

**TUMWATER CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION  
MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING  
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**CONVENE:** 6:00 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Mayor Debbie Sullivan and Councilmembers Peter Agabi, Michael Althaus, Joan Cathey, Leatta Dahlhoff, Angela Jefferson, Eileen Swarthout, and Kelly Von Holtz.

Staff: City Administrator Lisa Parks, City Attorney Karen Kirkpatrick, Finance Department Director Troy Niemeyer, Parks and Recreation Department Director Chuck Denney, IT Department Director Lance Inman, Water Resources and Sustainability Department Director Dan Smith, Communications Manager Jason Wettstein, Recreation Manager Todd Anderson, Facilities Manager Chris Graham, Water Resources Specialist Grant Gilmore, Recreation Marketing Specialist Marisa Worden, Administrative Assistant Stephanie Klein, and Department Assistant II Amanda McMenamy.

Others: Keith Hayes, BRS Architecture; Cory Wilkerson, BRS Architecture; and Scott Caron, Ballard King & Associates.

**REGIONAL  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
EDUCATION  
PROGRAM (REEP)  
ANNUAL  
REPORTING & 2025  
WORK PLAN FOR  
EDUCATION &  
OUTREACH AND  
HABITAT  
RESTORATION:**

Director Smith reported the briefing by Specialist Gilmore highlights the importance of the Regional Environmental Education Program (REEP) partnership over the last 35 years with the cities of Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater, and Thurston County enabling the operations of Stream Team and other environmental projects, stormwater, and water quality improvements. The partnership enables consistent messaging throughout the region irrespective of jurisdictional boundaries.

Specialist Gilmore briefed the Council on the annual reporting and 2025 work plan for education and outreach and the habitat restoration program for 2024. Within the Water Resources and Sustainability Department, staff focuses on City focused initiatives and regional programming and partnerships. A major component of the work plan is in support of City and regional efforts. Much of the work is in response to the requirements of the City's stormwater permit, the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase 2 stormwater permit for meeting Clean Water Act provisions. Efforts also include drinking water initiatives related to the work plan through conservation efforts. Staff also assists in education and training for operations and maintenance staff on the intricacies of stormwater infrastructure and the regulatory framework.

Staff also works with the Community Development Department to assist in updates for codes and regulations, as well as with the Transportation and Engineering Department to address stormwater design issues and assist in environmental permitting. In conjunction with the Parks and Recreation Department, staff assesses facilities and supports restoration efforts. Other efforts include outreach both internally and to the community. A quarterly water newsletter is published as well as content added to monthly utility

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customer bills. The business outreach program offers stormwater training and assistance to the business community to include homeowner associations and other organizations. As a member of the WRIA 13 Lead Entity (a regional watershed management initiative responsible for allocating salmon funding), the City is able to remain informed on efforts occurring in the upper reaches of the watershed down to Budd Inlet. The City has a close connection to Career Pathways with K-12 and higher education to build on relationships with the Tumwater School District and South Puget Sound Community College.

The regional environmental education partnership is often tied to Stream Team branding, a brand in existence for 35 years. Stream Team recently celebrated its 35<sup>th</sup> year anniversary with many volunteers participating in the festivities.

The Regional Environmental Education Partnership is based on an interagency agreement between Tumwater, Olympia, Lacey, and Thurston County. The partnership structure is unique and one of the only stream teams across the state that has such a unique relationship resulting in a highly effective model for completing work regionally. Many of the initiatives are in response to the NPDES Phase 2 requirements.

The City benefits from the collaborative efforts in numerous ways. As a group, members bring a unique set of talents, experience, and education with focus on environmental sciences and education. Members explore ways to innovate programs, share resources, and increase capacity.

Specialist Gilmore shared information on the education and background of each lead member of REEP.

One large initiative moving forward is expanding partnerships with state agencies and tribes and attracting more participation at events hosted by the partnership. During 2025, staff anticipates a larger expansion of relationships.

The annual work plans are driven by demand. Because of the effectiveness of REEP, members are working on ways to expand participation as most events include a waitlist. The implementation timeline supports annual goals and multi-year goals. Programs are designed as a phased approach building on previous year accomplishments. Many programs are legacy programs with the baseline content remaining constant regardless of changing science or changing communities. Programs continue to improve and are more refined especially when considering available technology. A major component of all efforts is the commitment to collaboration. Programs are designed for sustainability to accommodate shifts in partnership responsibilities, e.g. turnover within stream team leads.

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In response to a question as to how sustainability is factored within the work, Specialist Gilmore responded that sustainability is in many forms within programming to include a sustainability component to ensure the work established and created can be passed on to future and incoming leads and others assisting in the delivery. Sustainability initiatives apply to creating a healthy environment for community members and all creatures inhabiting the region, as well as improving water quality.

Councilmember Cathey inquired as to how climate change is factored within sustainability efforts. Specialist Gilmore replied that all work pursued for programs and hands-on science experiences include climate change elements. Because of the close collaboration with scientists across the region as well as with engineers, the partnership has a good understanding of climate change models that are used for planning and design methodologies. That knowledge is conveyed within the programs that are offered. Climate change impacts are being experienced now with changes in storm events and more frequent events.

Specialist Gilmore noted that information included in all publications informs residents within the region about Stream Team as a regional effort coordinated by local jurisdictions.

Members are working on relationships with businesses during 2025. A major component of the NPDES storm permit is ensuring businesses have the necessary tools to train staff and comply with Clean Water Act regulations. REEP ensures that the business community has the tools it needs to be successful. Thurston County serves as the platform to enable access to business community members for participation in online training. Of focus during 2025 is the promotion of online training programs to local communities with custom content included to highlight Tumwater's needs.

Over the last several years, members intensified quantitative and qualitative analytics on programs, outreach efforts, and innovative technology-driven components to ensure the effective delivery of services and programs. Those efforts are ongoing through surveys using SurveyMonkey, Constant Contact, and Survey 123. Online analytics are generated through the website. An equity component is included. An example is increasing accessibility to those who live in the rural areas of the county because many lack the opportunity to travel to some events. The program is now bringing some events to those communities, as well as training opportunities by offering training via online platforms. Additionally, relationship building with local school districts includes staff working with the Tumwater School District to provide online training to classrooms. Some of the positive outcomes is much more participation by younger demographics, which had been challenging in the past.

Some of the analytics include the Stream Team website's Service Event

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Management System, a tracking program of volunteer sign-ups, registrations, training sign-ups, and completion of trainings. Online platforms enable tracking the effectiveness of the various programs. Participation rates have increased since 2023 especially with students because of working with the schools and teachers to reach out to students. Many of the students are also engaging their parents resulting in a substantial increase in participation rates within the communities. The partnership plans to produce an annual report for release to the public.

Specialist Gilmore said he has been interacting with the school district since he joined the City. Several programs have been developed, such as Forest and Stream Ecology and Water Resource Management. He has engaged with students from grades 9 through 12 on a more content-based and advanced level. Throughout the process, it has become apparent that students are absorbing the information. At the end of the programs, students present results to community members and community organizations on what they have learned.

Last year, Stream Team events totaled 99 in-person opportunities within the South Sound region with 32 of the events sponsored in Tumwater. Some of the events included restoration events, hands-on science experiences, *Dog Days* at Pioneer Park, *Tumwater Falls Festival*, and a partnership event with *Return of the Chinook Celebration and Latinx Community Day* in September at Brewery Park at Tumwater Falls. Ongoing efforts include Sapp Road Park restoration, a second Saturday restoration event that has transitioned to one of the premier restoration events in the region. The event continually has a waitlist for participation. The Tumwater Valley Golf Course hosts the First Green event for middle school students with the event more environmentally focused. The event is a national program and has received national recognition. Close collaboration continues with Tumwater School District student-teacher opportunities through CTE Programs with Tumwater the only jurisdiction in the state sponsoring two CTE programs focused on Water Resource Management piloted in summer 2024 and the Forest & Stream Ecology Program. CTE programs are priority programs for school districts.

In Tumwater, 355 people participated in events and programs contributing 2,057 hours of volunteer time. The goal is to ensure South Sound residents have access, as well as increasing the rate of participation by rural Thurston County residents. The regional cohort is successful as it is recognized that Thurston County is one of the fastest growing counties in the state. Events occurring upstream affect everyone downstream in Thurston County. The successes in the urban areas should be mirrored in the rural communities recognizing the different culture and approach. It is important to work together to ensure water flowing downstream into the Thurston County community is clean. Participation has increased during specific months with programs and events increased during the months of June, July, August, September, October, November, December, and January. Activity level at the

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beginning of this year versus last year includes full capacity at two events in January.

During 2025 and beyond, REEP goals focus on building capacity and accessibility through technology and stronger partnerships. Those partnerships extend into interdepartmental partnerships to take advantage of talent available within the City. The department will continue to assist other departments within the City to achieve goals and the requirements of the NPDES Stormwater Permit. Efforts are moving toward a career pathways component for careers in local government and general sciences at-large. A new initiative is creating an internship program for juniors and seniors in high school as well as students enrolled in college.

Specialist Gilmore addressed questions on examples of accessibility for people of different languages. Materials from the program have been translated to Spanish with translated materials last year including Nature Sleuth materials (online scavenger hunt), salmon lifecycle documents, and stormwater best practices for construction. The team is exploring expanding translations of all program documentation for other languages. Most of the program documentation is written for ages beginning at middle school. The most effective route for involving youth from all minorities is through the schools.

Specialist Gilmore described how his work and academic experience is benefitting efforts to develop the framework for an internship program. The new initiative has been initiated at South Puget Sound Community College to develop internship opportunities. Internship opportunities offer the ability of students entering the workforce after graduation. It is important for the program to offer opportunities to people of all ages and of different educational backgrounds, as well as creating pathways to education that might not create financial burdens for students. All regional partners are interested in the program. Tumwater is leading efforts and building partnerships that will be modeled by other jurisdictions in the future. Some internship opportunities within the Water Resources and Sustainability Department include watershed management with a focus on water supply demands, water use demand, and water quality in different geographic areas. Internships will be structured to include accreditation with some paid positions offered. Regional funding mechanisms will determine the structure of internship programs. The City is currently providing some internship opportunities as each position requires oversight, coordination with staff members, and development of standard operating procedures for identification of tasks for each position, hours, and outcomes based on educational requirements. Efforts continue to ensure cohesiveness between the opportunities and educational curriculum requirements students must meet. Later in the month, he is scheduled to meet with the Tumwater School District and South Puget Sound Community College officials to present the internship opportunities available through REEP.

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Specialist Gilmore encouraged the Council sign up to receive Stream Team newsletters. The newsletters have been submitted for industry awards. REEP is exploring publishing a professional scientific journal on stormwater pollution prevention. All articles are authored by members of REEP with content prepared by the Leads. Options are being explored to accept guest articles. A new release is the *One Water* website newsletter featuring information on initiatives to prevent stormwater pollution the City is required to achieve each year.

Specialist Gilmore shared several images of events hosted last year.

Councilmember Cathey asked about any interaction with local land trusts. Specialist Gilmore advised that the Capitol Land Trust, Nisqually Land Trust, and the Thurston Conservation District are members of the WRIA 13 Lead Entity Regional Group. Restoration work completed by local land trusts create amphibian habitat and restore shorelines, uplands, and wetlands. Partnerships within the region enable community members to have the opportunity to engage with those organizations. REEP has contracted with the Thurston Conservation District under South Sound Green to assist in a middle school and high school educational delivery system and training offered by the Pacific Shellfish Institute. The network of regional science-based communities meet regularly to discuss ways to communicate projects and opportunities to the public.

Specialist Gilmore concluded his presentation by acknowledging the teamwork and support each staff member of the Water Resources & Sustainability Department provide mutually under the leadership of Director Smith.

**COMMUNITY  
CENTER DESIGN  
UPDATE:**

Director Denney reported the update is on the status of the Community Center Design Study, a goal articulated in the Parks and Recreation Open Space Plan in the 1990s, carried through to 2017, and culminating in a community survey that identified a community center as a need for the community. Voters approved adding a community center as a project in the 2018 ballot measure creating the Tumwater Metropolitan Park District. The City contracted with Barker Rinker Seacat Architecture (BRS) from Denver, Colorado to conduct a community design process for the facility.

The design process includes an Executive Committee comprised of Parks and Recreation Department staff members working with the consultants to schedule meetings and prioritize issues. A Steering Committee guides the process. Members include Councilmember Cathey, three Parks and Recreation Commissioners, a representative from the Tumwater School District, community members at-large, a representative from Tumwater Senior Center, a representative from youth sports in Tumwater, and a representative from the YMCA. Three community workshops have been

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hosted to brief the community on progress and receive feedback on community needs. A successful community survey was also completed.

Director Denney introduced members of the project design team: Keith Hayes, Principal-in-Charge, BRS; Cory Wilkerson, Project Manager, BRS; Echo Ma, Designer, BRS; Bob Droll, President, RWD Landscape Architects; Phil Vandevanter, Landscape Project Manager, RWD Landscape Architects; Scott Caron, Recreation Planning Consultant, Ballard King & Associates; and Martyn Blundall, Cost Estimating Principal, Blundall Associates.

Mr. Wilkerson briefed the Council on the status of the project. The review covered the project history and timeline, images of national trends for community centers, public survey results, three program options, site development concepts, and the preliminary project budgets for each program. The final report is scheduled for delivery to the City on April 25, 2025.

Mr. Wilkerson shared numerous images of national trends for different programming elements within a community center. Images included social spaces/activity hubs, classrooms, kitchens (catering, demonstration), open spaces, seating options, childcare space, indoor play areas, exercise/fitness spaces, and leisure pools and fitness pools.

Mr. Wilkerson responded to questions about whether the trends are reflective of the size of the community. During the first public workshop, the community shared expectations and needs for a community center. The feedback aligned with the results of the survey. Any center space can be adjusted in size to fit the specific needs of the community.

Mr. Caron shared the results of the online community survey conducted in December 2024. The response goal of 500 was achieved with 741 participants completing the survey. A majority of the responses were Tumwater residents who have resided in the City an average of 16 years. Distribution of ages was similar to the community as a whole. Approximately 38.5% of the responses indicated they participate in current programs or events. The typical response across the country is 37%. Most of the participants participated in special events and sports. The top answers for unmet space needs included:

- Indoor Track
- Fitness Spaces
- Maker Spaces (meeting rooms for programs/activities)
- Group Fitness
- Multi Use Courts

Responses to highest priorities included:

- Indoor Walking Space

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- Sports Courts
- Fitness
- Child Watch
- Group Exercise

Responses to programs and activities participants would like included:

- Indoor Track
- Exercise Classes
- Arts & Crafts
- Swim Lessons
- Court Sports

Responses to highest priority program or activity included:

- Exercise Classes
- Court Sports
- Senior Programs
- Indoor Walking
- Arts & Crafts

Most of the participants (71%) indicated they were willing to travel between five and fourteen minutes to a community center. Preferences for payment of services included monthly individual memberships and multi-use passes. A majority of the respondents expressed interest in paying less than \$7 a day with some willing to pay up to \$10 a day. For a monthly rate, most of the respondents were willing to pay less than \$40. Approximately 50% of the participants agreed the cost of services should be covered by fees and charges with the remaining participants preferring subsidization of costs through taxes or other sources.

Top priorities within a community center include:

- Court Spaces
- Exercise/Fitness Components
- Walking/Jogging
- Group Activities/Program
- Drop-in Play

Participants preferred the option of a family membership with fees at a price point allowing for greater use.

Councilmember Althauser questioned the pricing structure with respect to enabling the community to have access to the community center without participating in any specific program or activity. Mr. Caron responded that across the nation facilities are often designed with community spaces that do not require fees for access or utilization. Centers can be designed to



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accommodate the needs of the community. Program pricing schemes can include scholarships for programs/activities or a reduction in overall fees dependent upon the sense of the community in terms of cost recovery for operations.

Mr. Wilkerson reviewed three program options based on workshops with the Executive Committee, Steering Committee, and the public. The three program elements required programs, community programs, and recreation/fitness programs at three different cost estimates based on square footage and number of programs. The large, medium, and small programs offer total square footage of approximately 115,000, 74,000, and 74,000 respectively with each program offering different types of spaces and programs/activities.

Mr. Wilkerson reviewed the large, medium, and small program preliminary design concepts for three sites located at the Olympia Airport site, Brewery property, and the former Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) site. Typical community center sites require a minimum of eight to ten acres to support the facility and parking. He described the benefits of each site in terms of costs for existing and required infrastructure, frontage improvements, mitigation and demolition costs, flood protection measures, existing transit service, and access to the site for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Of the three sites, the WSDOT site is the top choice followed by the airport site and then the brewery site.

Mr. Wilkerson described costs for the building program based on public input received during the workshops. For the large program, the cost is estimated to be approximately \$66.5 million to include soft costs (design fees, permit fees, contingency, and furniture and equipment) with escalation factored two to three years in the future. Washington State sales tax is currently at 9.7% for first quarter 2025. Hard construction costs are estimated to be \$46.5 million with soft costs and sales tax adding an additional \$18 million for a preliminary cost of \$66.3 million excluding any land acquisition or leasing costs.

The renovation option for the brewery site reduces the cost to approximately \$52 million but it does not account for land acquisition or leasing costs, site access, or any flood mitigation necessary for the site. The medium program is estimated at \$45 million with construction costs of \$31.5 million. The small program is estimated at less than \$24.7 million.

Mr. Wilkerson advised that the figures are estimates by other partners the design team works with throughout the country. The rates are from other construction companies that are tailored to the areas based on variables, such as renovation or new construction. The estimates are backed from both research and actual costs for projects completed. The figures are updated annually.

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Next steps include a virtual committee workshop with the Executive Committee and Steering Committee on February 28, 2025, an in-person committee workshop on April 8, 2025, and a Council presentation on April 8, 2025 to review the selected site, program, and a third party cost estimate. Mr. Wilkerson invited the Council to submit any questions to Director Denney.

**MAYOR/CITY  
ADMINISTRATOR'S  
REPORT:**

City Administrator Parks reminded the Council of efforts by staff to track information from the federal government particularly regarding grants the City has or is anticipating to receive to identify any potential implications should funding not be received.

Mayor Sullivan reported on her attendance to the recent Mayor's Forum. Many legislative requests are anticipated with recognition of the current state budget and unknowns associated with actions by the federal government.

Councilmember Cathey said she recently learned that every two years, local cities are eligible to compete for membership on the Board of Health. The City of Olympia has initiated efforts for membership in 2025 with the City of Tumwater eligible to compete for a position in 2027.

Mayor Sullivan said staff would research the opportunity and follow up with the Council.

**ADJOURNMENT: With there being no further business, Mayor Sullivan adjourned the meeting at 8:16 p.m.**

Prepared by Valerie L. Gow, Recording Secretary/President  
Puget Sound Meeting Services, [psmsoly@earthlink.net](mailto:psmsoly@earthlink.net)