



Legislative Department Seattle City Council Memorandum

Date: January 5, 2011
To: Seattle Public Utilities and Neighborhoods (SPUN) Committee
From: Meg Moorehead, Council Central Staff
Subject: **SPUN Committee 2010 Year in Review**

2010 was another busy year for the SPUN Committee. The Committee's work plan covers Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) water, drainage, wastewater and solid waste services as well as City neighborhood planning and programs. In 2010, the Committee reviewed 24 pieces of legislation and provided oversight for the SPU and Department of Neighborhoods work plans. Highlights of the Committee's 2010 work include:

UTILITIES

Low-Income Rate Relief. The Committee continued its long-standing interest in affordable rates by requesting a 2011 review of City practices for enrolling customers for discounted low-income utility rates. The review will recommend ways to streamline enrollment practices so that more households receive the City's 50% low-income rate reduction.

Solid Waste Rates and Services. The SPUN Committee reviewed proposed 2011-2012 rates for garbage, recycling and compostable waste services. Committee review resulted in new multi-family compostable waste services and cost reductions of up to \$2.2 million per year compared to SPU's original rate proposal.

Drainage and Wastewater Rates and Services. The Council reviewed proposed 2011-2012 drainage and wastewater (also called sewer) rates. The new rates will fund expanded pollution control to comply with the federal Clean Water Act (CWA), increases in King County rates for treating City sewage, and other services.

Side Sewer Code Update. A side sewer is the privately maintained pipe that carries sewage and roof runoff from a building to City-owned lines. The Committee approved an update of City regulations the ordinance governing construction and use of side sewer pipes, including new limits on the discharge of fats and grease into the City's sewage system. The update reduces costs for maintaining the City system, reduces pollution, and contributes to CWA compliance.

Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) CWA Compliance. The federal CWA strictly limits uncontrolled discharges from the City's combined sewer system into local waterbodies. In 2010, the Committee continued its oversight of CSO construction projects and operational changes designed to comply with the CWA and reduce pollution in local waters.

Major Infrastructure Improvements.

- **Reservoir Covering.** The Committee oversaw efforts to improve security and create public park space by covering in-City drinking water reservoirs. The Beacon and Myrtle reservoir projects were substantially completed in 2010. The construction at the West Seattle and Maple Leaf reservoirs will be the focus for 2011 and 2012.
- **Madison Valley Flood Reduction.** Progress was made to solve long-standing stormwater flooding and sewer back-up problems in the Madison Valley neighborhood. In 2010, work was underway to divert some stormwater from the valley to a future storage facility in Washington Park.

Progress Toward Zero Waste. The Council took several steps to implement its zero-waste strategy for reducing garbage that must be landfilled, including:

- **Yellow pages opt-out.** The Council adopted a first-of-its-kind City-sponsored list for Seattleites to opt-out of receiving yellow pages telephone books. An advance recovery fee also was adopted to pay for recycling of yellow pages delivered in the city.
- **Recyclable and compostable food service ware.** Starting in mid-2010, all one-time-use food service ware made available by restaurants is required to be compostable or recyclable. An ordinance to aid implementation of that requirement, including requiring restaurants to provide space for recycling and compostable waste containers, was adopted in early 2010.
- **Mandatory multi-family compostable waste service.** To divert more food waste from the landfill, the Council added mandatory compostable waste service for multi-family residents during its approval of the 2011-2012 rates and budget.
- **Every-other-week garbage pilot project.** In 2013, City solid waste collection contracts allow Seattle to save money and promote recycling by shifting to every-other-week garbage collection. The Council approved a 2011-2012 pilot project to test this service change prior to the 2013 contract deadline.
- **Community waste reduction grants.** During its 2011-2012 rate and budget approval, the Council restored funding for community waste reduction grants to previous levels. The grants fund activities such as enhanced recycling in schools.

Graffiti Reduction. To address concerns about the effect of graffiti on more serious crimes, the Council requested a 2010 City Auditor evaluation of Seattle's graffiti control efforts. Many of the Auditor's recommendations, including staffing for parking pay station graffiti control, were funded in the Council-approved 2011-2012 budget.

NEIGHBORHOODS

Othello, North Beacon and North Rainier Neighborhood Plan Updates. The Committee took key steps toward updating the Othello, North Beacon and North Rainier neighborhood plans, and approved a plan for implementing early actions consistent with proposed neighborhood plan policies.

Rainier Beach and Broadview/Bitterlake/Haller Lake Neighborhood Plan Updates.

The Rainier Beach and Broadview/Bitterlake/Haller Lake neighborhoods were selected for the next round of neighborhood plan updates. The Council also endorsed creation of Neighborhood Advisory Committees to improve neighborhood stewardship during those updates.

Neighborhood Matching Fund (NMF). The Council approved over \$1.24 million in NMF grants to community organizations for projects as diverse as the renovation of historic cottages, playground improvements and youth arts education.

District Council Audit. The Committee reviewed the Department of Neighborhoods (DON) response to a 2009 City Auditor report on neighborhood District Councils, and endorsed a visioning process for the future of the District Council system.

Re-envisioning Neighborhood Outreach and Engagement. During the 2011 budget process, the Council provided sufficient funding for ten District Coordinator positions and called for a re-envisioning and restructuring of the DON outreach functions in order to maintain the City's long-standing commitment to civic engagement.