



CITY OF KIRKLAND
Department of Public Works
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MEMORANDUM

To: Kurt Triplett, City Manager
From: Pam Bissonnette, Interim Public Works Director
Date: July 29, 2013
Subject: King County Water Quality Assessment
Related to Combined Sewer Overflows (CSO)

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the City Council:

- Review an Interest Statement on the King County CSO program and its Water Quality Assessment; and
- Adopt a resolution authorizing the Council's representative to the Sound Cities Association (SCA) Public Issues Committee (PIC) to present Kirkland's Interest Statement and recommendation at its meeting on August 14, 2013.

Background Discussion:

On July 23, 2013 the Public Works, Parks, and Human Services Council Committee received a presentation on the King County proposed Water Quality Assessment related to the Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) program currently under consideration by Sound Cities Association (SCA). The Interest Statement contains the substance of the presentation and recommendation. SCA will consider its position on the Water Quality Assessment at its Public Issues Committee (PIC) meeting on August 14, 2013.

While the SCA PIC is taking a position on the Water Quality Assessment, the more significant issue is the CSO program itself, estimated at \$711 million in 2010 dollars and is closer to \$1 billion today. Kirkland pays King County Wastewater fees of about \$7.2 million/year. While it is not possible to determine the impact of raising \$1 billion regionally on Kirkland rates, it would be significant. If the Water Quality Assessment, costing around \$3 million - \$5 million, can provide information that could better direct these investments for the highest priority water quality problems, it would be money well spent. It has been determined by the Puget Sound Partnership that stormwater is the highest priority water quality problem for Puget Sound and its watersheds. The estimated \$1 billion could correct significant problems in King County's largest watersheds, i.e. the Green River Watershed, the Cedar River Watershed (Kirkland's watershed) and the south branch of the Snohomish Watershed.

Attachment A: Resolution

Attachment B: Interest Statement

RESOLUTION R-4991

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF KIRKLAND ADOPTING AN INTEREST STATEMENT ON THE KING COUNTY WATER QUALITY ASSESSMENT FOR TRANSMITTAL TO THE SOUND CITIES ASSOCIATION.

WHEREAS, King County has a long-term plan to control overflows from its combined sewer systems, approved in 1999 and amended by the King County Council in 2012; and

WHEREAS, in 2013, King County entered a consent decree with the U.S Department of Justice, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington Department of Ecology that outlines the planned actions to resolve alleged violations of the federal Clean Water Act arising from uncontrolled overflows; and

WHEREAS, through the plan and consent decree, King County has proposed a Water Quality Assessment with a commitment to limit combined sewer overflows to one per year at each outfall by 2030; and

WHEREAS, King County has estimated that the cost of the proposed Combined Sewer Overflow program to ratepayers in the King County Wastewater service area will be over \$700 million in 2010 dollars which is likely closer to \$1 billion in today's dollars, despite the fact that scientific studies have shown additional CSO projects will provide no significant improvement in water quality; and

WHEREAS, if the Water Quality Assessment, which may cost several million dollars, can provide information that could better direct the investments required under the consent decree for the highest priority water quality problems, it would be money well spent; and

WHEREAS, the proposed Water Quality Assessment needs to be paired with a cost-benefit analysis to determine whether a more integrated approach with greater stormwater control and treatment would be the best investment to achieve water quality standards by 2030;

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the City Council of the City of Kirkland as follows:

Section 1. The City Council adopts the attached Interest Statement, which is incorporated by reference, recommending that the proposed King County Water Quality Assessment be paired with a cost-benefit analysis to provide data and analyses on the best investment of \$700 million to \$1 billion to achieve acceptable water quality standards by 2030.

Section 2. The City Council authorizes the Council's representative to the Sound Cities Association Public Issues Committee

to present Kirkland's Interest Statement and recommendation at its meeting on August 14, 2003.

Section 3. The City Manager is directed to transmit a copy of this Resolution to the Sound Cities Association.

Passed by majority vote of the Kirkland City Council in open meeting this ___ day of _____, 2013.

Signed in authentication thereof this ___ day of _____, 2013.

MAYOR

Attest:

City Clerk

CITY OF KIRKLAND
KING COUNTY WATER QUALITY ASSESSMENT INTEREST STATEMENT
RE: Combined Sewer Overflows (CSO)
August 6, 2013

King County has proposed a Water Quality Assessment related to its Combined Sewer Overflow [CSO] program and its associated Consent Decree requiring all CSOs to comply with the state standard of no more than one overflow per CSO per year by 2030. The CSO program is stated to be over \$700 million in 2010 dollars, and closer to \$1 billion in today's dollars. This is important to Sound Cities Association (SCA) because these high costs will be borne by all wastewater ratepayers in the King County Wastewater service area even though CSOs only exist in about 40% of Seattle. Combined sewers exist in the oldest part of Seattle, and also in portions of cities such as Tacoma, Everett, Bremerton, and a few others in Washington that date back to early development. Combined sewer overflows are essentially 99% stormwater. The overflow occurs when the pipes and pumps are unable to handle the large combined volume of stormwater within which a very small amount of sanitary wastewater is mixed. These large volumes also impact the wastewater treatment plant. The West Point Sewage Treatment Plant accepts the combined stormwater and wastewater from the City of Seattle.

As a region we all benefit from good water quality; however, prior scientific studies starting in 1998 have shown that the water quality benefits of King County's CSO program are negligible. King County already complies with the Federal CSO standard of 4 overflows per CSO per year.

The Puget Sound Partnership, tasked with the cleanup of Puget Sound and its watersheds, has prioritized stormwater in their Action Agenda as the most significant contributor to poor water quality resulting in water quality standards not being met. Yet funding for stormwater control and treatment is far short of the need. CSO reduction does result in a small amount of stormwater being treated, but at very high cost. The contrast of the need for stormwater controls and treatment compared to the investment in CSO reduction calls for a thorough analysis to determine the best investment to achieve water quality standards in Puget Sound and its watersheds within King County. To do that, the proposed Water Quality Assessment needs to be paired with a cost-benefit analysis.

If such studies demonstrate that a more integrated approach to achieve water quality standards results in less CSO investment and more stormwater investment, the Consent Decree could be renegotiated allowing resources to be directed to where they will provide the greatest environmental benefit. Another possible avenue for shifting funding to the highest priority could include recognizing King County Wastewater's integrated and comprehensive role in water pollution abatement as envisioned by its original state authorization statute. A third approach could include avoiding high wastewater rates for the proposed CSO program with increases in stormwater rates to raise funding for high priority stormwater treatment as an alternative.

Investigating funding methods and providing options could be a part of the cost-benefit analysis study.

It is recommended that the proposed King County Water Quality Assessment be paired with a cost-benefit analysis to provide data and analyses on the best investments of \$700 million to \$1 billion to achieve acceptable water quality standards by 2030.