

COVER MEMO

Briefing Date/Time:	February 23, 2026
Staff Contact/Title:	Mike Reid, Director of Community and Economic Development, miker@portolympia.com
Subject:	FIFA Fan Zone Briefing and Memorandum of Understanding
Purpose:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information Only <input type="checkbox"/> Decision Needed

Overview

Port staff has invited Jennie Foglia-Jones of JFJ Strategies, on behalf of the Thurston County Chamber of Commerce, to provide a briefing to the Commission regarding a proposed regional partnership to host an official FIFA World Cup 2026 Fan Zone on Port-owned property located on the Port Peninsula (NorthPoint site).

The Fan Zone is being planned through a multi-jurisdictional partnership that includes Thurston County, the Cities of Olympia, Lacey, and Tumwater, the Thurston County Chamber of Commerce, and the Port of Olympia. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is being developed outlining roles, responsibilities, and financial coordination among participating agencies for planning and implementation of the Olympia–Lacey Fan Zone.

Fan Zones are designated public gathering areas intended to provide community access to FIFA World Cup matches through large-scale live broadcasts, local vendor participation, cultural programming, and family-oriented activities during the tournament period of June–July 2026.

It is anticipated that an action item for the approval of the Memorandum of Understanding would come before the Commission at the March 9, 2026 meeting.

Background

Washington State has been selected as a host region for the FIFA World Cup 2026, with tournament matches scheduled to occur in Seattle. The Seattle FIFA World Cup 26 Local Organizing Committee has designated nine official Fan Zone

communities across Washington State to provide public viewing opportunities and associated programming in support of the tournament.

Thurston County has been selected as one of these communities. Regional partners have identified the Port Peninsula lower lot and adjacent facilities as the preferred location for the Olympia–Lacey Fan Zone due to site capacity, proximity to downtown amenities, and multimodal access.

Under the draft partnership framework, the Thurston County Chamber of Commerce will serve as the lead entity responsible for event planning, sponsorship coordination, vendor procurement, and implementation in accordance with FIFA and SeattleFWC26 Fan Zone requirements.

Attendance is currently anticipated to average approximately 2,500 to 5,000 participants per activation day depending on match schedules and available funding.

Documents Attached

N/A

Summary and Financial Impact

The Interlocal MOU anticipates participation by the Port of Olympia in support of Fan Zone planning and operations, including:

- Provision of the Port Peninsula site and associated facilities
- Hosting of the Incident Command Center (ICC) within Port conference room facilities
- Participation in safety, sustainability, communications, and economic development workgroups
- Coordination related to tenant access, site readiness, and event operations
- Provision or augmentation of temporary infrastructure including power and Wi-Fi

In addition, the Port is anticipated to serve as the contracting entity for approximately **\$175,500 in Lodging Tax Advisory Committee (LTAC) funding** contributed by the City of Lacey, City of Tumwater, and Thurston County to support Fan Zone planning and implementation.

Under the proposed framework:

- The Port would enter into a Professional Services Agreement with the Thurston County Chamber of Commerce for event planning and management services; and
- Participating jurisdictions would reimburse the Port following completion of the event for approved LTAC expenditures. Interlocal Agreements may be necessary to memorialize this arrangement.

At this time, no additional financial commitment beyond the proposed LTAC contracting role is anticipated unless authorized by the Commission at a future meeting.

Affected Parties

- MOU members:
 - Thurston County
 - Cities of Olympia, Lacey, and Tumwater
 - Thurston County Chamber of Commerce
- Experience Olympia & Beyond
- Intercity Transit
- Olympia Downtown Alliance
- Waterfront tenants and businesses
- Event vendors and sponsors
- General public

Options with Pros and Cons

Option 1: Participate in the Regional Fan Zone Partnership and support the Memorandum of Understanding

Pros:

- Activates Port-owned waterfront property during a globally recognized event
- Supports regional tourism and visitor-serving businesses
- Advances Destination Waterfront placemaking objectives
- Enables coordinated multi-agency safety planning through ICC hosted at the Port
- Leverages LTAC funding to support waterfront activation

Cons:

- Temporary operational impacts to Peninsula site access
- Staff coordination and operational readiness requirements
- Administrative responsibilities associated with LTAC contracting

Option 2: Decline Participation

Pros:

- Avoids potential staff and site readiness commitments
- Avoids administrative contracting responsibilities

Cons:

- Missed opportunity for regional tourism and economic activation
- Reduced participation in state-recognized Fan Zone programming
- Limited ability to showcase Port waterfront assets during a globally significant event

Environmental Considerations

Event planning and implementation will be required to comply with all applicable local, state, and federal permitting and environmental requirements. Temporary infrastructure and operational activities will be subject to site restoration and waste management protocols as outlined in the draft partnership framework.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommend continued participation in regional planning efforts and returning to the Commission with a proposed Interlocal Agreement and Professional Services Agreement for formal consideration at a future meeting.

Commission Recommendation

Advisory Only at this time

Next Steps/Timeframe

- March 9 – Action on Memorandum of Understanding

Conclusion

Staff will continue coordination with regional partners regarding the proposed Olympia–Lacey FIFA World Cup 2026 Fan Zone and will return to the Commission with proposed agreements for formal approval as planning advances.