



Legislation Text

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File #: 2007-0213, Version: 2

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Clerk 4/4/2007

A MOTION providing for a study of the potential for directing wastewater generated by the marine cruise ships which visit local port facilities into the county's wastewater management and disposal system.

WHEREAS, on February 16, 2007, the Port of Seattle Commission approved development of Pier 91 in North Elliott Bay as a cruise ship terminal , and

WHEREAS, the marine cruise ship industry makes over one hundred fifty vessel visits annually at Port of Seattle facilities, and services more than a half million passengers annually, and

WHEREAS, a three-thousand-passenger cruise ship can generate two hundred ten thousand gallons of sewage, one million gallons of "greywater" and thirty-seven thousand gallons of bilge water each week, according to the Pew Ocean Commission's report, America's Living Oceans, and

WHEREAS, pursuant to a 2004 memorandum of understanding between the cruise ship industry, the Port of Seattle and the state Department of Ecology, the parties agreed to prohibit the discharge of cruise ship-generated untreated wastewater in Washington waters, further agreeing that wastewater discharge would be allowed only by vessels equipped with "advanced wastewater treatment systems," and

WHEREAS, that 2004 memorandum of understanding utilizes self reporting of noncompliance to the Department of Ecology, and

WHEREAS, while the marine cruise ship industry is subject to international conventions, United States Coast Guard regulations and Washington state requirements, the federal Clean Water Act provides an exemption for these vessels from the act's point source discharge permitting system, and

WHEREAS, current regulations permit a vessel equipped with approved "advanced waste treatment" facilities, to discharge treated wastewater solids a minimum of twelve miles from land, at a speed of at least six knots, and

WHEREAS, the Port of Seattle Commission passed a motion on February 16, 2007, directing Port Commission staff "to prepare a budget and work program to evaluate the feasibility, environmental impact, cost/benefit and possible funding sources of building additional infrastructure to support the cruise ship industry in Seattle, including proposals to facilitate off-loading of biosolids and hazardous waste," and

WHEREAS, Puget Sound is the jewel of regional natural and environmental resources, providing a home for an extensive range of marine life, including Puget Sound Orcas and Chinook salmon, both identified as threatened or endangered species through the federal Endangered Species Act, as well as supporting important recreational, aquaculture, fishing and boating activities, all dependent upon the unimpaired condition of the sound's waters, and

WHEREAS, ratepayers of the region have invested in a full-service, region-wide wastewater discharge management system, involving the capture and processing of wastewater generated from human activity throughout the region, and

WHEREAS, this system may have the capacity to receive and process waste generated by the growing marine cruise ship industry calling at Port of Seattle facilities, and

WHEREAS, the diversion of these cruise ship wastes through the regional wastewater management system can avoid the disposal of processed solids from these vessels at sea, and

WHEREAS, the Pew Report, America's Living Oceans, calls for regulation of wastewater discharges from cruise ships through the establishment of uniform minimum standards for discharges in state waters;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

A. That the King County executive, through the wastewater treatment division of the department of natural resources and parks, work cooperatively with the Port of Seattle and other affected agencies to

undertake a study of the potential for processing marine cruise industry-generated wastewater through the county's wastewater treatment system;

B. That the study should include at least the following elements:

1. Impacts to the environment that can be avoided through the diversion, of waste from cruise ships through the county's wastewater management system;

2. The capacity of the county's wastewater treatment system to receive and process the volumes of waste generated by the marine cruise ships which visit local port facilities, now and in the future;

3. A summary of piping, coupling and other mechanisms needed to channel waste from visiting cruise ships to the county's wastewater management system;

4. Any displaced future opportunity for wastewater processing capacity utilization by resident users of the wastewater management system;

5. Costs for the waste diversion, and any appropriate financial arrangements to address costs;

6. Economic or other impacts to the cruise ship industry; and

7. A recommendation regarding any appropriate council action; and

C. That the executive report the results of the study to the council's growth management and natural resources committee by July 31, 2007; and that thirteen copies of the study and recommendations be filed with the clerk of the council for distribution to

all councilmembers and to and lead staff of the growth management and natural resources committee by July 31, 2007.