Meeting Agenda

Meeting Topic:	Central Waterfront Redevelopment
Meeting Date and Time:	March 19, 2025; 6 p.m.
Meeting Location:	St Helens City Hall

This annotated agenda describes the objective and primary topics of discussion for the March 19 Council work session.

The objective of this work session is to provide the St. Helens City Council with an update on the Central Waterfront project. This includes summarizing work completed to date with a focus on findings and implications for potential next steps and decision-making on how to best apply funding that's already been allocated.

Background:

1. Project Catalysts (why this project is important for St Helens)
    a. Compatibility with current and future investments in the Riverfront area
        i. Potential private investment partners have identified the lagoon as a major impediment to achieving the master plan.
    b. Wastewater Treatment Plant:
        i. Age and condition
        ii. Discharge permit compliance
        iii. Maintenance of oversized lagoon
    c. Environmental resilience: industrial and municipal wastewater sludge in immediate proximity to Willamette River
    d. Timing with Portland Harbor cleanup and other river dredging as an opportunity to offset costs and/or generate revenue
2. Project Timeline (what has been completed to date)
    a. Project concept conceived as part of Riverfront Redevelopment Master Plan (2015)
        i. First presentation of Market Analysis to City Council July 2016
        ii. First public meeting September 2016
    b. Market Analysis (2016)
        i. Significant demand exists for a soil- and sediment-disposal facility near the Portland metro area.

ii. The St. Helens facility would have several unique attributes that create distinct advantages to answer this demand, including flexibility in transport mode, landfill-adjacent barge-transfer infrastructure that reduces transload costs, and proximity to large demand segments.

iii. There are no competitive facilities with the ability to directly offload sediment from barges, but multiple competitors that can accept soil from upland sources. Initial projections suggest that revenue generation would be significant, supporting the City's redevelopment plans and other City needs.

iv. Proximity to primary sediment and soil sources reflects a significant opportunity to reduce greenhouse gases resulting from transport of materials.

c. Landfill Site Characterization (2019 – present)

i. Phase 1 Site Characterization Report (2020)

1. Establish a preliminary framework for understanding the existing site conditions.
2. Determine if the site is suitable for landfill construction.
3. Provide sufficient baseline information to develop initial facility design, construction program, operations plan, and environmental monitoring program.
4. Submitted to DEQ (Spring 2020).
    a. Respond to DEQ comments, recommend additional investigations to address data gaps identified by DEQ.

ii. Phase 1B Environmental Investigation Report (2023)

1. Address DEQ data gaps to better understand environmental conditions.
2. Advance geotechnical investigation to better understand soil properties.
3. Environmental fieldwork and geotechnical investigation.
4. Submitted to DEQ (January 2024).
    a. DEQ indicated most data gaps have been addressed; future work needs to focus on continuing to refine understanding of geotechnical conditions and challenges.

Current Status:

1. Technical analysis completed in Phase 1B has identified three primary constraints:
    a. Part of the lagoon is underlain by hard basalt and the remainder is underlain by highly compressible alluvial silt where up to 9 feet of settlement is predicted as the site is filled. The differential settlement between the basalt (no settlement) and the silt (lots of settlement) is a challenging condition for a landfill liner.
    b. Alluvial silt is susceptible to liquefaction during an earthquake, with potential for lateral soil movements.
    c. The landfill liner is currently proposed below the 100-year flood elevation, which poses a risk that the liner could float up when river levels exceed fill levels within the lagoon.

    d. Additional geotechnical explorations, laboratory testing, slope stability modeling and engineering analysis will be required, including better understanding of the settlement tolerances of the liners and suitability of the berm.

2. Phase 1C Scope of Work (as currently defined, subject to change)
    a. Market Analysis Update
    b. Geotechnical Studies
    c. Site Development Plan
    d. Risk Assessment and Air Modeling
    e. WWTP Impact Analysis
3. Output of Market Analysis Update (2024)
    a. Implications for feasibility of revised approach.
    b. The market analysis update reflects the implications of recent geotechnical findings, indicating that the northern two-thirds of the berm that separates the lagoon from the river is seismically unstable. Stabilizing this portion of the berm is cost prohibitive.
    c. The geotechnical findings affect constructability and costs, reducing the volume available for soil and sediment disposal down to one-third of the originally anticipated capacity.
    d. Repurposing the lagoon as a smaller soil- and sediment-disposal facility remains viable without subsidy based on current understanding, but it looks different from the original vision.
    e. Development of a smaller disposal facility brings opportunities for creative solutions to the portion of the lagoon that cannot be filled under a revenue generating scenario, due to seismic challenges.

Moving Forward:

1. There is no “do nothing” option
    a. WWTP will need significant upgrades or replacement
    b. Berm is not sustainable for the long-term
    c. Lagoon is a blight on and liability for one of the community’s primary assets: the waterfront
2. At a minimum, the baseline condition must prioritize public safety and minimize risk
3. Consideration of alternatives must weigh cost recovery (or subsidy) vs. revenue potential, and the tradeoffs inherent in those options
4. Timing with Portland Harbor cleanup and other river dredging is an important consideration and requires the project to keep pace with those efforts