



City Council Agenda Bill

20306

Bill Number

Subject: Report from the February 3, 2014 Lake Whatcom Policy Group meeting.

Summary Statement: The Lake Whatcom Policy Group, consisting of representatives from the Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District, the Whatcom County Council, and the Bellingham City Council, meets regularly to discuss policy issues regarding Lake Whatcom. The Lake Whatcom and Natural Resources Committee chair will provide a briefing on the discussion and recommendations from the February 3, 2014 Policy Group meeting.

Previous Council Action: n/a

Fiscal Impact: None.

Funding Source:

Attachments: 1. Lake Whatcom Policy Group, Brief Digest of Presentations and Discussion, February 3, 2014 meeting.

Meeting Activity	Meeting Date	Staff Recommendation	Presented By	Time
Committee Briefing Information Only	10-Feb-2014	Information Only	Pinky Vargas	5 mins.

Council Committee:

Agenda Bill Contact:

Mark Gardner, 778-8204

Committee Actions:

Lake Whatcom Reservoir & Natural Resources

Pinky Vargas, Chair

Terry Bornemann; Pinky Vargas

Reviewed By	Initials	Date
Cathy Lehman, Cl. Pres.		
Pinky Vargas, LW Nat. Rs. Cmte	PV (By MG)	2-4-14
Legal	PM/L	2-4-14
Mayor	KL	2.4.14

Council Action:



Lake Whatcom Policy Group February 3, 2014 Meeting Brief Digest of Presentations and Discussion

Policy Group members in attendance: Carl Weimer, Barry Buchanan (Whatcom County Council); Pinky Vargas (City of Bellingham Council); Leslie McRoberts (Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District Board). Other legislative or board members present: Michael Lilliquist, Cathy Lehman (City of Bellingham Council); Larry Brown (Sudden Valley Board).

1. Presentation of Draft 2013 Lake Whatcom Program Accomplishments Report

Staff introduced a draft of the 2013 Program accomplishments report and briefly discussed its contents. As with previous annual accomplishments reports, the tasks are derived from the current 5 year plan (in this case, 2010-14). The 2013 report differs from last year's report in that a separate Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) section has been added. The planned activities for 2014 are also listed in the report. Policy Group members requested that staff add into the report, either in a pull-out or in each section, information regarding the budget commitments for items planned for the current year (in this case, 2014). Also, a summary total of 2013 expenditures would also be useful. This is more easily determined for capital projects so that may represent the bulk of it. There is also the option of capturing this information in a separate memo or pull-out section.

Staff reviewed some of the highlights of 2013 work:

- Whatcom County Public Works received an award from the American Society of Civil Engineers for habitat and stormwater improvements to a tributary of Silver Beach Creek.
- Whatcom County adopted new land use and stormwater regulations for the watershed.
- The City of Bellingham completed 41 projects on private properties as part of the Homeowner Incentive Program (HIP). Project practices included infiltration, dispersion, and re-vegetation.
- A Watershed Friendly Expo Project was held at Bloedel Donovan Park attended by 70 residents and 20 representatives of local business.
- The Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) program moved from pilot to full implementation.

Staff cautioned that projecting costs for 2014 Work Plan tasks that are not capital projects will be difficult due to the uncertainties of staff hours required to complete some tasks, and other factors. For example, the City would like to renegotiate Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) easements during 2014, but this is dependent on a willingness of BPA to work through the issues, and needed staff hours must also be identified. In addition, some programs may be adjusted depending on Council actions, e.g. AIS.

City staff reviewed City stormwater program activities for 2013. The design work for upgrading of facilities at Bloedel-Donovan is complete and work will commence in 2014 after a public outreach process is completed. A number of projects are in the planning stages such as additional stormwater work for Northshore, and this work will also commence in 2014.

Policy Group members and staff discussed how citizens can find information about sources and quantities of phosphorus coming into the Lake. This is detailed in the Department of Ecology (DoE) TMDL report but many of those sources will be adjusted to reflect new data and updated modeling, plus this information may be difficult to access or interpret. The data in the DoE report do not reflect phosphorus reductions achieved to date. Conversely, the City's Performance Measures system does report out information on achieved phosphorus reductions. [See <http://www.cob.org/data/metrics/water.aspx>] Sudden Valley just started a monitoring program for phosphorus levels in Austin Creek and its tributaries, and this information will be available at a later date.

Policy Group members also inquired whether the information on phosphorus removal from Silver Beach Creek is available. Staff replied that some of this has been analyzed, but some projects will require more time before their impacts can be measured. For example, some projects required re-vegetation before stormwater can be re-routed through them. Information on completed projects are summarized in the 2013 update report. A full report on the pilot will be available in the future.

2. Annual Joint Councils and Commission Annual Meeting Planning

The Policy Group discussed a possible joint statement that may be appropriate for discussion/endorsement by the joint Councils/Commission at the annual meeting, such as a possible joint resolution. A draft resolution was circulated that includes milestone dates for completing certain planning processes. According to the resolution, this year will focus on detailing a complete phosphorus reduction model and to exploring the policy issues necessary for the completion of this model. The next year, 2105, would be used to specify the monetary and time line commitments needed to achieve needed phosphorus reduction. In 2016 a specific plan containing budget commitments and timelines for achieving P reduction in the TMDL would be produced. The 2015-19 work plan would be developed in such a way as to accommodate the achievement of these milestones. The resolution also discussed the role of the Policy Group in facilitating achievement of these planning milestones, and calls for more formal representation of Sudden Valley in the Policy Group. Setting milestones would establish expectations for the outcomes of staff work and also provide a set of goals for the Policy Group. The Mayor and County Executive have reviewed this idea and agree in concept with setting policy goals.

Policy Group members generally liked the idea of trying to identify milestones to accelerate the planning process and provide timelines for clarification of budget and policy issues. Discussion ensued on how to best vet the resolution to assess whether it is ready for possible adoption during the Joint Councils meeting. County Council members asked that the resolution be revised to reflect comments received to date and transmitted to them in time for the next Natural Resources Committee meeting. Among other things, the resolution will be revised to include information on phosphorus reduction already achieved in the watershed.

Staff noted that the 2015-19 work plan will be the basis for the TMDL response. The phosphorus reduction model should be updated within a year. The plan will also lay out the scheduling of the achievement of TMDL targets and the corresponding financial commitments. Timelines set in a resolution could be incorporated into the work plan.

The group also discussed other possible topics and ideas to improve the annual meeting. The meeting will likely be held in the City Council chambers because other venues require

custom setup for television and are thus more expensive. Target dates for the meeting are March 26 or the 27th, and the meeting will likely occur between 6:30 and 8:30 PM.

Items for the 2014 meeting may include:

- Review of the TMDL process.
- Presentation of 2013 accomplishments.
- Outline of investment areas needed to achieve phosphorus reduction.
- Discussion of the resolution, and possible adoption.
- Public comment.

Staff will bring back a draft agenda for fine-tuning at the next Policy Group meeting.

3. Adopt Policy Group Meeting Plan and Dates for 2014

The Policy Group reviewed proposed topics for 2014 and their sequencing, and discussed the general approach to be taken with the issues. Because certain key staff are not available for the March meeting, the discussion of the phosphorus reduction model will be postponed until April. In its place, topics regarding land preservation, parks development, and forestry activities will be presented, with an emphasis on identifying the policy issues embedded in each of these areas.

The group also tentatively identified future meeting dates and times. The meeting will be shifted to the afternoon because that works better for some of the Policy Group members. The next meeting will occur on March 3, tentatively at 1:30 PM.