



Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee

Update on Sea Level Rise Planning in Olympia

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Title

Update on Sea Level Rise Planning in Olympia

Recommended Action

Information only. No action required.

Report

Issue:

Receive briefing on sea level rise planning work initiated by the City of Olympia, the Port of Olympia and LOTT Clean Water Alliance.

Staff Contact:

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Presenter(s):

Eric Christensen

Background and Analysis:

Project Background

Sea level rise presents a prominent flooding risk to our downtown. Largely built on sediments excavated from Budd Inlet up to 100 years ago, the downtown area has always been vulnerable to flooding. City staff currently manage and control, sometimes just barely, the flooding risk during high tides and high flows in the Deschutes River.

The City began work on climate change and sea rise in the early 1990s. Over the years, we have accumulated extensive data on the elevations of critical downtown infrastructure, buildings, and shorelines relative to potential water elevations in Budd Inlet. This information provides a sound basis for meaningful long-term planning.

Consistent with the goals and policies of the City of Olympia Comprehensive Plan and the Downtown Strategy, staff initiated work on a formal sea level rise response plan in early 2017. The City, the Port of Olympia and LOTT Clean water Alliance are jointly funding and participating in the planning process. A consulting firm, AECOM Technical Services, has been hired to help lead the planning

effort. The three entities share common concerns regarding sea level rise, yet have unique individual vulnerabilities.

To address sea level rise, we are focusing on how to raise our shorelines using land under public control, such as parks and street right-of-way. Because timing for implementation of the strategies will be based on flooding risks, efforts will be focused initially on the shorelines of Capitol Lake, and West Bay (Percival Landing), followed by the Port. The LOTT wastewater treatment plant and combined sewer system will be protected by the shoreline barriers.

Planning Process and Next Steps

The tasks to be completed by AECOM and the City, Port and LOTT for this project include:

1. Evaluate the best available science regarding potential sea rise.
2. Develop a sea level rise planning framework incorporating community input.
3. Conduct a vulnerability and risk assessment of downtown assets.
4. Develop specific strategies for protecting downtown for approximately 100 years. As a component of this task, conceptual drawings for three physical adaptation strategies (Capitol Lake, Percival Landing and Billy Frank Jr. Trail) will be developed.
5. Complete formal plan including governance needs, implementation schedules, and financing considerations.

The planning process is on schedule. The first three steps in the planning process are completed and the task work products, including the vulnerability and risk assessment, are available for community review on the sea level rise webpage. The project team began work on the adaptation strategies in May.

The conceptual drawings for Capitol Lake, Percival Landing and Billy Frank Jr. Trail will be first shared with the UAC on August 23.

To provide an opportunity for impacted downtown property owners to learn about their individual flooding vulnerabilities, targeted property owner outreach has begun.

Meetings with state agencies have been scheduled for August and September.

- Discussions regarding strategies for Heritage Park will take place with the Department of Enterprise Services.
- Discussions regarding strategies for Percival Landing will take place with the Department of Natural Resources.
- A general discussion of our strategies will take place with the Department of Ecology.

A community “sea level rise walking tour” event is planned for September 8. By September 1, the conceptual physical adaptation drawings will be available at three locations (Heritage Park, Percival Landing South Pavilion and Percival Landing North Pavilion) and on the project website. A joint elected officials meeting is scheduled for September 17 and a community meeting is scheduled for September 19.

The ultimate goal is to develop a plan that lays out a framework with the necessary incremental steps for sustaining a long-term downtown community-wide sea level rise program. The current schedule anticipates the plan will be reviewed by City Council, the LOTT Clean Water Alliance Board and the Port of Olympia Commission in December and/or January.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

Various community groups and other agencies are engaged in climate change and sea level rise issues. The City of Olympia Comprehensive Plan and Downtown Strategy support developing a sea level response plan. Citizens voiced their support for the sea level response planning process at a February 8, 2017 vulnerability and risk assessment community workshop and at June 27, 2017 sea level rise planning process community informational meeting. Coordination with regional climate change mitigation planning is occurring.

Options:

Information only.

Financial Impact:

None at this time. However, potential long-term private and public impacts are appreciable. The estimated costs for sea level rise adaptation are being developed and are anticipated to be substantial. How adaptation will be paid for will be determined with future work efforts. Percival Landing will play an important role in protecting downtown and sea level rise will need to be taken into account with future improvements.

Attachments:

None