

City of SeaTac
Special Council Study Session Minutes Synopsis
Virtual Meeting

July 13, 2021
5:00 PM

Virtual Meeting

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Erin Sitterley called the SeaTac Special City Council Study Session to order at 5:00 p.m.

COUNCIL PRESENT (remotely): Mayor Erin Sitterley, Deputy Mayor (DM) Peter Kwon, Councilmembers (CM) Senayet Negusse, Stanley Tombs, Clyde Hill, Takele Gobena, and Pam Fernald.

STAFF PRESENT (remotely): City Manager Carl Cole, City Attorney Mary Mirante Bartolo, City Clerk Kristina Gregg, Information Systems (IS) Manager Bart Perman, Deputy City Manager (DCM) Gwen Voelpel, Government Relations & Communications Manager Kyle Moore

AGENDA REVIEW:

- A. Virtual Meeting: live streamed on SeaTV Government Access Comcast Channel 21 and the City's website; conference line to listen to the meeting at 206.973.4555.
- B. Public comment opportunities to commenters who signed-up or provided written comments prior to 2 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

AGENDA BILLS:

Agenda Bill #5760; A Motion authorizing the City Manager to enter into a contract with Gordon Thomas Honeywell (GTH) for Federal Lobbying.

Summary: The City of SeaTac currently employs GTH as its state lobbyist, and has enjoyed a successful track record of advocating for City issues at the state level. The City is considering adding a federal lobbyist team from GTH to enhance SeaTac's ability to secure federal dollars to assist local residents and to give SeaTac a greater voice on federal issues involving aviation, infrastructure, housing, parks, and mass transit.

A lobbyist firm would give SeaTac a more strategic approach to lobbying Congress on issues that directly affect residents. This issue is important because federal earmarks are back after being absent for more than a decade. Federal earmarks allow congressional members to direct more than 10 billion dollars in federal funds annually to projects in their district. With the return of earmarks, the City does not have a strong presence to advocate for funding to be directed to help SeaTac residents. In addition, the City has a multitude of federal issues with an international airport, a federal detention center, a federally funded light rail expansion through the City, and four federally funded highways either touching or near the City.

In addition to federal earmarks, there are billions of dollars of federal grants available to local governments every year. The City does apply for some of these grants; however, there is federal money left on the table because either the City is unaware of the grants or it does not have the capacity to track down all grants.

The City employed a federal lobbyist, Strategies 360, from 2008 to 2010. The contract ended when the City was cutting costs during an economic downturn.

As a region, the airport cities have partnered with the Port of Seattle (POS) to lobby on behalf of the SEA Stakeholder Round Table (StART) Federal Policy group agenda. StART is composed of members from the Port, airlines, and the Highline Forum-cities of SeaTac, Burien, Des Moines, Normandy Park, Tukwila, and Federal Way. StART is a forum for information-sharing, discussing Highline Forum-member cities' concerns, and providing feedback to the Port for issues related to the airport.

While the neighboring cities of Burien, Federal Way, Tukwila, Renton, and Auburn (as well as King County (KC) and the POS) hire federal lobbyists to represent their interests, SeaTac does not have its own voice on federal issues. A federal lobbyist would benefit the City as follows:

- Ensuring SeaTac's voice is heard on policy issues in Washington, D.C., and making certain the City's unique perspective and needs are understood by our congressional delegation, and by federal agencies;

AGENDA BILLS (continued):

Agenda Bill #5760 (continued):

- Securing federal funding for important SeaTac infrastructure and transportation projects. As an example, Burien recently requested \$5 million for the SR-518/Des Moines Memorial Drive (DMMD) Westbound On-Ramp Project, and the project made the 2021 Infrastructure Project list for the State’s 7th Congressional District. Only 10 state projects made the list; and
- Providing “belt and suspenders” coverage of major policy issues that affect SeaTac. With in-house staff covering local, regional, and state government issues, and with lobbying representation dedicated to Olympia, it makes sense to round out coverage by having a lobbyist cover federal policy issues that pose challenges and offer opportunities to the city.

Unlike the state legislature, the federal government would require a year-round lobbying effort. Much like the state legislative agenda, the federal agenda would be developed by Council through a public process.

The yearly contract would be for \$72,500. It would be funded through the General Fund and would require a budget amendment.

This item was discussed at the June 10 Administration & Finance (A&F) Committee meeting and was recommended for discussion at the July 13 Council Study Session (CSS) by the full council.

Government Relations & Communications Manager Moore introduced GTH Vice President Briahna Murray and Managing Partner Dale Learn. They reviewed the agenda bill summary.

Council discussion ensued regarding the proposed contract and federal legislative agenda.

Council consensus: Refer to the July 27 or August 10, 2021 RCM Consent Agenda depending on the budget amendment

EXECUTIVE SESSION: None

ADJOURNED:

MAYOR SITTERLEY ADJOURNED THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE SEATAC CITY COUNCIL AT 5:46 P.M.