



COMMISSION
AGENDA MEMORANDUM

Item No. 6j

ACTION ITEM

Date of Meeting August 11, 2020

DATE: July 16, 2020

TO: Stephen P. Metruck, Executive Director

FROM: Sandy Kilroy, Director, Maritime Environment & Sustainability
Jon Sloan, Sr. Manager, Environmental Programs
Alex Adams, Sr. Environmental Program Manager

SUBJECT: Interlocal Agreement with University of Washington, Sea Grant, Hershman Fellowship Program

Amount of this request: N/A

Total estimated project cost: \$58,000

ACTION REQUESTED

Authorization for Executive Director to sign an Interlocal Agreement (ILA) with University of Washington's Sea Grant program, substantially in the form attached, with minor changes to be approved by legal counsel. The ILA will allow the Port to host two (2) 12-month Hershman Fellowship positions.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Washington Sea Grant, based out of the University of Washington (UW), was established to help people understand and address the challenges facing Washington's oceans and coasts. Sea Grant funds research, fosters education, and supports several graduate fellowship programs. The Hershman Fellowship program is for soon-to-graduate or recently finished graduate students who are engaged in ocean and coastal policy issues. The purpose is to develop marine and natural resource policies related to Port operations and/or management of Port properties and share the Fellows' expertise with a host agency. The Port applied to the program in February 2020 and was accepted to host two (2) fellows starting on September 16, 2020. In exchange for the services of the fellows, the Port will provide \$58,000 to the Sea Grant program (\$29,000 per fellowship). Sea Grant will provide the balance of the funding. Funding is already authorized in the annual expense budget for the Environment and Sustainability Center of Expertise. The Fellows will be employees of the UW, which will pay their salaries and benefits, but the Fellows will be hosted by the Port and embedded within Maritime Environment and Sustainability (ME&S) and the Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (OEDI).

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JUSTIFICATION

The Port of Seattle’s ME&S and OEDI departments routinely work to address complex environmental and social equity matters critical to the port, the maritime industry, and important for improving conditions in near-port communities. This work creates opportunities to engage young people through internships and/or fellowships to participate, providing value-added services to the Port while also furthering career-development and educational objectives. The Washington Sea Grant Hershman Fellowship program provides 12-months of employment for highly competent recent post-grads with interest in our work, at very low cost. In exchange, the Port will receive the benefit of their experience and assistance with developing policies related to operation of its seaports, including energy, habitat restoration, climate resiliency, and community engagement.

Diversity in Contracting

The Port participated in interviews of seven (7) fellowship candidates through a “matching” process managed by the University of Washington. The interviews included questions about the candidates’ views on diversity, equity and inclusion. During the selection process candidates ultimately matched to the Port expressed a passion for environmental justice and examining the disparities within historically under-represented groups. The Office of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion’s framework commits to making the Port of Seattle a leader in regional efforts to achieve equity and social justice. The vision is to develop a Port that mirrors the diversity of our community and instills principles of equity in all programs and services. Our selection and successful match of two candidates reflected the importance of their responses to these questions.

DETAILS

The Maritime Environment and Sustainability (ME&S) Department applied to be a host agency to the Hershman Fellowship program in February 2020 and were accepted. The Sea Grant Fellows will be assigned to assist with the following focus areas in ME&S and OEDI:

- (1) **Climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience.** Evaluate policy and program options related to Port operations to respond to sea level rise, coastal nearshore marine water acidification, greenhouse gas reduction/sequestration, and energy planning.
- (2) **Habitat restoration and blue carbon.** Identify opportunities for marine area habitat restoration and blue carbon enhancement/sequestration, including new approaches for active management of shoreline and upland natural areas on Port property.
- (3) **Environmental outreach, engagement and stewardship.** Work with ME&S and OEDI to prepare environmental curriculum materials for use with staff, interns, students, business partners, and citizen groups to carry out existing Port commitments on Port property and/or related to Port operations.
- (4) **Environmental and societal data analysis.** Help improve the Equity Index by finding and identifying key data sets within the Port of Seattle to use incorporate into the index.

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The above work is critical to achieving the Port’s environmental and social equity goals related to operation of its seaport facilities. Additional staffing support provided by the Hershman Fellows will help the Port make progress on these goals and will also help fill staffing shortfalls that have resulted from the COVID-19 crisis. At the same time, the work will provide an outstanding experience for the Fellows that will help prepare them for careers in the maritime and/or environmental industry.

Schedule

Fellowship positions are scheduled to begin on September 16, 2020 and will run for 12 months. The interlocal agreement must be finalized with the University of Washington prior to September 16, 2020.

ALTERNATIVES AND IMPLICATIONS CONSIDERED

Alternative 1. Engage graduate or undergraduate interns to participate in the work.

Cost Implications: Cost would be higher at ~\$40k per position for 12 months of full-time work.

Pros:

- (1) Expand a robust internship program (though it is either paused or greatly reduced at present due to COVID-19).
- (2) Introduces maritime environmental issues to students earlier in their education and helps develop a pipeline for workforce development.

Cons:

- (1) Interns are typically less experienced and have not completed their degrees.
- (2) Interns are generally limited to a 3-month period.
- (3) Cost per position is higher.

This is not the recommended alternative.

Alternative 2. Engage full-time staff to undertake the work.

Cost Implications: Cost would be substantially higher at \$175k per position.

Pros:

- (1) Hiring full-time employees is an investment which develops long-term internal competency and provides the Port with more consistency over time.

Cons:

- (1) Hiring freeze makes it difficult to bring on FTE’s without special approval.
- (2) Cost of a full-time employee is substantially higher.

This is not the recommended alternative.

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Alternative 3 – Engage two (2) Washington Sea Grant Hershman Fellows to participate in the work.

Cost Implications: Positions require contribution of \$29k per position to University of Washington.

Pros:

- (1) Port benefits from experience and energy of highly capable post-grads who are eager to engage in maritime environmental issues at a much lower cost than hiring a full-time employee.
- (2) Enables the Port to continue with projects that are on pause due to limitations on hiring during the COVID-19 response.

Cons:

- (1) Because the fellowship is only a short-term (1 year) employment opportunity, the Port can only access the experience of the individual fellows during the one-year period.

This is the recommended alternative.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no funding requested as part of this authorization.

ATTACHMENTS TO THIS REQUEST

- (1) Draft Interlocal Agreement
- (2) Presentation slides