

**COUNCIL SUMMARY BACKGROUND BRIEFING:
KING COUNTY REGIONAL COMMITTEES AND OTHER ISSUES**
April 2017

This briefing summarizes recent actions taken by the three regional committees formed as a result of the merger of King County and Metro. The three regional committees are the Regional Policy Committee, the Regional Water Quality Committee, and the Regional Transit Committee. We will also include updates on other regional issues (e.g., King County Flood Control District, King Conservation District) as appropriate. This is intended as a summary briefing; staff can provide more details on any of the items below.

REGIONAL POLICY COMMITTEE (RPC)

April 19 meeting summary:

- **Received a briefing on an ordinance creating a King County “Access for All” program and potentially sending a proposition to King County voters for a 1/10-cent sales tax increase to finance the program.** Authority for this sales tax increase was granted by the State Legislature in 2015 and allows counties to place a cultural access program measure on the ballot. The proposed Access for All program would raise approximately \$67 million per year in King County. The Access for All measure is an extension of the type of programming King County 4Culture uses to administer grants through competitive processes to over 400 organizations annually.

If the Access for All program were to be approved by voters as proposed, it would represent approximately a tenfold increase in the amount of total grant awards 4Culture would provide annually. Under the current proposal, the bulk of the funding, about 70%, would be distributed to roughly 30 of the larger arts and cultural organizations in King County. Those organizations would be required to spend half of this funding to reach lower income communities throughout the county and provide services and/or programming outside of urban areas. Nearly \$7.5 million of the total would be generated by sales taxes in Bellevue in 2018.

Based on the funding formulas described in the proposed ordinance and using 2015 attendance and budget numbers, Bellevue nonprofit arts, heritage and science organizations are estimated to receive approximately \$1.4 million in grant awards according to estimates provided by King County 4Culture. Additionally, at least \$1 million would be distributed to community-based organizations in each King County Council district. The County Council needs to take action to place the measure before voters by May 1 in order for the measure to qualify for the August 1 ballot. While the taxes would be collected beginning in 2018, distribution of the funds would occur beginning in 2019.

- **Received a status report on the Regional Affordable Housing Strategy.** In 2016, the King County Council passed a motion expressing support for regional planning, coordination and funding efforts to address the challenges of homelessness and housing affordability in King County. That motion expressed Council’s intent to work with the King County Executive to convene a regional planning effort during 2017, including cities, nonprofit agencies, and private partners, to develop a regional plan for affordable housing. The report summarizes housing needs around King County, including the relationship between housing costs, household incomes and homelessness. The report

outlines a proposed objective for a Regional Affordable Housing Task Force to assess the current state of housing affordability, unmet needs, and to make recommendations about regional policies and strategies.

It also outlines a plan for the task force to develop a regional affordable housing strategy, proposed membership for the task force and an associated standing advisory panel. The report proposes that the County Council and Executive convene a Regional Affordable Housing Task Force that will:

- Assess the current state of regional housing affordability, including ongoing efforts by jurisdiction
- Develop and recommend a statement of intent
- Identify collective tools and actions, such as new partnerships, local strategies, regulatory reform, and funding approaches (including the potential for a countywide sales tax increase)
- Develop and recommend a state legislative strategy
- Reach agreement on a “dashboard” to display regional progress in achieving the affordability goals of the Countywide Planning Policies

The report proposes that the Executive and County Council establish a task force similar to other regional planning efforts, such as that undertaken for the Eastside Rail Corridor. Under the current proposal, the task force is proposed to consist of 10 members and one ex officio member:

- Four County Councilmembers or designees
- King County Executive or designee
- One representative from North King County (recommended by the Sound Cities Association (SCA))
- One representative from East King County (recommended by SCA)
- One representative from South King County (recommended by SCA)
- One representative from a city in rural King County (recommended by SCA)
- Mayor of Seattle or designee
- Director of King County Department of Community & Human Services or designee (ex officio)

The Executive will transmit recommendations for task force members by May 30. The task force is to deliver a work plan to the Executive and County Council by October 31, 2017 and a final housing strategy report by December 2018.

- **Received a briefing on an ordinance imposing an additional sales and use tax of 1/10 cent to fund construction of affordable housing and facilities providing housing-related services solely for eligible households.** This authority was granted by the Washington State Legislature under the same legislation that authorizes the proposed 1/10-cent sales tax for arts and cultural organizations. The legislation allows for a 1/10-cent sales tax increase for affordable housing, mental and behavioral health-related facilities, or associated services. Although these two taxing authorities were created in the same state legislation, they are independent of each other and the County’s decision to seek voter approval for one does not impact the other.

The County Executive transmitted a proposal in early March to place a 1/10-cent Cultural Access sales tax, the “Access for All” measure, on the August 1, 2017 ballot. While several County Councilmembers have been supportive of this proposal, other Councilmembers have questioned the timing and priority of the arts levy proposal at the same time King County has declared a homelessness state of emergency and increasing housing affordability challenges, among other regional needs. King County Councilmembers Rod Dembowski and Larry Gossett introduced a

proposed ordinance in late March to place the 1/10-cent sales tax for affordable housing and associated services on the August 1, 2017 ballot. It is anticipated that the County Council will not act on this legislation at this time, and instead will move forward with the Regional Affordable Housing Strategy process outlined above.

With County leaders coalescing around the Regional Affordable Housing Strategy and Task Force, issues of funding and timing still remain. The County has until October 8, 2018 to impose the 1/10-cent sales tax increase for affordable housing. If the County does not impose the tax by that date, then any city within the County can do so. The Regional Affordable Housing Task Force is scheduled to complete its work in December 2018. The County is working to address the gap in the timeline between the taxing authority deadline and the Task Force's work by requiring reports from the Task Force earlier in 2018 that specifically address the potential of a 1/10-cent sales tax increase.

There is also a bill in the State Legislature that would give the County councilmanic authority over the 1/10-cent sales tax. This is not anticipated to change the timeline or scope of the Task Force.

The County Council is scheduled to vote on the Regional Affordable Housing Strategy and Task Force in May.

The next meeting of the RPC is scheduled for May 10.

REGIONAL TRANSIT COMMITTEE (RTC)

April 19 meeting preview:

The next meeting of the RTC is scheduled for Wednesday, April 19, which is after the time of this writing. The agenda is anticipated to include:

- A briefing on the King County Metro Fares Program and Outreach.
- Discussion and possible action on the Metro Connects Development Program Work Plan.

A complete summary of the April 19 meeting will be included in the May regional issues packet.

REGIONAL WATER QUALITY COMMITTEE (RWQC)

April 5 meeting summary:

- **West Point Flooding Investigation – Preliminary Findings Report.** The King County Wastewater Treatment Division engaged CH2M to prepare a report on the root causes of the February 9, 2017 emergency bypass discharge and flooding event at the West Point Treatment Plant. The firm completed a preliminary report on the event and briefed the Committee on the sequence of events, equipment failures and findings at the April 5 meeting.

The preliminary report describes a sequence of events that was initially triggered by an electrical system failure, but also involved other plant systems and operations, resulting in flooding and the emergency bypass. There are no definitive findings of the source of the electrical fault, but investigation continues. Once the electricity failed, several other systems failed (the discharge valves closed when the electricity went off, and defective float switches did not trigger the shutdown

of flow coming into the plant even though the outgoing discharge valves were not open), and ongoing testing and analysis is still needed to understand what happened and why.

Issues raised at the meeting included the maintenance protocols for the switches and whether the review is taking a complete “system” look at how the equipment and operations are all connected and contribute to a complete system failure. CH2M’s initial findings include continued work to identify the source of the electrical failure, developing a backup system for the pump/valve system and replacing the failed float switches with a different type of switch.

Background

In the early morning hours of February 9, the plant experienced a critical equipment failure during an exceptionally heavy rainfall event. The effluent pumps used to push flow out the discharge pipes failed and resulted in the backup of flows into the below surface chambers and tunnels that support the primary treatment systems of the plant. Flooding depth reached 12 to 15 feet in places, submerging pumps, motors, electrical conduits, panels and other equipment. An emergency bypass gate was opened, allowing the flow to bypass the plant and discharge untreated flow into Puget Sound.

There were no injuries, but the damage to the plant was extensive. The plant is currently operating using only primary treatment, and no secondary treatment is occurring (see next briefing below). Cleaning and sanitizing the plant has been occurring as quickly as possible. Miles of electrical conduit must be replaced, along with motors, electrical panels and other equipment. The plant is currently scheduled to be back to full operations by the end of April. King County does carry insurance for the facility for damages up to \$250 million.

- **Briefing on West Point Secondary Treatment Restoration.** In the aftermath of the February 9 emergency bypass discharge and flooding event, the Wastewater Treatment Division has been working to restore the secondary treatment process at the plant. Secondary treatment is primarily a biological process, reliant on a community of activated bacteria to act on the wastewater flows. The restoration of this process, once suspended, is a complex undertaking. It involves stimulating the biomass by reseeded it with healthy microorganisms. CH2M has been leading the facility restoration process and briefed the Committee on progress in restoring secondary treatment.
- **Briefing on Legislative Measures Regarding the Wastewater Treatment System.** On Monday, March 13 the King County Council passed a motion providing for a report on the causes, consequences and appropriate response to the West Point Treatment Plant emergency bypass discharge event. This is intended to be an independent, third-party review to analyze the events leading up to the event as well as the actions during and after the event. The report will assess how flooding of the plant could have been averted, review the environmental and public health impacts of the flood and damage to the plant, and evaluate lessons learned and how to avoid such an event in the future. The County Council will lead the review and report on the findings by July 1, 2017. In addition, there are three other legislative measures that are being developed:

Wastewater System Metrics (2017-0164). This is a proposed ordinance that would require the preparation and posting of system metrics and notification in case of significant process disruptions. Examples of metrics are peak and monthly flow volumes at key locations, water quality monitoring information, and volumes of biosolids produced. The motion is aimed at having regular and ongoing access to information and the strengthening of the monitoring process.

Half-Century West Point Treatment Plant Review (2017-0141). This motion calls for a review of the operating context of the West Point Plant in light of changes to population, impermeable cover, growth patterns, weather patterns, and treatment technologies.

Strategic Asset Management Plan (2017-0142). This motion provides for an evaluation of the Wastewater Treatment Division's Asset Management Plan to ensure it is appropriately targeted and to see if it can be more effectively directed towards critical system assets at the same time as it addresses ongoing equipment replacement needs.

- **2017 Committee Work Plan Revisions.** The Committee adopted a 2017 work plan at its March meeting.

Work plan items for 2017 currently include:

- Regional Wastewater Services Plan Review and Update
- West Point Treatment Plan Emergency Bypass Event – Causes and Recovery
- Wastewater Rate (although no increase is expected for 2018)
- Water Works (this is the new “Culver” fund and provides grants for water quality projects. RWQC will receive an annual briefing on the program)
- Combined Sewer Overflow Plan and Facilities
- Capital Cost Estimating
- Conveyance System Improvements
- Infiltration/Inflow
- State Water Quality Standards
- Potential Options for Assistance with Capacity Charge for Low-Income Customers
- Resiliency and Recovery Master Plan
- Reclaimed Water

The County Council completed its organizational process for the year, and Councilmember Kathy Lambert, the 2017 Chair of the RWQC, requested two additions to the work plan. The first one is regarding biosolids. Chair Lambert would like a review of the County's biosolids program, including processing methods, application as soil amendment, and the quality of the product. The second request is for a review of the Cedar Hills Regional Landfill leachate capture and processing system. Wastewater that is generated from the landfill site is managed through retention in leachate ponds for management and discharge into pipelines that deliver it to the wastewater system. A briefing would focus on storage, treatment and disposal processes for the leachate. The Committee will vote on the additions to the work plan at its May meeting.

The next meeting of the RWQC is scheduled for Wednesday, May 3.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLANNING COUNCIL (GMPC)

March 29, meeting summary:

- **The King County Comprehensive Plan update in 2016 included several work program items**

with implications for the Countywide Planning Policies (CPP) and the GMPC. In addition to the school siting report, which is a recurring work program item, the following items will also have implications for the GMPC:

- Regional affordable housing planning – though not technically a GMPC work program item, this county-led effort will be exploring the challenges of providing affordable housing and develop recommendations that could inform future CPP amendments.
- Move remaining unincorporated urban areas toward annexation – the GMA states that cities are the appropriate providers of urban services, yet there are still significant areas of urban unincorporated areas throughout the county. This item will analyze obstacles to annexation and consider possible CPP amendments on joint planning and annexation policies and/or possible adjustments to the potential annexation area map.
- Review of four-to-one program – one method for expanding the urban growth area is by dedicating four acres of permanent open space for every acre of land added to the urban growth area. There have been several proposed modifications to the current requirements over the years that could result in preservation of more open space but also change the original intent of the program. The review will analyze the effects of different proposals and provide recommendations for the GMPC to consider in late 2018.
- Buildable lands program methodology review – this item includes a review of the current methodology used to calculate buildable land capacity for all jurisdictions in King County. While state law stipulates the requirements of the report, the method for determining capacity is up to each of the six counties required to report. King County will be working with stakeholders to review the methodology for possible refinements. This item could also be affected by proposed state legislation that would prescribe more of the methodology regarding buildable lands.

The regional affordable housing planning and buildable lands methodology work items are of particular interest to Bellevue. The regional affordable housing work has not yet begun so it is unknown what implications, if any, there would be for Bellevue but staff will be following the work closely. Changes to the buildable lands methodology could have implications for Bellevue staff work program if the requirements or timing of reporting change significantly. It could also have implications for Bellevue's capacity depending on changes to formulas and/or assumptions. Bellevue will also be closely following the work on this item.

- **Regional Centers Framework Update briefing.** PSRC staff provided an overview of the recommendations from the Centers Framework Stakeholders Working Group that completed its work in January, including alternatives for designating regional growth centers, manufacturing industrial centers and military facilities. The alternatives explored using tiers of centers (recognizing different sizes, types and roles) and criteria that relied on more than size and activity units. The additional criteria attempt to better define the appropriate role of the centers by looking at transit service, growth potential, local commitment and performance. Staff from the Interjurisdictional Team provided a complementary presentation on the potential implications for the Countywide Planning Policies and King County designated urban centers and raised some issues for consideration by the GMPC.

Considerations for the GMPC included whether to designate countywide centers, if King County requirements should match PSRC designation criteria, and whether there should be a limit on the number of centers. Transportation funding is based in part on designation of regional growth centers

and Manufacturing Industrial Centers (MIC). Downtown Bellevue is designated as a regional growth center and metropolitan city at the top of the centers hierarchy and that does not change under the alternatives being proposed. The GMPC is not involved in regional funding decisions. However, if the Countywide Planning Policies are amended in the future to better align with the updated framework it could result in additional urban centers and/or countywide centers being designated in King County, including some in Bellevue.

The next meeting of the GMPC is scheduled for Wednesday, May 31.