

COVER MEMO

Briefing Date/Time: June 15, 2026

Staff Contact/Title: Alex Smith, Executive Director, 360.528.8001,
alexs@portolympia.com

Subject: Budget as a Communication Tool

Purpose: Information Only Decision Needed

Overview

The purpose of this work session item is to look at examples of budget documents other ports have used to communicate about their budgets with the public. The goal of the conversation is to identify examples that the Port of Olympia can use to improve how we communicate with the public about our finances and budget.

Background

The Port of Olympia budget, while complying with State Auditor's Office accounting requirements, does not explain or provide context for the numbers in the budget. Accordingly, members of the public have had questions about issues like:

- (a) The profitability of our business units;
- (b) Whether tax levy proceeds subsidize Port any business lines;
- (c) How bond debt payments are allocated;
- (d) How costs associated with the Port's being a special purpose government are tracked and allocated; and
- (e) Whether we are building a reserve for asset maintenance and replacement.

We looked for budget documents from other ports to see how they address these issues in their budget documents. We looked first at ports of

a similar size and that have similar business lines. We also included budget documents from larger ports that have a reputation for highly effective communications. The following budgets were reviewed:

- [Port of Anacortes](#)
- [Port of Everett](#)
- [Port of Port Townsend](#)
- [Port of Port Angeles](#)
- [Port of Vancouver](#)

Summary and Financial Impact

There will be staff resources needed to develop and produce a Port of Olympia budget document that provides financial information and context that more clearly communicated the Port's finances.

Affected Parties

- Port of Olympia finance and communications staff
- Thurston County residents

Environmental Considerations

This June 15th 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

Staff will incorporate the ideas generated from this discussion into a draft budget document for Commission review and feedback.