

TUMWATER PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING
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CONVENE: 8:00 a.m.

PRESENT: Chair Eileen Swarthout and Councilmembers Michael Althausen and Charlie Schneider.

Staff: Water Resources & Sustainability Director Dan Smith, Water Resources Specialist Carrie Gillum, and Administrative Assistant Cathy Nielsen.

Others: Meridith Greer, Greer Environmental Consulting.

**CORROSION
CONTROL SERVICE
PROVIDER
AGREEMENT
AMENDMENT 1:**

Specialist Gillum reported the City contracted with HDR to perform an evaluation to complete a corrosion control study in addition to a report for submittal to the Department of Health (DOH). The submittal aligns with the requirements for the City to complete the study under the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Lead and Copper Rule. The report has been completed and staff planned to submit the report in July; however, DOH requested a delay to enable the inclusion of lead and copper sampling completed during the summer. Staff submitted the report to the DOH on December 1, 2022. The DOH has an established timeline to review and respond to the report. Part of the contract with HDR is to respond to any questions or comments received from the DOH following its review of the report. The request is to extend the agreement with HDR to enable continuation of the work and to respond to any comments from the DOH. The report assists the DOH in determining whether the City would need to pursue additional corrosion control measures within the system.

MOTION: **Councilmember Schneider moved, seconded by Councilmember Althausen, to recommend the City Council approve and authorize the Mayor to sign Amendment 1 for the Corrosion Control Service Provider Agreement extending the contract term to December 31, 2023. A voice vote approved the motion unanimously.**

**SEPTIC TO SEWER
CONVERSION
PROGRAM GRANT
AGREEMENT:**

Consultant Meridith Greer briefed the committee on the proposed septic to sewer conversion program grant agreement.

Although septic systems handle and manage wastewater effectively, many septic systems in high-density areas often tax the environment, creating problems for surface water and groundwater, which are the City's main source of drinking water. Approximately 990 parcels in the City of Tumwater are currently served by a private septic system along with more systems within the City's urban growth boundary. Converting from septic to sewer is costly at approximately \$10,000. LOTT Clean Water Alliance offers several rebate programs to help reduce costs to homeowners. In 2019, only five homeowners took advantage of the rebate program.

The region hosted several septic summits hosted by LOTT in 2012 and in 2015 to discuss strategies for moving forward to convert more septic systems to sewer.

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Because of the high cost for homeowners to participate, there was a lack of assured participation. Although the City has extended sewer in different areas of the City, homeowners are not required to connect if their respective septic system is working. Many of the rebate programs rely on homeowners voluntarily connecting to City sewer. There was also a lack of a regional strategy with each city pursuing different alternatives dependent upon staffing and funding levels.

The proposed program changes the priority audience by focusing on mobile home communities. Mobile home communities typically entail high-density septic systems with many homes located on smaller parcels. The cost is also generally lower to convert mobile home communities to sewer by extending sewer and connecting up to 20 or more homes rather than extending sewer 20 different times. Mobile home parks are also managed and operated by companies that can help facilitate working with individual homeowners. The proposal also benefits the environment by reducing risks caused by septic systems.

The Velkommen Mobile Home Park (VMHP) approached the City about the possibility of connecting to City water and sewer. Staff is moving forward with a case study on an approach for connecting the community to City sewer service. The community is located off Littlerock Road and Israel Road near the south end of Tumwater. The community is owned and operated by 70th Avenue LLC. Staff is meeting next week with representatives of the company to kick off the project. The project is comprised of 39 septic systems that would be converted to sewer. The homes recently connected to City water service. Staff applied for a grant last year from the Department of Ecology to help fund the project. The City received a grant of \$500,000, which requires a 25% match from the City's sewer utility. The goal is to create a blueprint for other jurisdictions demonstrating the best way to work with mobile home communities to convert from septic to sewer. The process will include interviews with homeowners and company representatives, local permitting agencies, and LOTT to develop a better understanding of the process to connect a larger community to City sewer service. The VMHP will serve as the example in the study to assist in creating the blueprint and to pursue the mechanics of the conversion project. The grant is effective from December 2022 through November 2025.

Staff requests the Public Works Committee recommend the City Council approve and authorize the Mayor to sign the Septic to Sewer Conversion Program Grant Agreement. Ms. Greer invited questions from members.

Councilmember Schneider inquired about the impact to each mobile home if the underlying land is not owned by the homeowner. Ms. Greer said staff is exploring options as the funding provides the financial resources to convert from septic to sewer. Following conversion, the mobile home community would be responsible for paying for a monthly rate for sewer. The parties are exploring potential ways for cost sharing and how to fund the conversion programs. The blue print will explore the financial aspect of conversion to ensure the retention of affordable

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housing. The benefit of the pilot project is the grant received from the Department of Ecology to help offset many of the costs for homeowners and the company. As staff explores potential expansion of the program, a funding strategy will need to be identified to ensure the process is feasible and equitable for homeowners.

Chair Swarthout asked whether the grant would cover construction costs for conversions. Ms. Greer advised that the grant would cover approximately 15% of developing the blueprint, conducting interviews, with the remaining amount to fund connection fees and design work.

Chair Swarthout asked whether the costs allocated to property owners would be identified as part of the study. Ms. Greer said that the intent is distributing the majority of the costs through property owners and the Department of Ecology grant. The increased costs experienced by homeowners will be the monthly utility billing for connecting to City sewer. Staff is working through the process to determine the extent of the impact and the level of rates that would be charged. Interviews with property owners will help identify their financial situations and ways the City can assist to help offset costs. Maintenance of septic systems is typically incurred once every three to five years. Overall, the cost of connecting to sewer would be approximately the same but would entail a monthly rate rather than a larger one-time charge every five years.

Director Smith added that staff is exploring the costs and ways to distribute the costs fairly for the mobile home community. The study will explore incentives the City could offer in coordination with the state to convert other mobile home parks in the future. The underlying property owner is interested in connecting to sewer, as well as working with staff to evaluate the costs. The relationship was prompted as a component of the park converting to water service while recognizing the higher cost of conversion to sewer. With the award of the grant, the City was able to work with the company to identify some of the obstacles and ways to overcome them through incentive programs.

Councilmember Schneider asked whether the close proximity of mobile homes would result in less cost to convert to sewer. Ms. Greer affirmed that the cost to convert would be less costly, which is why the City is exploring conversion options for mobile home parks as the average cost per conversion is much lower.

Director Smith clarified that the financial information included in the agenda packet pertained only to the proposed project.

MOTION:

Councilmember Schneider moved, seconded by Councilmember Althaus, to recommend the City Council approve and authorize the Mayor to sign the Septic to Sewer Conversion Program Grant Agreement. A voice vote approved the motion unanimously.

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ADJOURNMENT: **With there being no further business, Chair Swarthout adjourned the meeting at 8:29 a.m.**

Prepared by Valerie Gow, Recording Secretary/President
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