

Joint release

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COWLITZ COUNTY PUD BEACON HILL SEWER DISTRICT

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PUD APPROVES STUDY TO CONSIDER TRANSFER OF WATER SYSTEM TO BEACON HILL SEWER DISTRICT

Longview, WA — Cowlitz PUD's Board of Commissioners has approved a staff recommendation calling for the PUD to hire a consultant, and jointly participate with Beacon Hill Sewer District (BHSD) to evaluate transferring the PUD's water system to BHSD.

Cowlitz PUD provides water service to about 3,800 customers in the outlying areas north and east of Longview and Kelso, including Columbia Heights, Beacon Hill, Lexington, Sunset Terrace, Cedar Gates, Ostrander and Cowlitz Gardens.

BHSD is the sewer service provider for 2,900 customers, all who have PUD water service, including Lexington, Beacon Hill and parts of the Columbia Heights area.

"Our Board thinks it makes good business sense to at least evaluate transferring our water service to a fellow public entity, like Beacon Hill, whose core business is water through pipes. With 47,000 electric customers, our core business is power and that's where our main focus has been and will continue to be," PUD General Manager Brian Skeahan said.

Cowlitz PUD and Beacon Hill Sewer District staff members have participated in several brainstorming sessions to discuss what a transfer of the PUD water service to BHSD would look like — from a full transfer of ownership to something more like a contractual operation, maintenance and management-type of relationship.

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“Our Board has discussed the potential transfer of the PUD water system to Beacon Hill Sewer District and agrees that the next step is to have an expert evaluation done by a neutral, third party,” BHSD General Manger Kim Adamson said. “We are looking forward to seeing the results of the study.”

The PUD has hired Kennedy Jenks, a full-service, multidiscipline engineering and environmental sciences consulting firm, to perform the evaluation. The cost of the study is \$42,000.

“Kennedy Jenks recently completed the area’s Comprehensive Water Plan, so they are very familiar with local water issues,” Skeahan said.

Cowlitz PUD and BHSD sent a letter to customers last week, informing them of the potential of a water system transfer. “Both boards agree that we want our customers well informed and to know that they have the opportunity to comment on this. If it looks like this could move forward, we envision holding joint public hearings as well,” Adamson said.

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