

# Portland Utility Board Annual Report and Work Plan

## Executive Summary

The Portland Utility Board (PUB or Board) is a community-based advisory body tasked with advising City Council and bureau leadership on operational, budgetary and policy matters related to the two utility bureaus, the Bureau of Environmental Services (BES) and the Portland Water Bureau (PWB).

In Fiscal Year 2023-24, the PUB attempted to effectively engage in and respond to the City's organizational structure changes impacting the utilities, while also maintaining a focus on major Capital projects, evolving economic issues and response to the climate crisis. The Board prioritized engagement and recommendations on the Natural Resources Service Delivery Assessment, the BES Rate Study; the financial assistance program's Smart Discount Pilot; and large capital projects including the Bull Run Filtration Projects. The Board appreciated a visit to the Tyron Creek Treatment Plant early in the year as a valuable look into the bureau's work and better understanding of future development challenges and planning.

For FY 2024-25 the Board will continue to use the frames of racial equity; the climate crisis and climate justice; innovation and efficiency; and inter-agency and cross-sector collaboration to guide its work. In consideration of the challenges facing utilities, the Board is elevating the focus on sustainability of infrastructure and watershed health while applying lenses to identify how decisions may impact affordability and equitable distribution of public health benefits and service provisions. In addition to continuing policy and project work, the Board is eager to more effectively engage in City organizational structure changes related to the utilities. The Board is confident that with earlier and authentic engagement, their expertise and volunteer time could be more effectively utilized to inform equitable solutions to the many issues facing clean drinking water, sanitation, stormwater management services, and watershed health.

## Introduction

The Portland Utility Board (PUB) began its service to the City on September 1, 2015. It was formed to advise City leadership on establishment of fair and equitable rates, balancing customer needs with legal mandates, environmental protection and the long-term stability of the utilities. The Board provides budgetary and policy oversight of Portland's utility bureaus – the Bureau of Environmental Services (BES) and the Portland Water Bureau (PWB) centering a core belief that every person is entitled to clean and affordable drinking water, healthy communities, and healthy watersheds. Throughout the year there were many opportunities for the PUB to give recommendations and feedback to Council and bureau leadership with a goal to inform decision-making and actions taken. Although the Board has worked effectively with Bureau leadership to maximize their timely engagement and impact, in FY 2023-24 these efforts were overridden with decisions from Council that did not provide adequate time for the

bureaus to engage PUB effectively with authentic collaboration on structural reorganization and related decisions.

## Issues Considered

Over recent years, the Board has increasingly focused on issues of racial equity, inclusion, and social justice; the difficult work of balancing rates and affordability with the need to maintain and update infrastructure to improve resilience; and the policy and programmatic decisions that inform and respond to budget pressures. The Board believes these are the areas where the input of a community-based advising body can be most impactful. Table 1 lists the key issues the PUB focused on during FY 2023-2024. Other topics not listed were also considered and discussed.

**Table 1: Key Issues the PUB Considered in FY 2023-2024**

Topic	Budget	Policy
BES Rate Study and Implementation		X
Budget Development, Monitoring and Recommendations	X	X
Bull Run Filtration Project	X	X
Board Values and Anti-Racist Principles		X
City Transition – Charter Reorganization and Structure	X	X
Climate Action and Adaptation Strategies, Green Infrastructure, Eco roofs	X	X
Columbia Slough Agreement	X	X
Financial Assistance Programs, Billing, and Debt Recovery; Smart Discount Pilot	X	X
Natural Resources Service Delivery Assessment	X	X
Permitting and Development Citywide	X	
Resilience and Emergency Planning – PWB Fire Response	X	X
Tryon Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant (TCWTP)	X	X
PUB Recruitment		X
Workforce Culture and Professional Development - Hiring, Retention, and Promotion of staff (focus on BIPOC)		X

*Note: The check marks are meant to indicate areas emphasized. For most topics both budgetary and policy ramifications were considered. Equity is a lens applied to every topic.*

## Accomplishments and Impact

The Board’s accomplishments reflect its continued focus on equity, inclusion, and upstream policy work. In alphabetic order, highlights of the Board’s accomplishments include:

- **BES Rate Study Engagement** – The PUB has continued to engage with BES regarding the Rate Study, providing support for the study recommendations and engaging on implementation in the coming year. **City Response:** BES received the PUB’s feedback

and support and is continuing to work with the Board regarding implementation. The Board anticipates further engagement in Fall 2024.

- **Billing, Debt Recovery, and Financial Assistance** — Building on the groundwork of previous fiscal years, the PUB continued to engage with the bureaus regarding billing, debt recovery practices, and the financial assistance programs, encouraging policies and practices that center the needs of those most impacted by structural inequities. The Board has engaged with PWB regarding the Smart Discount Pilot and is interested in the results of the pilot and to engage on next steps. The Board continues to advocate for further enhancements to improve the reach of assistance to renters that cannot access the programs as well as exploration of alternative funding sources and models for providing basic water, sewer, and stormwater services. **City Response:** The bureaus have accepted the PUB’s prior recommendations and continues to engage with the Board on these topics, maintaining funding necessary for the Regulated Assistance to Multi-Family Properties (RAMP) and other financial assistance programs. The City has expanded support for customers facing financial hardships with automatic reductions through the Smart Discount Pilot and is engaging with PUB on the program and results in 2024.



Figure 1- Woman looking at a lot of bills to pay, stock image from theadvisermagazine

- **Budget Analysis and Recommendations** - The PUB coordinated with bureau leadership to provide value-based input earlier in the budget process for consideration during bureaus’ budget development. The PUB provided this earlier input in November 2023, an early recommendation letter with the bureaus’ Requested Budgets, testimony to Council at the Public Works budget work session regarding the Board’s identified budget priorities and concerns, a final budget recommendation letter, and testimony at budget and rate hearings (see Appendix B for the letters or [view online](#)). **City Response:** The utility bureaus received the PUB’s values, considering and responding to them in their

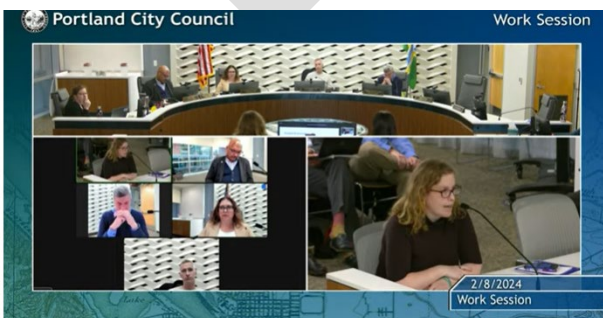


Figure 2 - Chair Robin Castro’s testimony before Council

budget development and proposed cuts. City Council accepted the PUB’s testimony and budget letters and identified areas where they sought further PUB engagement (on Natural Resources work and identification of potential budget process improvements). The City transition, speed of decision making in some

areas, and late budget instructions to bureaus made it challenging to engage in ways that demonstrate impact on decisions by Council. Bureau leadership and the Board continue to work on potential improvements in process so that the Board input is timely, relevant and impactful. However, the Board remains concerned that the issues are carrying forward into the current year and hampering ability to engage as proactively as planned.

- **City Organizational Structure Changes, Natural Resources Service Delivery Assessment and One Water** – Recognizing the City’s need for significant decisions and reorganization to respond to local governance changes, the Board has been eager to engage in decision-making that relates to and impacts the utility bureaus and their services. The PUB provided feedback to Council on the decisions related to restructuring generally and was particularly interested in engaging with the Natural Resources Service Delivery (NRSD) assessment, supporting creation of a Natural Resources Bureau to elevate the work and confirm integration with existing utility bureaus’ work. The Board is particularly focused on advancing climate action, ensuring regulatory compliance, integrating green infrastructure and the funding strategy for this work. The Board shared concerns regarding removal of natural resource programs and staff from BES and/or PWB and was supportive of establishment of a project team to evaluate natural resources services and develop a work plan defining services and implementing changes. The Board identified three representatives from the Board to engage as PUB liaisons on the project team, dedicating their time and expertise to this priority project. The PUB maintains prior feedback advocating the City provide a clear description their ability to meet and enhance climate action, environmental justice and green infrastructure goals with proposed restructuring. The PUB maintains interest in exploring funding, integration with existing bureaus and impacts on existing staff. The Board provided recommendations, concerns, and requests to engage in letters to Council and engaged in project team meetings when scheduled. Though the project team, work seemed to have stagnated since Spring 2024 the PUB remains poised to engage in next steps. **City Response:** The bureaus and PUB staff have informed the PUB regarding timeline, proposed work plan and other information as it comes available. BES staff engaged PUB representatives in the NRSD project team to incorporate PUB input in developing the work plan. It is unclear how the NRSD work may be impacted by recent announcements of One Water to explore integration of sewer, stormwater and water services. The PUB remains interested in both NRSD and One Water exploration efforts and view them as their highest priorities for engagement in FY 2024-2025. As shared in the prior report, the PUB continues to advocate the City utilize community members and advisory boards like PUB for feedback before decisions are made regarding services that are within their areas of expertise and oversight. Although the bureaus appear to seek feedback and are responsive to requests for PUB engagement, it remains difficult to identify avenues to engage directly in Council decision making early enough to have

impact particularly on fast moving decisions that supersede or make irrelevant other efforts in progress.

- **Process Coordination, Communication, and Mutual Trust Building** – In prior work plans, the Board identified a goal of collaborating with the bureaus to increase transparency in bureau communications with the Board and improve input gathering processes. The Board’s Chair meets with PUB Staff and leadership from the bureaus and Commissioner’s office quarterly to discuss priorities and plan topics of interest to bring to the Board. The PUB has appreciated



*Figure 3-BES staff providing a tour for PUB at Tryon Creek Treatment Plant October 2023.*

opportunities for tours of bureau facilities to understand the issues more directly as well as for relationship building with staff. The Board and bureau leadership have explored process improvements regarding budget engagement, planning for the PUB to provide feedback early enough in the budget development process to be impactful. The Board appreciates opportunities to provide input as issues are emerging and the feedback has potential to impact the program, policy, or decision-points. Improvement in this area remains an area of focus and continued growth, with a goal of ensuring intentional input from the public through bureaus’ community outreach, advising on how to reach community effectively and enhancing responsive public comment. Utilizing PUB representatives to engage in project work collaboratively with staff was identified as a potential tool to maximize opportunities for input where work is under way rather than just informing PUB once the majority of work was completed. This method was used in the Natural Resource Service Delivery Assessment and though impacted by other transition decisions and timelines did have potential to be impactful and productive so this approach will continue to be considered in future project work. It would be helpful for Council to consider the PUB’s processes in developing decision-making and project timelines that are sufficient to incorporate feedback from the public. The Board meets twice a month, requires adequate notice to the public regarding topics discussed, and requires sufficient time to both prepare for discussion as well as compile feedback. When possible, the PUB needs notice at least a month in advance of desired feedback to ensure authentic engagement on topics that would benefit from public input, such as transition related projects and other items within the Board’s purview. It would be helpful for the PUB to understand what Council views as the role of the PUB and Council’s expectations of our function as an oversight body. How does the PUB and advisory boards fit into the City’s decision-making processes? How can the Board have

impact early enough to influence Council decisions? **City Response:** The bureaus have been generally responsive to the Board’s requests, keeping the PUB apprised of and engaged in policy issues prior to Council review and/or implementation such as the Rate Study recommendations and Columbia Slough Agreement in FY 2023-2024. Challenges remain with identifying opportunities for meaningful engagement on large projects where key decisions have been made in prior years or with Council driven projects or decisions (e.g. citywide organizational changes impacting the utilities and One Water exploration). This will continue to be a priority particularly when addressing fiscal challenges and organizational transition.

- **Workforce Culture and Professional Development– Hiring, Retention and Promotion of staff** – In 2022, the Board produced a [report on workplace racial equity issues](#) with a range of recommendations relating to the hiring, retention and promotion of Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) staff. With equity as a central lens in PUB’s work, the PUB does not want to lose sight of this priority area particularly when the bureaus’ are undergoing significant transition that impacts staff. **City Response:** The bureaus provided updated information to the Board in spring 2024 regarding workforce culture and efforts relating to this work. The bureaus and the Board continue to have interest in collaboration and will coordinate regarding updated plans and impacts that may result from transition and budget decisions.

## Fiscal Year 2023-24 Values and Work Plan Frames

***Equity is the primary value and focus for the board*** in considering impacts of the utility bureaus’ budgets, policies, programs and services. Equity must be central in all decision-making. The Board and the bureaus must ensure benefits and burdens are evaluated, intentional and transparent. The Board’s broad set of values are foundational to their oversight; thus, they are filters used to consider the impact these have in any decision, policy issue or budget proposal. For the current year, the PUB has elevated the following values as areas of focus and high priority based on current challenges facing the City, the utilities and the communities they serve:

- Affordability
- Assistance to Low-income residents that are not direct customers (renters)
- Sustainability of Infrastructure
- Protection of Public Health and Watershed Health
- Regulatory Compliance
- Transparency and Inclusive Public Engagement



Figure 4- PUB viewing/walking over aeration basins at Tryon Creek Treatment Plant, October 2023

The following values remain important to the PUB and will also be considered:

- Assistance to Low-income residents
- Efficiency of Operations
- Improvement of Infrastructure
- Long-term value to the residents of the Portland Region
- Service Delivery
- System Resilience and Reliability

The frames the PUB developed in 2021 continue evolve and serve as the key frames in the coming year including racial equity; the climate crisis and the climate justice; innovation and efficiency; and inter-agency and cross-sector collaboration. These frames function as overarching themes the Board applies to all topics and issues it considers. Bureau leadership and City Council can expect them to be reflected in the questions the Board raises during meeting presentations as well as in the policy recommendations and advice the Board provides.

### ***Racial Equity***

The Board will continue to center racial equity in all its decision-making. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities bear an inequitable burden due to the impacts of past and current policies and practices rooted in systemic racism, e.g., policies around urban development or workforce development. For example, a BIPOC low-income family experiences deeper disparities and additional barriers compared to a white low-income family. Moreover, systems of inequities interlock and create increased and unique disadvantages for those with intersectional identities. The PUB will strive to understand and address the impacts of intersectionality as they relate to the work of the Board. For example, the PUB will request disaggregated demographic and geographic data in order to examine service disparities as well as the distribution of benefits and burdens/harms. In developing recommendations, the Board will not only analyze the current distribution of burdens and benefits, but also consider reparative actions that address harm done by inequitable policies, actions, and practices.

### ***The Climate Crisis and Climate Justice***

Earlier and longer wildfire seasons, increased frequency of extreme flooding, extended drought, unseasonable snowstorms, increasing summer heat; we are experiencing the effects of a rapidly changing climate. There are no areas of life that will remain untouched, and the bureaus' work will be central to addressing the impacts of climate change on the community. Although the City has declared a climate emergency and developed an action plan to address issues, the progress is unclear, and the PUB recognizes a risk of distraction from the plan amid significant citywide reorganization and transition. The Board wants to ensure the City maximizes the opportunities during this critical time, remains focused on the climate emergency to move the action plan forward, and engages the PUB in restructuring and decisions related to green infrastructure. With significant reorganization of BES, exploration of One Water, and proposed realignment of Natural Resources services, it is important to engage

the PUB particularly related to climate action, regulatory compliance, integrating green infrastructure, and the funding strategy. It will be important to ensure rates and service delivery charges continue to fund natural resource work appropriately as well as One Water if pursued. Recognizing marginalized communities are disproportionately impacted by climate change while contributing less to it and benefiting less from climate adaptation policies, the Board takes a climate justice approach to addressing the climate crisis. The Board will work to ensure that marginalized communities and communities most impacted have a seat at the table, are included in the decision-making process and that bureau policies equitably distribute the benefits and burdens of climate policy. The Board will encourage the bureaus to amplify efforts to reduce their contributions to climate change, build in resiliency, and implement climate adaptation strategies that address long-standing harms faced by marginalized communities.

### ***Innovation, Effectiveness and Public Transparency***

The Board will ask questions of innovation, effectiveness, and public transparency in analyzing citywide initiatives, bureau policies, operations, and plans. Heightened transparency and effective public engagement are critical during significant City reorganization and transition as well as in exploration and/or implementation of One Water or other realignment initiatives. The PUB advocates for effective engagement of PUB and other relevant advisory boards as important contributors to the conversations and decisions regarding projects that impact or involve bureaus and services under their purview. The Board will look for innovations that result in increased equity, efficiency, cost reductions, effectiveness and improvements in asset management, policy, engineering and design, maintenance, and operational strategies. The Board will pay special attention to ensuring that innovations and efficiencies advance equity and do not happen at the expense of marginalized communities. The Board will pay attention to the processes the bureaus and City Council follow, regarding policy development as well as policy outcomes. The PUB will advocate for maximum public input early in policy decision making processes. The PUB expects the Board, bureaus and City Council to enable robust and informative public comment periods and to pursue opportunities to increase responsiveness to public input.

### ***Inter-Agency and Cross-Sector Collaboration***

Many issues are inter-bureau and inter-agency in nature because they are complex and span the work of multiple organizations, e.g., financial assistance programs aimed at providing relief to those most impacted by Portland's skyrocketing cost of living. The Board recognizes this as an even more significant focus with the impending changes to City organizational structure resulting from recent voter-approved Charter changes. The Board expects to be engaged regarding changes that impact the utilities and related areas. The Board encourages maintaining a focus on affordability, understanding the intersection with bureau operations and other agencies, and ensuring policies to provide services for the community that is most vulnerable. The Board will look for opportunities for collaboration, cooperation, and sharing of



resources such as staff expertise and equipment in ways that advance equity and enhance services.

## Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Work Plan

The PUB prioritizes those issues where there is opportunity to influence City Council and bureau decisions or otherwise impact bureau operations, policies, and budget. Purely informational topics will be secondary in terms of time allotted. The Board’s work plan forecasts where there will likely be active critical decision points; where the Board’s input will be valuable; and policy areas of high interest to the Board. The work plan is also responsive to shifting needs and input from Board members, Council, bureau leadership, and community. As such it is a high-level work plan meant to be revisited and nimbly adjusted as issues emerge. In FY 2024-2025 the One Water Initiative was announced with a very short timeline for exploration. The PUB is eager to engage authentically in the initiative.

**Table 2: Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Work Plan Priorities**

**Bold** indicates a time sensitive/urgent topic, *Italics* indicate a code/bylaw required topic.

High priority items the Board plans for active engagement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Billing, Debt Recovery, Smart Discount and Financial Assistance Programs</li> <li>● <b><i>Budget Development, Monitoring and Trend Analysis</i></b></li> <li>● <b>City Reorganization/Charter Transition – Bureau &amp; Advisory Board Impacts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Engagement with New Leadership</b></li> <li>- <b>Natural Resource Service Delivery</b></li> <li>- <b>One Water Initiative</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Rate Study Implementation (BES)</li> <li>● <b>Sustainability of Infrastructure</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Failing Infrastructure (e.g. pump stations and plants)</b></li> <li>- <b>Construction cost impacts on budget</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>● Watershed Health</li> <li>● Workforce Culture and Professional Development - Hiring, Retention, and Promotion of BIPOC staff</li> </ul>
Bureau projects and programs of high priority to the PUB — Actively engaged with when opportunities for input and impact arise. Otherwise, the Board receives very brief or written updates.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Capital Projects <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) next steps</li> <li>○ Filtration Projects</li> <li>○ Secondary Treatment Expansion Program- (STEP)</li> <li>○ Tryon Creek Facility</li> <li>○ Other large projects with critical decision points</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Climate Action and Adaptation Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Green Infrastructure</li> <li>○ Tree Program (next steps)</li> <li>○ Urban Heat</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Organization &amp; Operations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bureau Strategic Plans</li> <li>○ Bureau equity plan updates</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Portland Harbor Superfund</li> <li>● Resilience and Emergency Planning</li> <li>● Reviewing intersection between Housing and Environmental Protection</li> <li>● Procurement and Contracting – equity emphasis</li> <li>● Urban Flood and Safety District</li> <li>● Wholesale Agreements</li> <li>● Other emerging issues</li> </ul>

- Endangered Species Protection Recovery

**PUB specific work**

- *Annual Report and Work Plan*
- Board Development – onboarding and integration/inclusion of new members
- Board Process and Continuous Improvement
- *Board Recruitment Related Work*
- Equity focused training and engagement – making values active

## PUB Operations

### Member Terms

The Board is composed of eleven voting members who serve three-year terms and three ex officio non-voting members from the bureaus who serve one-year terms. One voting member seat is reserved for an employee of BES or PWB in a represented bargaining unit.

**Table 3: PUB member terms for Board members serving in FY 2023-2024**

	PUB Member	June 30, 2024	June 30, 2025	June 30, 2026
Voting	Alexis Rife		X	
	Bob Sallinger		X	
	Christopher Richard (Labor)		X	
	Heather Day-Melgar		X	
	Julia DeGraw			X
	Karen Williams		X	
	Lorraine Wilson		X	
	Robin Castro			X
	<i>Vacant for 2023-2024 (filled for 2024-25)</i>			
	<i>Vacant for 2023-2024 (filled for 2024-25)</i>			
Ex-Officio	Joanne Johnson		X	
	Joe Spada (reappointed)		X	
	Roslyn Gray		X	

### Recruitment

As stated previously, a recruitment was not held as usual in Spring 2023, so there remained three vacancies in voting member positions throughout FY 2023-2024. The PUB continued to operate with fewer members anticipating more information available regarding City organizational structure and impact on the PUB, operating with 8 voting members. Despite lower membership, the Board was able to achieve full quorum at most meetings. The three vacancies have been filled for FY 2024-2025, returning to full Board membership.

For FY 2023-24 the Board included a reappointment of PWB staff Joe Spada, as well as appointment of two new staff as ex-officio members, Joanne Johnson from PWB and Roslyn Gray from BES. All three ex-officio members have been reappointed for FY 2024-2025 as well.

### **Recruitment Process**

**Voting Seats** – Relatively unique to City advisory bodies, the team tasked with reviewing the recruitment process, applications, and conducting interviews for the community voting seats includes current Board members, utility bureau staff, and a representative from the Commissioner-in-Charge’s office. The goal is to ensure that all partners have a voice in the process and are engaged in the outcomes. The explicit inclusion of Board members helps maintain a level of independence from City Council and City staff. The process from prior year was delayed so recruitment opened in December 2023 and remained open until late January 2024. Recruitment was successful with 11 extremely qualified applicants.

The team utilized a new interview process, conducting group interviews facilitated by PUB staff. This approach successfully addressed prior scheduling challenges for staff and community partners on the panel, allowing review of candidates as individual schedules allowed. It also resulted in a more conversational approach for candidates, intended to reduce pressure for volunteers and leading to dialogues more similar to how the Board operates. The team recommends using this approach again in the future.

The team’s appointment recommendations were passed to the full Board for review and the Board’s subsequent recommendations were sent to the Commissioner-in-Charge and the Mayor for their review and to bring to Council for official appointment.

**Ex officio Seats** — Bureau leadership identify their recommendations for ex officio non-voting member seats based on the Board’s needs, staff availability, and, per code, balancing the one voting represented seat and the three ex officio seats between the bureaus for represented and non-represented employees. Since ex officio members serve one-year terms, this is an annual process.

### **Co-Chair Appointment**

Though Co-Chair terms are typically staggered, the pandemic and ending terms shifted the process and both Co-Chair terms ended on June 30, 2023. Karen Williams and Robin Castro graciously agreed to extend their Co-Chair terms through December 31, 2023 and December 31, 2024 respectively, to provide stability to the Board during transition. The second co-chair seat has remained vacant since December 2023.

### **Member Experience and Interests**

The ordinance governing the PUB identifies a broad range of skills and experiences that serve the Board well, including but not limited to environmental science, financial planning, budget, equity, group process, and capital projects. The Board continues to consider the range of experiences and interests needed for the PUB’s work. Where has dominant culture over-

emphasized one skill set and/or over-looked or not recognized a skill set essential to moving the work of the PUB, the bureaus, and Council forward? How is the nature and scope of the Board's work structured to ensure participation from folks with a wide variety of knowledge, skills, and lived experience? How will the changes to the City organizational structure resulting from Charter changes impact the work of the PUB in the future? The recruitment/interview considered these elements and more in their selection and recommendation process.

### **Member Service**

The Board contributes significant time, expertise, and value in its service to the City.

***PUB Meetings*** — As a public body, the Board's decision-making work is done within a public meeting setting. To accomplish this work, in FY 2023-2024, the PUB held a total of 29 meetings including 23 full Board meetings (two operating as subcommittees due to lack of quorum but still advancing PUB's work), 5 subcommittee meetings and a field trip to a BES facility Tryon Creek. In addition, the Co-Chairs participate in numerous planning and leadership meetings and all Board members spend time outside of meetings preparing for meeting discussions, conducting research, developing communications to Council, and following up on individual lines of inquiry.

***Public Comment*** — The Board's meetings are open to the public and dedicate time during agendas to receive comment from members of the public, both as general comments as well as just prior to any formal Board decisions. In FY 2023-2024, there were 43 members of the public that engaged in the Board's meetings for a total of 60 meeting attendances and 11 public comments submitted formally during meetings and/or in writing. The primary issues raised related to concern regarding the Bull Run Filtration project and increased rates. One public comment shared positive feedback regarding the accessibility of the PUB meetings and encouragement for the difficult conversations observed. In addition to these comments, several members of the public attended meetings as community partners on projects to participate and provide background to the PUB in policy discussions. The Board intends to receive and be responsive to public comment when appropriate, including continued improvement in this area in the work plan.

***Administrative Review Committee Hearings*** — Administrative Review Committee (ARC) hearings are opportunities for utility bureau customers to request a review of whether bureau administrative rules were applied to their situation appropriately and fairly. In FY 2023-2024 PUB members participated in 5 ARC hearings for a total of approximately 15 hours, not counting preparation time and document review. This donated time and expertise contributes to the City's work as the participating PUB member is the only non-bureau staff on the review committees. Because PUB members have a community perspective and are also familiar with the bureaus' constraints, they are uniquely positioned to ensure equitable outcomes in ARC proceedings, to see opportunities for ARC process improvement, and to make connections to larger policy issues. Past PUB ARC participants have identified the need for an in-depth equity

analysis of the ARC process, e.g., demographic trends in who is accessing ARC and in ARC decisions, equity of long-term outcomes, and clearer understanding of the purpose and goals of the PUB's participation.

## **Communications with City Council**

With the City undergoing significant transition resulting from recent Charter changes, the PUB has attempted to engage in areas relevant to their purpose. The PUB has provided feedback to Council regarding the overall organizational restructuring as well as the Natural Resources Service Delivery Assessment (NRSB). Over the past year the Board has coordinated with staff and Parks Board for information gathering, designated PUB voting member representatives to participate actively in the NRSB project team and engaged directly with Council during work sessions when possible. Specific feedback is included earlier in this report and the attached letters to Council. This project remains a high priority for the Board, though it is unclear how it may be impacted by the One Water Initiative.

In the winter and spring, the Board provided written and verbal input on the bureaus' requested budgets and participated in the budget work session and rate hearing. Specific feedback included in the written documents attached.

Typically, the Board has a fall work session with City Council. In consultation with the Mayor and the Commissioner-in-Charge, the Board opted to suspend the fall 2023 work session and focus on engagement in budget and transition related sessions with Council.

## **Conclusion**

The Board expects this to be another busy year with continued focus on the One Water Initiative, reorganization, and large capital projects such as the Filtration Plant, Columbia Boulevard Wastewater Treatment Secondary Treatment Expansion Program— Capital Improvement Project (CBWTP STEP-CIP), Tryon Creek Facility and Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI). The Board looks forward to a site visit to Water Bureau facilities in fall 2024 as an opportunity for gathering in-person as well as relationship building in ways that spark collaboration between the Board, the bureaus, City Administrators and Council to address emerging challenges and improve programs, operations, and services in ways that equitably serve Portland communities.

# Appendix A

PUB Budget and Policy Values for FY  
2024-2025 Budget Development

# Appendix B

## FY 2023-2024 Portland Utility Board Communications to Council

### Contents

<b>Date</b>	<b>Communication Topic</b>
September 29, 2023.....	<a href="#"><u>PUB Feedback on City Proposed Organizational Structure</u></a>
October 5, 2023 .....	<a href="#"><u>City Proposed Organizational Structure – Supplemental Feedback from PUB</u></a>
October 31, 2023 .....	<a href="#"><u>PUB Support for BES Rate Study Recommendations</u></a>
December 12, 2023.....	<a href="#"><u>Issues with Recent Decision-Making Process by City Council – Natural Resources</u></a>
February 16, 2024.....	<a href="#"><u>Requested Budgets for FY 2024-25 for BES and PWB</u></a>
April 25, 2024.....	<a href="#"><u>Proposed Budgets for FY 2024-25 for BES and PWB</u></a>