Staff Report

January 5th, 2026 Council Workshop Meeting

Professional Services Agreement Amendment for Slow Sand Filter Plant Startup
Presenter: Rob Charles, Utilities Manager
Time Estimate: 10 minutes

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BACKGROUND: The City of Camas has relied on surface water from Jones Creek since 1913 and Boulder Creek since 1931. These sources are conveyed to the City's Slow Sand Filter (SSF) Water Treatment Plant, which was constructed between 2013 and 2015 to provide up to 1,570 gallons per minute of treated surface water. When operational, the SSF Plant allows the City to reduce reliance on groundwater wells during non-peak demand months, lower energy costs through gravity-fed conveyance, and provide higher-quality water preferred by certain industrial users.

Although the SSF Plant was substantially completed in 2015, it has never been placed into full operation due to a series of technical, regulatory, and external factors. Following construction, the Washington State Department of Health required the addition of a carbon dioxide system to control water pH, which was not installed and completed until 2021. Separately, significant leakage was identified in approximately three miles of transmission main connecting the plant to the City's distribution system, requiring replacement before startup could proceed.

As the City prepared to initiate startup in 2022, the Nakia Creek Fire occurred within the watershed. Due to concerns regarding fire-fighting foam, debris, and potential impacts to raw water quality, startup was deferred. In 2023, reduced flows at the Boulder Creek intake revealed structural issues that required design, permitting, and reconstruction; construction work at the intake is scheduled for the permitted work window in 2026.

In 2024, additional challenges arose related to maintenance and operability of the carbon dioxide treatment system and ongoing telemetry and control system upgrades. These issues highlighted the complexity of restarting a facility that has remained idle for an extended period and requires coordination among multiple vendors and regulatory agencies.

SUMMARY: The City is seeking Council approval of a Professional Services Agreement amendment with Jacobs Engineering to complete startup and commissioning of the Slow Sand Filter (SSF) Water Treatment Plant. Although the plant was constructed in 2015, it has never been fully placed into operation due to a series of regulatory requirements,

infrastructure repairs, wildfire-related watershed impacts, and system integration challenges that occurred over several years.

With major prerequisite issues now addressed or scheduled, the City is positioned to move forward with a coordinated and structured startup effort. When operational, the SSF Plant will provide a seasonal surface water supply that allows the City to reduce reliance on groundwater wells, lower energy and operating costs through gravity-fed conveyance, and provide a cleaner source of water preferred by certain industrial users for process water.

The proposed amendment expands and extends Jacobs' scope of work to lead and coordinate final startup activities, including:

- Overall project management and scheduling through plant startup and initial operations
- Coordination of multiple vendors and agencies involved in startup (including TOMCO, Air Gas, S&B, and regulatory agencies)
- Verification, testing, and repair of treatment systems, including the carbon dioxide pH control system
- Support for telemetry, controls, and system integration during startup
- On-site startup assistance and commissioning of the SSF Plant
- Training and refresher instruction for City operations staff
- Post-startup operational support during initial seasonal operations, shutdown, and restart

Jacobs Engineering was the original designer of the SSF Plant and has supported the City through prior startup assistance efforts. Utilizing Jacobs under the existing agreement allows the City to leverage institutional knowledge of the facility and avoid the inefficiencies and risks associated with onboarding a new consultant at this stage. The amendment establishes a not-to-exceed amount of $179,410 and supports a planned startup and operational transition of the SSF Plant by fall 2026.

Figure 1: Slow Sand Filter Plant – 32723 NE Lessard Road, Camas, WA

BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY: Operation of the Slow Sand Filter Plant will provide multiple benefits to the community by improving system reliability, reducing operational costs, and maximizing the use of existing infrastructure investments. The facility allows the City to rely on gravity-fed surface water during seasonal operations, reducing electrical consumption and wear on groundwater wells that can be taken offline during these periods.

The surface water source also provides a cleaner water supply that is better suited for certain industrial and process-water users within the City, supporting economic activity and local employers. Bringing the SSF Plant into operation improves overall water system resiliency by diversifying supply sources and aligns with long-term planning efforts to responsibly manage and steward the City's water resources.

STRATEGIC PLAN: This work aligns with the Strategic Plan Goal of Stewardship of City Assets.

POTENTIAL CHALLENGES: Because the Slow Sand Filter Plant has not previously operated as part of the City's active water system, bringing the facility online will require careful monitoring during initial startup. As surface water is introduced, water will move through parts of the distribution system that are not typically supplied by this source, which may temporarily stir up minor sediment in some pipes.

These conditions are expected and manageable. The startup plan includes controlled sequencing, system flushing, and close oversight by City staff and Jacobs Engineering to identify and address any issues during initial operations. These adjustments are typical when placing a long-idle water treatment facility into service and do not affect long-term water quality or system reliability.

BUDGET IMPACT: The proposed Professional Services Agreement amendment with Jacobs Engineering is in an amount not to exceed $179,410 and will be funded from the Water Fund. Sufficient funds are available within the current budget:

Budget:	
Boulder Creek Intake Project (2026 Capital Budget)	$244,000
Expenses:	
Jacobs Engineering Amendment	$179,410
*Tomco (CO2 System Repair)	$ 5,000
*S$B (Telemetry Services)	$ 5,000
Total	$189,410

** Estimated costs. Actual amounts will be determined based on final scope and need during startup.*

RECOMMENDATION: Staff would recommend this item be placed on the Jan 20th Council Regular Consent Agenda for Council's consideration.