

June 22, 2007

Meeting Attendees

Committee Members

Richard Bonewits, King County Unincorporated Area Councils
Sally Clark, City of Seattle
Dan Clawson, City of Renton
Suzette Cooke, City of Kent
Grant Degginger, City of Bellevue
Mike Flowers, City of Carnation
Ron Hansen, City of Shoreline
Kenneth Hearing, City of North Bend
Laure Iddings, City of Maple Valley
Matt Larson, City of Snoqualmie
Joan McBride, City of Kirkland
Steve Mullet, City of Tukwila
Michael Park, City of Federal Way
Ron Sims, King County Executive
Roger Thordarson, sitting in for Auburn Mayor Pete Lewis

King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks, Water and Land Resources Division Staff

Pam Bissonnette, Director of Department of Natural Resources and Parks
Sandy Kilroy, Regional Services Section Manager, WLRD
Steve Bleifuhs, River and Floodplain Management Unit Supervisor, WLRD
Brian Murray, Advisory Committee Project Manager, WLRD
Grover Cleveland, Director's Office, DNRP

Committee Staff

Margaret Norton-Arnold, Facilitator
Maureen Dunn

Meeting Overview

The third King County Flood Control Zone Advisory Committee meeting was held on Friday June 22, 2007 from 9 a.m. to noon at Bellevue City Hall. The primary focus of the meeting was on how the District tax levy might be applied throughout King County.

Proposed Project List and Financial Analysis

Brian Murray presented the Levy Rate Scenarios and the Draft Capital Projects List. In response to Committee requests from the June 8 meeting, Brian outlined which capital improvement projects could be built at varying levy rates, ranging from five to fourteen cents of assessed value. Advisory Committee members were provided with a copy of Brian's PowerPoint presentation.

The following handouts were provided to the Committee:

- Preliminary Draft: Levy Rate Scenarios for Capital Projects
- Opinion Summary from June 8, 2007 Meeting
- Meeting Report from June 8, 2007
- Summary: Impact of Levy Rate Scenarios on Capital Project List
- Tax and Fee Options for King County Flood Control Zone District: June 14, 2007
- Impacts of Climate Change on Flooding

Committee Questions and Discussion

- Committee members asked if the listed flood control projects were competing for the same financial resources as the projects that have been identified through the WRIA and other processes. The concern was that there might be a "double counting" of these projects, and that money generated through the tax levy would be spent on projects that are already being funded through state and federal financing mechanisms.
- King County staff responded that they are working closely with the WRIA efforts to ensure that this double spending does not occur. Moreover, the level of funding available from the state and federal governments is both limited and inconsistent. A number of the WRIA projects cannot be implemented due to these limitations. In addition, the Flood Control District projects are solely focused on preventing and mitigating the impacts of flooding. They will be built using best practices in habitat restoration, and if habitat improvements occur as a result of flood control projects, that is a significant benefit. However, it is not the primary focus of the District's projects.
- There was an in-depth discussion about the status of the listed projects: are they ready to build now? Are they simply "studies" at this point? Several committee members expressed concerns in this regard, noting that they did not want to fund *just more studies*. There was a question about cost estimating, with the comment that these estimates can change dramatically within just a few years, and it is important to be as accurate as possible. Several members said it would be best to have at least the preliminary designs and more detailed plans completed before the committee is asked to approve the CIP list. The tax levy, they said, should be based on accurate and detailed planning/estimates, and not on "feasibility studies".

- In response, King County staff said that the cost estimates had been based on more than twenty years of successfully completed work on these types of projects throughout the County. All of the projects have a “life cycle”, which includes a feasibility study, design, permitting, and construction. Most of the projects identified at the five-cent levy rate are ready to be implemented now, and detailed planning work has been completed on many of the projects on the sequenced CIP list. Others will require additional planning and design, and of course all of the projects have to be permitted at the local jurisdictional level.
- Sandy Kilroy noted that the Basin Technical Committees (BTCs) had received more detailed descriptions, which clearly outline the planning, design, and/or permitting phase of each one of the CIP projects. Advisory committee members are welcome to review this level of detail as well.
- Most members said that they have confidence in the work of the Basin Technical Committees and the proposed projects based on what they are hearing, noting that advisory committee members are more oriented toward policy and do not have the technical background necessary to fully evaluate the proposed projects. These members urged the advisory committee to trust the recommendations of the BTCs. A few members, however, remained wary of the overall project list and of the recommendations they are being asked to make. They felt that the advisory committee should have more time, more information on the project criteria, and more data on the proposed projects before the committee makes a recommendation about the project list. Staff reminded members that projects are discussed in the adopted Flood Plan as well as posted on the website.
- Also in response to discussions at the previous two committee meetings, Brian Murray presented three options to the group regarding the definition of “regional” vs. “subregional” projects. There had been a number of questions about how the differences between these types of projects would be delineated, what types of projects would go into each category, and how those projects might get nominated. Brian said that a proposed approach would be to move forward with funding the sequenced project list that had been developed, with a commitment from King County to develop clear and rational criteria for the regional and subregional categories. The advisory committee would be involved in creating these criteria and in defining the differences between the two.
- This suggestion sparked considerable discussion. Most committee members were satisfied with the approach that Brian had outlined. They did not want any further delays in moving forward with projects, and did not want to halt the CIP process while a definition is being hammered out. *I don't think the public cares if the projects are regional or subregional; we need to stay out of the weeds on this and maintain momentum. People are paying money for these projects, and they will want to see success.*
- A couple of members, however, did not feel that the capital improvement program should move forward without the regional and subregional criteria being more clearly defined. *We are dealing with very complicated issues in a very*

aggressive timeline. “Let’s have the levy first and maybe next year we can talk about the details” is not the right way to handle public dollars.

Two-Tiered Rate Structure

Grover Cleveland from King County presented four potential options for a funding structure for the Flood Control Zone District. At issue is the degree to which property owners in areas that are more prone to flood damage pay for flood control protection vs. property owners in those jurisdictions that are less vulnerable to flood damage.

The options included a uniform countywide property tax; subzones with different property taxes; a uniform property tax plus special assessments for those areas more prone to flood damage; and a uniform property tax plus a service charge for those flood-prone areas. The presentation included a discussion of how each could be set up as well as a discussion of the administrative, legal, and cost implications of each. Based on the analysis, King County is recommending that the levy rate be uniform for all areas of the County. Members were provided a copy of Grover’s powerpoint.

- One committee member reacted negatively to the presentation, declaring it biased and asserting that King County was *only looking for the quickest and most efficient way to get the process done.*
- Most members agreed, however, that the levy should be applied uniformly throughout the County. They worried that any attempt at implementing a differently-tiered rate would delay the implementation of the overall program, noting that it is complicated and time-consuming to attempt to define different flooding zones. These members reminded the group that flooding has a negative impact on all areas of the region, if not from a physical, then from an economic, standpoint. *The boundaries between rural and urban areas are porous – everyone has a responsibility to control flooding.*
- One member said that their city had forfeited their local flood control district in order to participate in the new County-wide district, and that if there is any delay in funding or implementation, her city will not have the revenue needed for flood control projects.
- In contrast, several other members said that a tiered rate structure should be pursued. One argument in this regard was that the entire region would be subsidizing commercial interests – such as those at Southcenter – if the levy rate was uniformly applied throughout the County. These members did not believe there had been enough careful analysis and comparison between the different funding scenarios. For example, options 3 and 4 – a uniform tax rate with special assessments or service charges for flood-prone areas might offer a more palatable funding structure, and yet those options had not had the benefit of substantive committee discussion.
- Other members said that the regional nature of our industrial and commercial economy warrants a regional and uniform funding source for flood protection.

Summary of Committee Opinion

At the conclusion of the meeting, Committee members participated in a “temperature read” tally of their preliminary opinions regarding a tiered rate structure. They also shared their opinions on both the overall levy rate and the Capital Improvement Project list, both of which had also been discussed at the June 8 advisory committee meeting. The June 22 summary of opinions is currently being reviewed by advisory committee members.

Next Meeting and Next Steps

The fourth, and final 2007 meeting of the Flood Control Advisory Committee is scheduled for July 20. At this meeting, final votes will be taken on the proposed project list, the levy rate, and the question of how that levy rate should be applied throughout the County. Members were encouraged to use the next month to meet and/or work with King County staff to ask questions and to obtain the information they feel they need before casting their final votes.