

COVER MEMO

Briefing Date/Time: May 18, 2026

Staff Contact/Title: Mike Reid, Community and Economic Development Director, 360.764.5395, miker@portolympia.com

Subject: Economic Benefit Study – BERK Proposal

Purpose: Information Only Decision Needed

Overview

The purpose of this work session is to brief the Commission on BERK Consulting’s revised Scope of Work for the 2025 Economic Benefit Study and to review the staff recommendation to move forward with contract development.

Presenters will include the following:

- Madalina Calen - Project Manager + Lead Economist, BERK
- Brian Murphy - Principal, BERK
- Dr. Spencer Cohen - Strategic Advisor + Economic Impact Analysis Support, HPS

This item is Advisory; no action is requested today. A contract would return for Commission consideration at a future business meeting.

Background

In October 2025, the Port issued RFP 2025-1047 – 2025 Economic Benefit Study, seeking a consultant to measure the Port’s economic benefits across all business lines, including direct, indirect, induced, and user-based benefits. The RFP outlined required components, submittal requirements, and evaluation criteria such as completeness, depth of methodology, clarity, accuracy, qualifications, and ability to perform the work.

The Port received seven proposals. A review committee consisting of Port staff and members of the Port's Citizen Advisory Committee evaluated all submissions using the RFP criteria and unanimously recommended BERK Consulting as the top proposer.

BERK submitted its proposal on October 31, 2025, detailing team qualifications, past work, and a methodological approach emphasizing transparency, defensible modeling, communication effectiveness, and collaboration.

The Port's 2009, 2014, 2021, Economic Impact Studies were produced by Martin Associates, using a long-established methodology applied across many U.S. ports. Commissioners expressed questions about assumptions regarding job dependence, the handling of indirect/multiplier effects, and broader application of economic benefit studies. To this end staff initiated a series of pre-launch scoping interviews between BERK and the Commissioners to better help frame the project to achieve Commission objectives.

Following these interviews, BERK produced a revised Scope of Work (May 11, 2026) that directly responds to Commission priorities.

At the May 18 work session BERK will review the results of their Commission interviews and discuss the scope of the project.

Documents Attached

- BERK Consulting – Revised Scope of Work
- BERK Consulting – Original Proposal
- Commissioner Interview Summary

Summary and Financial Impact

BERK's revised scope includes:

- Direct, indirect, induced, and fiscal impact modeling
- Transparent explanation of multipliers and job classifications
- Qualitative assessment of community value
- Public engagement components
- A communication plan and presentations for the Commission

The total estimated consultant cost is \$85,355.

Affected Parties

- Port business units (Marine Terminal, Airport, Swantown Marina & Boatworks, Peninsula Properties, Lacey Commerce Business Center)
- Tenants and users of Port facilities
- Thurston County taxpayers and jurisdictions

Environmental Considerations

The May 18 Work Session discussion does not authorize any project, development activity, or physical change to the environment. Therefore, no direct environmental impacts are anticipated from this agenda item.

Next Steps/Timeframe

Possible Commission action on this item at the May 26, 2026, Commission meeting.