

Port: Bids came in higher than initial projections

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In a former storage lot leased from the Department of State Lands at the foot of Pier 3, the Port's general contractor Conway Construction has built 2 acres of settling ponds, ringed by gravel access roads. The ponds are meant to settle out small solids in the stormwater, which is then pumped past gabion cages filled with oyster shells meant to leach out metals and into a field of bioswales vegetated with estuarine plants to leach out more toxins. The treated water is then released into the Columbia at the end of Pier 3.

But instead of a lush wetland environment the system is supposed to resemble, the Port's bioswales appear more like battered and barren tundra, dotted by pools of standing rainwater.

McGrath said contractors digging out the ponds and bioswales had to go slow to avoid hitting a system of pipes hidden under Pier 3, which used to host a large warehouse. The hydroseeding, meant to be finished by the end of summer, was then pushed back into the rainy season.

McGrath said the Port, ready to flip the switch on the stormwater system in December and later in February, then faced the unforeseen issue of having to reroute fish waste from Bornstein Seafoods, which is disposed of under a different permit, to a separate pipe.



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

Heavy rains have prevented the Port of Astoria's bioswales from filling in with vegetation.

In one of the coldest, rainiest winters in the past couple of decades, the hydroseeding didn't take, and the plants never grew. McGrath said the ground compacted over time. What was supposed to be a porous bioswale leaching out harmful substances as water seeped through the dirt to drains below turned into a bowl. Meanwhile, an outer berm meant to contain water in the bioswale continually washed away.

"The whole thing needs to be chewed up," McGrath said of the bioswale.

The Port's contractor will wait for better weather this spring to finish the bioswale, tilling, reseeding and rebuilding the outer berm.

Escalating costs

The project, originally estimated to cost \$1.5 million, was nearing \$2.25 million as of the end of January.

The Port's Financial Man-

ager Will Isom said bids came in higher than the Port's initial projections. The agency eventually took out a \$1.75 million loan from Key Bank to cover most of the project.

Isom said the Port's plan is to fund the project through the Key Bank loan and an account where the Port has been required to set aside 10 percent of its log ship revenues in since 2010 for the improvement of Pier 3 into a shipping terminal. The account had nearly \$1.2 million as of the end of January. Isom said the Port received permission from the state, which required the account, to dip in for the stormwater project.

The Port has planned to split the cost of building the stormwater treatment system with tenants, based on how much land they lease in the areas serviced. But Knight said he wants to make sure the system is up and running before trying to ask tenants to

help pay.

Knight said he is also waiting to see how much the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which could reimburse the Port for storm damage from December 2015, will pay the agency to tie Pier 2 into the stormwater system. Commissioners had expressed concerns that seafood processors on Pier 2 should help pay for the stormwater treatment system, which is intended to eventually treat water from the entire central waterfront.

When will it be done?

The Department of Environmental Quality wanted the stormwater system operational by July 2016 but has held off on any enforcement as the Port tries to finish the project.

"We're in constant contact with DEQ on every step of this construction," Knight said. "We call them every time there is a delay."

Kujala: 'You guys are in good hands with this City Commission'

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energy project collapsed last year when investors pulled out, Kujala declared that Warrenton is still "open for business."

The large turnout at Tuesday's meeting included his wife, Alana, and their nearly 2-year-old daughter, Karlie; his mother, Judy, father, Norman, and sister, Marie.

'Dutiful servant'

Kujala's fellow commissioners, City Manager Linda Engbretson and City Recorder Dawne Shaw told him that his absence at the dais will be felt. Newton and Commissioner Pam Ackley said that Warrenton's next mayor has "big shoes to fill."

Balensifer — who, on behalf of the city, gave Kujala a plaque "in recognition and appreciation" — credited the outgoing mayor with getting him involved in city government.

Commissioner Tom Dyer said Kujala "has been a dutiful servant for the people of Warrenton, and he'll be missed tremendously."

Dyer, who retired last year from the Oregon State Police, cautioned Kujala that leaving the commission will be "kind of like retirement: You're going to have withdrawals, but you'll make it through."

Engbretson, who was the city recorder when Kujala joined the commission, told him, "You've represented the city well, and I know you will continue to do so. I will miss you, and I hope you will continue to take my calls."

Kujala assured Warrenton residents: "You guys are in good hands with this City Commission."

Turning to city staff and department heads, he said, "Thank goodness that you

guys have decided public service is the way you want to devote your time. It's a blessing — it really is."

'I did want the job'

Kujala recounted several poignant moments from his tenure on the commission, from his first LNG-related public meeting — which, he said, "was really the eye-opener for me about how important of a role it was, to be on the City Commission" — to the day Pacific Coast Seafood CEO Frank Dulcich told him, as they stood over the remains of the seafood plant after it burned down in 2013, that the company would rebuild, a promise it is now fulfilling.

One of Kujala's favorite moments, he said, was when he ventured out into the rain in 2014 seeking votes for the upcoming election, and residents observed that he must really want the job to be campaigning in such weather.

"I did want the job," he said, "and I have enjoyed it. I wouldn't trade it for anything."

In other business:

- The City Commission agreed to issue a request for proposal to obtain city attorney services. Warrenton has been relying on contracted counsel since City Attorney Hal Snow died in December.

- The commission approved Kennedy/Jenks Consultants' proposal for engineering services to conduct an infiltration and inflow study of the city's sewer and stormwater systems.

- The Warrenton Business Association presented Jon D. Bletscher, owner of North Coast Dental Clinic, with this year's Community Pride Award.

Transit: 'We have to agree on the projects we're funding'

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The projects would be financed with a new vehicle excise tax of 1 percent and a 9-cent increase in the fuels tax and \$15 hike in registration fees over a 10-year period, only in the Portland metro area.

The state would contribute about \$598.7 million to the projects, while local jurisdictions would pitch in \$525 million.

"In the work group we

talked about this local match being akin to skin in the game, and then we talked about going Dutch," Shaw said. "I think this idea of doing this together means that we also have to govern this together. If we really are going to go Dutch, then we have to agree on the restaurant. We have to agree on the projects we're funding."

The congestion projects are only one component of a transportation package. Earlier this month, another work group

recommended an increase of \$255.6 million to \$312.4 million in annual spending to maintain roads and bridges.

That would require raising revenues equivalent to a 9- to 11-cent increase in the state's 30-cent gas tax. The money would likely come from a combination of sources, which could include a hike in the fuels tax, registration fees, tolling or other options.

Another recommendation would levy a \$0.0001 statewide

payroll tax to pay for transit projects and a \$1 per ton aggregate tax on concrete to pay for multimodal transportation, such as air and water.

State Sen. Brian Boquist, R-Dallas, who led the congestion work group, said the recommendations are only a starting point for negotiations that will continue over the next several weeks.

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