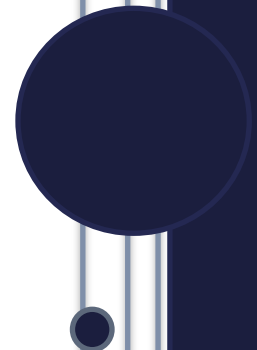




PORTLAND UTILITY BOARD

FY 2020-21 Annual Report to Council

September 2021



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).

Fiscal year 2020-21 (FY 2020-21) required continued adaptation and attention to operational, budgetary, and policy issues connected to the pandemic. In addition, large on-going projects, e.g., BES's Secondary Treatment Enhancement Project, BES' re-organization, and PWB's filtration projects, required the Board's attention. The Board's responsiveness and flexibility ensured that they contributed positively to the work of the bureaus and Council. Highlights include feedback on proposed changes to Title 21 as well as focus on issues of equity, particularly in the areas of affordability, billing, financial assistance programs, community engagement, and workforce development. The Board's consistent attention to equity supported the bureaus in thinking creatively about these issues and moving them forward.

Due to the pandemic the Board delayed the prior year's recruitment and ran two successful recruitments in FY 2020-21, resulting in increased diversity in lived experience and areas of interest/expertise on the Board. The Board developed and adopted *Beliefs, Values, and Anti-Racist Principles* to hold itself accountable for identifying and addressing racism and for actively working to maintain an inclusive Board culture. The positive evolution of the Board continued and is reflected in the breadth and depth of the issues the Board addresses.

For FY 2021-22, the frames of racial equity, the climate crisis and climate justice, innovation and efficiency, and inter-agency and cross-sector collaboration will guide the Board in prioritizing issues and developing recommendations to the bureaus and City Council. The Board is delighted to continue relationship-building and identification of shared priorities with Commissioner Mapps, the Commissioner-in-Charge of the utility bureaus. The Board looks forward to strengthening the working relationship between the Board, City Council, and bureau leadership through early, effective engagement on the policy and programmatic decisions that drive the budget. Working together, the Board believes we can find equitable solutions to the many issues facing clean drinking water, sanitation, and stormwater management services—fundamental necessities for human life and the planet.

Introduction

The Portland Utility Board (PUB) began its service to the City on September 1, 2015. It provides budgetary and policy oversight of Portland's utility bureaus – the Bureau of Environmental Services (BES) and the Portland Water Bureau (PWB). Throughout the year there were many opportunities for PUB to give recommendations and feedback to Council and bureau leadership that informed decision-making and actions taken.

Issues Addressed

The Board has increasingly focused on issues of racial equity, inclusion, and social justice; the difficult work of balancing rates with the need for modern, resilient infrastructure and the complicated issue of how equity informs this balancing act; a reconsideration of affordability through the lens of equity; and the policy and programmatic decisions that inform the budget numbers. The Board believes these are the areas where the input of a community-based advising body can be most impactful. The below table lists the key issues PUB addressed during FY 2020-21. Many other topics, not listed, were also addressed.

Table 1: Key Issues PUB addressed in FY 2020-21

Topic	Budget	Policy	Pandemic Impact
BES Reorganization		✓	Delayed
PUB Governing Documents		✓	Delayed
Bull Run Filtration Projects	✓	✓	
Community Engagement Strategies		✓	
Covid-19 Impacts on Bureau Operations	✓	✓	✓
Intersections of Bureaus' Work and Houselessness	✓	✓	
Lead and Corrosion Control Updates		✓	
Annual Budget Review and Recommendations	✓	✓	
Billing, Debt Recovery, Financial Assistance Programs	✓	✓	✓
PUB Meeting in Community			Delayed
PUB Recruitment		✓	Delayed then two cycles
Small Business Program for Utility Relief (SPUR)	✓	✓	Pandemic relief program
Secondary Treatment Enhancement Project	✓	✓	
Stipends for Advisory Bodies		✓	
Title 21		✓	
Tryon Creek Facility Updates	✓	✓	
Urban Flood Safety and Water Quality District		✓	
Workforce Development		✓	

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

Accomplishments and Impact

Intentional recruitment for increased diversity of lived experience, expertise, and areas of interest in Board membership combined with ongoing shifts in operations to a more inclusive and egalitarian approach has resulted in the Board taking on a broader range of issues and asking deeper questions. The Board's impacts and accomplishments reflect the Board's successful focus on process, equity, and inclusion. In alphabetic order, highlights include:

Affordability — The Board's equity-driven approach to affordability adds momentum to BES' own efforts to rethink affordability. The Board centers those who are least able to pay their bills and thus, are most impacted by even small rate changes. The Board's input has encouraged the bureau to engage more deeply with communities to better understand their lived experiences and the impact BES' policies have on them, resulting in positive innovations, e.g., in BES' partnerships.

Ambassadorship — PUB creates broader connections to communities for the utility bureaus. Serving on PUB gives community members a nuanced understanding of bureau operations, the multi-faceted issues they face, and the importance and complexity of utility work. PUB members effectively serve as bureau-community connectors. They are able to speak to the importance of the utility bureaus and to invite other community members to engage with PUB and the bureaus, giving the bureaus a wider network of community relations.

Billing, Debt Recovery, and Financial Assistance — The Board encourages the bureaus to develop policies and practices that address the needs of those most impacted by structural inequities, e.g., evaluation of the effectiveness and value of shutting off water service. The Board has also encouraged the Water Bureau to adopt communication methods that are more effective with communities the government struggles to reach. The Board has emphasized active consideration of the lived realities of communities in devising communication strategies. PUB's input contributed to the bureau's decision to revise the language in customer notices and to increase outreach to customers with outstanding past due balances.

Deep-Dive Budget Analysis — BES staff report they have found PUB's approach to budget analysis to be efficient. Compared to prior approaches, it results in Board feedback they find more actionable. This approach, piloted in FY 2019-20 and continued in FY 2020-21, focuses on deeper analysis of programs selected for alignment with PUB priorities. It engages PUB earlier and more effectively in the policy decisions that drive the budget; streamlines the budget work; and allows PUB to provide more focused feedback to Council and the bureaus. The Board will continue to fine-tune this approach in collaboration with the bureaus.

Hiring, Retention, and Promotion Practices — The Board's united voice on the importance of diversity, inclusion, and equity in the bureaus' hiring practices and insistence that the bureaus address deficient practices has amplified the energy and attention with which BES tackles these issues. PUB's interest in BES' work on these issues has helped staff check their assumptions, be

more reflective, ensure they are doing a good job of explaining current processes, and include more people in the work.

PUB Beliefs, Values, and Anti-Racist Principles – PUB’s principles hold individual Board members accountable for identifying and addressing racism and for actively working to maintain an inclusive Board culture. The unique challenges and opportunities of public meetings combined with the fact that PUB comes together as strangers and must learn to work together on value-laden issues prompted the Board to develop a set of beliefs, values, and anti-racist principles to guide its internal work, interactions with the public, and expectations for conduct at the Board’s public meetings. By request, this guiding document has been shared with other advisory body staff both within the City and beyond to assist in addressing the unique challenges of advisory body work in public meeting settings. See Appendix B.

Small Business Program for Utility Relief (SPUR) – In response to PUB feedback, bureau



leadership adjusted the timeline, engaged more directly with community leaders, and worked with PUB to form a community-driven selection committee. PUB emphasized the importance of including those the program intends to serve, Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) small business owners, early on

in designing the program; the importance of choosing partners who have earned and enjoy relationship and trust within BIPOC communities; and the need to ensure decisions are not made within a vacuum of white privilege. A PUB representative served on the SPUR committee and was instrumental in improving the program. Like PUB, the SPUR committee encouraged the bureaus to take a relational approach to community. For example, the SPUR committee recommended directly contacting applicants who did not receive a credit to offer them other supports. PUB input on SPUR has also had far-reaching impact, e.g., BES will use this feedback in designing outreach for the Comprehensive Rate Review. PUB continues to advocate for funds at the local and state level.

Stipends Advocacy – Conversations with several Commissioners and Civic Life staff have blossomed into the idea of PUB piloting stipends with a goal of developing efficient and equitable administrative processes that can be replicated throughout the City. In the fall of

2020 identifying the lack of stipends as a barrier to participation based both on individual Board member experience and community feedback during recruitment cycles, the Board took up advocacy for stipends not just for PUB but also for City advisory bodies generally. PUB looks forward to piloting stipends in the future in a way that benefits community and the City by removing barriers to participation and ensuring advisory bodies more fully reflect the community.

Title 21, Increased Transparency — PUB helped the Water Bureau increase transparency around proposed Title 21 changes. Initially, the Water Bureau did not post a strike-through version of the proposed changes on their website. The public had the complicated task of cross-walking between the existing code and the proposed version of the code to find out what was proposed to change. The Board requested that a strike-through version be posted along with the proposed and existing code. After discussion a strike-through version was added to the website-making comparison easier and increasing transparency. Going forward, the Board hopes this will become standard practice.

Title 21, Individual Metering — Along with other invited community groups, the Board provided testimony at the Council Title 21 work session which ultimately helped Council arrive at their decision on individual metering. Council joined PUB in their assessment and the Water Bureau revised its policy on individual metering. Rather than an individual meter requirement, the policy encourages individual meter use by creating an affordable pathway for their installation. While PUB was generally sympathetic to the long-term goals of individual metering, the Board also felt that the proposal needed more development, including consideration of potential unintended consequences.

Fiscal Year 2021-22 Work Plan Frames

Key frames for the Board in FY 2021-22 include racial equity; the climate crisis and the climate justice; innovation and efficiency; and inter-agency and cross-sector collaboration. These frames function as over-arching 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.



Portland Water Bureau Water Quality Lab

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. PUB will strive to understand and address the impacts of intersectionality as they relate to the work of the board. For example, 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 past inequitable policies, actions, and practices.

The Climate Crisis and Climate Justice

Earlier and longer wildfire seasons, increased frequency of extreme flooding, extended drought, the record heatwave of June 2021; 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. Recognizing marginalized communities are disproportionately impacted by climate change while contributing less to it and, all too often, benefit 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 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 and Efficiency

The Board will ask questions of innovation and efficiency in analyzing bureau policies, operations, and plans. The Board will look for innovations that result in increased equity, efficiency, cost reductions, 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.

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 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 2021-22 Work Plan Priorities

The Board 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 elaborates on a few high priority topics:

Transparency and Process Coordination — A goal for this fiscal year is to collaborate with the bureaus to increase transparency in bureau communications with the Board and improve input-gathering processes. The Board needs to be apprised of emerging issues and asked for input when input will have impact on the program or decision-point at hand. There have been critical issues where it has felt like items have come to the Board *after* key decisions have been made. The opportunity for improvements based on feedback from PUB is lost and the Board's expertise is under-utilized. The Board also recognizes the complexity of identifying the right time to bring an idea, issue, or project to PUB for review. The Board believes this process-improvement work will facilitate an improved two-way communication between the PUB and the bureaus; better utilize the relationships the PUB has with community; increase community trust of the bureaus; and allow for more effective and impactful community input.

Financial Assistance Programs and Billing — Financial assistance programs continue to be a high priority for the Board, including financial assistance to residential customers, small businesses, renters, etc. The Board prioritizes working with the bureaus on plans to resume billing, general billing issues such as bill redesign, improvements to financial assistance programs, and other potential remedies that can be offered to customers in ways that acknowledge and address long-standing structural inequities and the disparate impacts the pandemic and ensuing economic crisis has had on specific communities, particularly BIPOC communities.

Hiring, Retention, and Promotion of BIPOC staff — The Board has made addressing the disparities BIPOC staff experience in hiring, retention, and promotion at the City a high priority policy item. The career entry and advancement pipeline should be structured more equitably. Ensuring that career pathways don't present barriers to participation from BIPOC individuals and addressing structural inequities is critical and ensures both equitable opportunities for employment with the City and equitable succession planning within the Bureaus. The Board will closely examine how different work is valued, the demographics of who is doing that work, and potential correlations between the two. The Board will also examine issues related to the apprenticeship and internship programs; workplace culture and decision-making structures; and workplace issues that the pandemic has daylighted such as those related to working

remotely, returning to the office, and being required to work on-site. The Board looks forward to working with the bureaus on these multi-faceted issues.

Table 2: Fiscal Year 2021-22 Work Plan Priorities

Level 1 – High priority topics with opportunities for PUB input/impact	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apprenticeships and Internships • Budget Development and Monitoring - Bureau performance metrics • <i>Comprehensive Rate Review Study (BES)</i> • Climate Action and Adaptation Strategies • Financial Assistance Programs and Billing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiring, Retention, and Promotion of BIPOC staff • <i>Impacts of Houselessness</i> • <i>Portland Harbor Superfund</i> • Resiliency and Emergency Planning • Transparency and Process Coordination
Level 2 – Active projects of interest to PUB; may move up as opportunities for input/impact arise	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative Reviews - equity analysis and possibly code related changes • Asset Management • BES Transition • Bureau Strategic Plans • Filtration Projects • Lead and Corrosion Control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procurement and Contracting – equity emphasis • Secondary Treatment Expansion - Capital Improvement Plan (STEP-CIP) • <i>Tree Program</i> • Tribal Liaison Program
Level 3 – Lower priority for dedicated meeting time, primarily written updates outside of meetings	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employee Safety Programs • Multilingual Premium Pay – Update/Monitoring • Other Large Capital Projects • Resource Recovery and Energy Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streets 2035 Presentation • Tryon Creek Facility • Urban Flood and Safety District • Washington Park Reservoir
PUB specific work	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Annual Report and Work Plan</i> • Meetings in Community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Recruitment Related Work • Board Development – stipends

Bold is a required topic; *italics* is in process or completed at time of work plan submission.

PUB Operations

As noted below, the pandemic resulted in important changes to the Board’s operations.

Member Terms and Term Extensions

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.

Recruitment typically happens during the spring with new members joining on July 1. Due to the pandemic the Board delayed the spring 2020 recruitment. The three voting members with terms expiring on June 30, 2020, Mia Sabanovic, Micah Meskel, and Ted Labbe, graciously agreed to an extension through December 31, 2020. The Co-Chair with an expiring Chair term, Heidi Bullock, also generously agreed to extend her Co-Chair service through December 31, 2020 to provide stability to the Board. Two ex officio members, Brian Laurent and Sara Petrocine, were identified by the bureaus for a second term. One new ex officio member, Amy Chomowicz, began service on July 1, 2020.

The Board thanks the departing Board members — Dory Robinson, Heidi Bullock, Mia Sabanovic, Micah Meskel, Rob Martineau, Ted Labbe, Brian Laurent, and Sara Petrocine — for lending their expertise, time, leadership, and enthusiasm to the Board’s work. Advancements in the Board’s effectiveness and work are due, in no small part, to their contributions.

Table 3: PUB member terms for board members serving in FY 2020-21

PUB Member	Term Ending			
	Dec 31, 2020	June 30, 2021	June 30, 2022	June 30, 2023
Voting Members				
Dory Robinson		X		
Gabriela Saldaña-López			X	
Heidi Bullock		X		
Julia DeGraw				X
Kaliska Day			X	
Karen Y. Spencer			X	
Karen Williams			X	
Mia Sabanovic*	X			
Micah Meskel*	X			
Rob Martineau		X		
Robin Castro				X
Ted Labbe*	X			
Theresa Huang				X
Tom Liptan				X
Ex officio Members				
Amy Chomowicz			X	
Brian Laurent		X		
Sara Petrocine		X		

**Term expiring June 30, 2020 voluntarily extended through December 31, 2020.*

Member Experience and Interests

The ordinance governing PUB identifies a broad range of skills and experiences that serves the Board well, from environmental science to equity to group process. As part of its evolution, the PUB is rethinking the experiences and interests needed for PUB work. When do these “desired”

skills present unnecessary barriers? 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? The iterative process of evaluation and adjustment is reflected in the annual work of the recruitment subcommittee. See Appendix A for a list of FY 2020-21 PUB member experiences and interests.

Recruitment

The Board ran two recruitments during FY 2020-21. One recruitment ran in fall 2020 with appointment of four new community voting members, Julia DeGraw, Robin Castro, Theresa Huang, and Tom Liptan, joining the Board on January 1, 2021 for a term ending June 30, 2023. Their terms were shortened from three years to two and a half years to align with the PUB's annual work cycle. In spring 2021 a second recruitment ran with appointment of a new represented voting member, Jasmine Varela, and two new community voting members, Alex Lopez and Cayle Tern, all for terms beginning July 1, 2021 and ending June 30, 2024. Amy Chomowicz was re-appointed and two new ex officio members were appointed, Arielle Bradford and Sarah Messier, all for a one-year terms beginning on July 1, 2021 and ending June 30, 2022. In all, as of July 1, 2021, seven of the eleven new Board members have less than a year of service. The Board is excited about the opportunity for dynamic growth the mix of new and returning Board members offers.

Recruitment Process

The recruitment process varies depending on the type of vacancy.

Community Voting Seats — Relatively unique to City advisory bodies, the Board guides recruitment for the community voting seats. The Board makes key decisions related to recruitment and forms a recruitment subcommittee which is involved in all phases of recruitment. The full Board reviews the recruitment committee's recommendations and finalizes an appointment recommendation for the Mayor and Commissioner-in-Charge of the utility bureaus. The lead role the Board plays helps maintain independence from City Council and City staff, which ensures the Board can provide autonomous oversight of the utility bureaus. A fall and a spring recruitment subcommittee were formed, each with three voting Board members. Based on prior feedback-that the lack of stipends presented a barrier to participation, the Board had hoped to offer stipends by the spring 2021 recruitment. It was not able to do so, which negatively impacted recruitment efforts. The Board hopes to offer stipends by the spring 2022 recruitment cycle.

Represented Voting Seat — FY 2020-21 was the first time since the formation of PUB that the represented seat was open. There are five unions with members in at least one of the bureaus: AFSCME 189, IBEW 48, Operating Engineers 701, PROTEC 17, and LiUNA 483. Earlier this year Rob Martineau, departing voting labor representative on PUB, President of the District Council

of Trade Unions (DCTU), and President of AFSCME Local 189, initiated conversations with representatives from the five unions. The unions coordinated in the recruitment process, reaching out to their stewards and membership to identify potential candidates and ultimately recommend one to fill the vacant seat.

Ex officio Seats — Bureau leadership identify their recommendations for ex officio non-voting member candidates for open seats based on PUB needs, staff availability, and, per code, balancing the one voting represented seat and the three ex officio seats between represented and non-represented employees. Since ex officio members serve one-year terms, this is an annual 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 work must be done within a public meeting setting. To accomplish this work, in FY 2020-21, PUB held 45 board meetings, including 24 full board meetings, 17 subcommittee meetings, and 4 onboardings for new PUB members. In recognition of the challenges of extended virtual meetings the Board went from one long Board meeting per month to two shorter Board meetings. It dropped the standing subcommittee meeting slot in favor of as-needed subcommittee meetings to work on special projects. In FY 2020-21 the Board had an uptick in special project work as evidenced by the increase in subcommittee meetings. Despite having dropped the standing subcommittee meeting, the Board went from 8 subcommittee meetings in FY 2019-20 to 17 in FY 2020-21 to allow for work on items such as Title 21, recruitment, community engagement, and Board governance. PUB members spend significant time outside of meetings preparing for meeting discussions, conducting research, developing communications to Council, and following up on individual lines of inquiry in order to bring back additional information for the full Board’s consideration.



PUB Members during a September 2020 meeting held virtually (not all members pictured)

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 2020-21 PUB members participated in nine ARC hearings for a total of approximately 27 hours, not counting prep time. This donated time and expertise contributes greatly to the City's work. The participating PUB member is the only non-bureau staff on the review committee. 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 PUB participation.

Communications with City Council

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 2020 work session in recognition of City Council's need to focus on the issues arising from the pandemic. In late fall 2020 the Board participated in the City Council work session focused on individual metering. In the spring the Board provided written input on the bureaus' requested budgets and participated in both the budget work session and the rate hearing. Again, in deference to the Mayor and Commissioner-in-Charge's need to focus on urgent pandemic-impacted issues, the annual discussion between the Board and Mayor's office prior to the Proposed Budget was cancelled. The Board looks forward to reengaging more closely in the coming year with the Commissioner-in-Charge, the Mayor, and City Council on the many policy and budgetary issues of the utility bureaus.

Conclusion

The Board expects this to be another busy year with focus on large capital projects, the bureaus' strategic initiatives, the rippling economic and social impacts of the pandemic and long-standing structural inequities, and the urgent need to move racial equity forward. The Board will apply the enthusiasm, expertise, equity-driven focus, and responsiveness to emerging issues that served it well in the previous year. The Board looks forward to working with the bureaus and City Council in the coming year to address emerging challenges and improve programs, operations, and services.

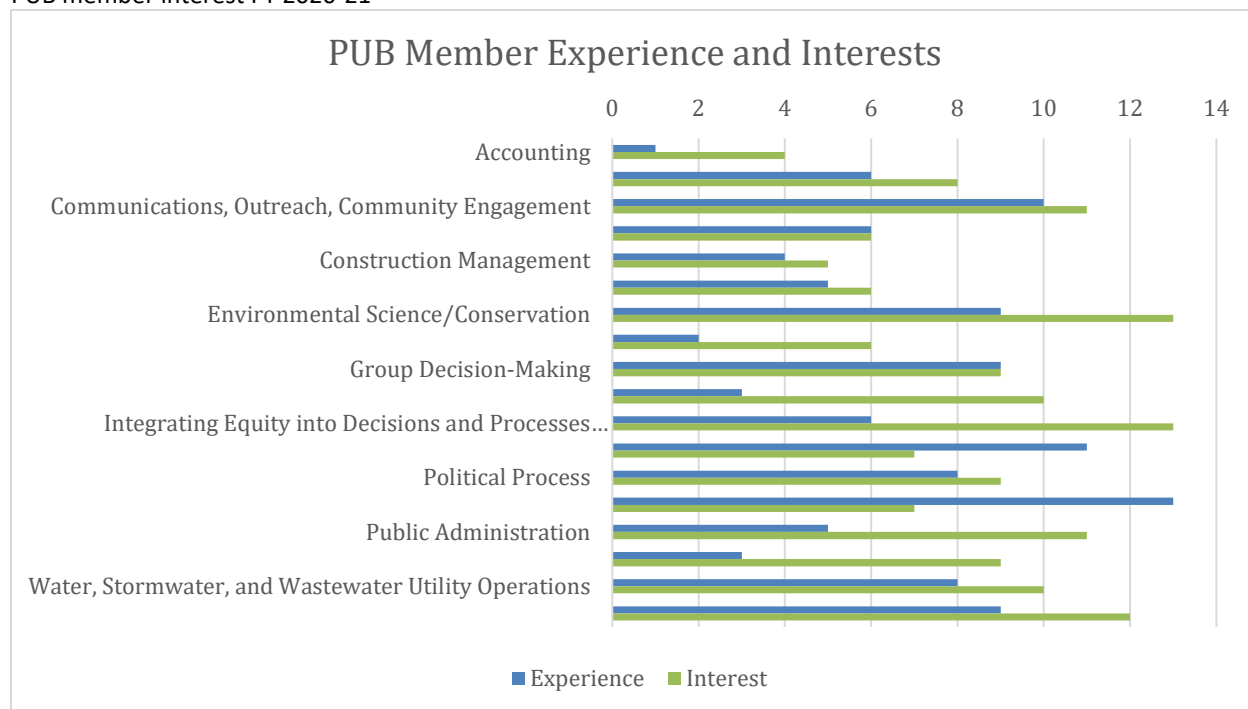
Appendix A

FY 2020-21 Portland Utility Board Members

Portland Utility Board Members Experience and Interests

The summary table includes data from 15 of the 17 voting and ex officio members in FY 2020-2021 and is a composite, including members who left December 31, 2020 and those who joined January 1, 2021.

PUB member interest FY 2020-21



Biographies of Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Board Members

FY 2020-21 Voting Members

Dory Robinson (Co-Chair) is passionate about restorative justice and building resilient communities in Portland. Her goal on the PUB is to support and create initiatives that lead to cleaner water and affordability measures within BES, PWB & City Council that center the social and economic needs of Black, Indigenous and Communities of Color. Term: July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2021. Co-Chair Term: July 9, 2019 – June 30, 2021.

Gabriela Saldaña-López is a community organizer in Portland. She was born and raised in Southeast and East Portland and has a double BA from the University of Oregon in Planning, Public Policy and Management, and International Studies with a concentration in nonprofit administration. She joined PUB in 2019 and brings a unique perspective, connections, and experience through her community organizing and event coordination roles over the years and

is passionate about advancing actions that can begin to address disparities in Portland. Term: July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2022.

Heidi Bullock (Co-Chair) is an environmental program manager with the Port of Portland who is working with a team on cleaning up the Portland Harbor in a way that is protective of the health of Portlanders and the environment and affordable for the region. Heidi has worked in the environmental industry for over twenty years serving in a variety of technical and management roles. As a scientist she has experience with site investigations, feasibility studies, remedial design and operations, and laboratory analysis work. She also has experience managing both projects and staff. Her project management experience includes project scoping, proposal and budget preparation, project/team coordination, and technical report preparation and review. Heidi also has executive management experience serving as the Portland Business Unit Manager for an environmental engineering consulting firm for three years before joining the Port of Portland. Heidi believes that everyone has the right to clean air and water and values her work in protecting and preserving those resources. Heidi holds a B.S. in Applied Biology from Utah State University and an M.S. in Hydrology from the University of Idaho. Term: July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2021. Co-Chair Term: July 9, 2019 – December 31, 2020.

Julia DeGraw is the Coalition Director for the Oregon League of Conservation Voters and has spent her entire career in the environmental nonprofit sector. She was born and raised in the Portland Metro region and has lived here her entire life except for four years of college in Wisconsin where she earned a BS in Environmental Studies and Sociology from Northland College. Much of her career has focused on water issues including her nine-year stint at Food & Water Watch as the Senior Northwest Organizer where she often advocated for Portland water issues. She is passionate about ensuring a clean environment for future generations, sanitation and clean affordable water for all, and dismantling systemic racism in Portland. Her experience interacting with thousands of residents from her campaigns for public office, alongside her professional experiences make her uniquely suited to serve the diverse interests of people of Portland on the PUB. Term: January 1, 2021 - June 30, 2023.

Kaliska Day (Co-Chair) is a project manager with Wenaha Group and with over 16 years in construction management brings a unique perspective on how utilities impact practical installation. She has familiarity with a breadth of government agencies as well as experience serving several years on the Portland Bureau of Transportation Bureau Budget Advisory Committee. This provided a great opportunity to see the interconnectedness of government and it was rewarding to give input to the process as it would be on the board. She volunteers with the Oregon Native American Chamber which provides opportunity not just to connect with native communities but also many other diverse communities of color. She joined the PUB in 2019 and brings a unique perspective and voice to the construction industry and the effects of government decisions on contractors as well as a voice to the native community and advocate for a severely under-served demographic. Term: July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2022. Co-Chair Term: July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022.

Karen Spencer is the Chief Operating Officer and a founding team member for Firmcast dba [Searchfunder.com](https://www.searchfunder.com), an online community and technology platform for search funds. Karen is a member of the State Bars of California and Oregon, as well as the US Patent & Trademark Office. She has over 25 years of experience as in-house and external counsel with a focus on intellectual property, commercial agreements and the legal implications of business decisions. Karen has a wide range of interests, volunteer engagement and training, including the Oregon Youth Development Council, Portland Parks Foundation, improvisational acting and managing an award-winning blues band. She joined the PUB in 2019 and brings a range of skills in strategic planning, legal analysis, leadership and teamwork to the Board. Term: July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2022.

Karen Williams (Co-Chair) brings experience in hydrogeology, watershed planning, water quality and public administration to PUB. After several years as an environmental geologist and project manager, she joined the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality and supported watershed councils, local governments and others working across Oregon to measure and improve stream quality. She's now a policy analyst at DEQ and helps to reduce air pollution from cars and trucks. Karen has enjoyed past service on boards for small nonprofit organizations, her union, neighborhood association, and community budget advisory committees. Term: July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2022. Co-Chair Term: January 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022.

Mia Sabanovic is a civil water engineer and joined PUB in 2019 and brings unique experience having worked with both bureaus, working at the Portland Water Bureau for 11 years and the past 2 years with the Bureau of Environmental Services, and an interest in helping the bureaus optimize how to preserve and deliver services. As a refugee from a war-torn Bosnia and Hercegovina she understands the importance of clean and potable water and functioning wastewater system that does not result in raw sewage overflows into the rivers and lakes. Coming from a country under severe oppression and genocide she also has a unique understanding of cultural differences in communication, trust and overcoming barriers to engagement with government. Mia is sensitive to the cultural and community diversities and is actively engaged in the community, including organizing and participating in leadership development conferences for women through Portland's Muslim Educational Trust Center. She brings a passion for water as a sustainable and equitable resource, technical engineering skills and a vast knowledge of both bureaus' strategic plans. Term: July 1, 2019 – December 31, 2020

Micah Meskel has been in his current position as Conservation Field Coordinator with the Audubon Society of Portland since 2015. Micah was born and raised in Portland, leaving town briefly to attend the University of Oregon where he graduated with a degree in Economics. Term: July 1, 2017 – December 31, 2020

Robert Martineau is a Water Operations Mechanic at the Portland Water Bureau. He also serves as the President of AFSCME Local 189, where he chairs the Policy Committee. Rob attended all of the meetings of the Utility Oversight Blue Ribbon Commission and brings

knowledge and experience as a front-line operator of Portland's drinking water system. Term: From inception of PUB in 2015 – June 30, 2021.

Robin Castro is a working class East Portland renter and Senior at Portland State University pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Studies. She's an elected member of the student government at Portland State - representing over 26,000 university students and is a founding member & Treasurer of the only progressive student group on campus. She comes from a long line of working class men and women who have experienced economic hardship and hopes to merge her personal experience with poverty and her educational background to provide procedural and environmental justice for her community. Term: January 1, 2021 - June 30, 2023.

Ted Labbe is a conservation biologist and Executive Director at the Urban Greenspaces Institute. He is a Portland native with a twenty-five-year professional career that includes experience with nonprofit organizations, State and Tribal agencies, as well as private consulting. He has an M.S. in Fish and Wildlife Biology from Colorado State University and has led a series of collaborative conservation efforts, which engage the public in policy-relevant field initiatives. Ted is founding volunteer and board member of Depave, a local nonprofit that creates community-connected greenspaces in pavement-plagued neighborhoods. Term: July 1, 2017 – December 30, 2020.

Theresa Huang is a planner serving as Project Development Specialist at the Urban Greenspaces Institute. Spending her childhood in Taiwan and upbringing in Oregon, she brings her experience and perspectives that shaped her passion for environmental and social justice to help bring people and nature closer to each other. In addition, she also has a deep understanding of the barriers to engagement and communications that many underserved communities face, especially with the immigrant and refugee community. She completed her studies in environmental studies and urban planning at UO and PSU, and has experience in planning, environmental restoration, urban forestry, and community outreach through her work with Portland Bureau of Environmental Services, Johnson Creek Watershed Council, Friends of Trees, and other nonprofits based in Eugene. Theresa is also a board member of Depave, a local nonprofit that removes over-paved areas to transform it into greenspaces. Term: January 1, 2021 - June 30, 2023.

Tom Liptan, fasla - As a landscape architect Tom worked with the City of Portland, Bureau of Environmental Service for 26 years. He was the catalyst behind research and development of vegetative systems (Green Infrastructure) for rain and stormwater management. He started at BES in Customer Service where he worked across all city neighborhoods and particularly on the eastside Mid-County Sewer Project. Then he was assigned as the team leader for the preparation and implementation of Portland's first MS4 permit. He participated in the city's CSO compliance project and watershed planning. These projects required extensive interaction with other city bureaus including PBOT, Parks, Urban Forestry and Water Bureau. Since the 1990s he has documented the benefits of stormwater management using vegetated systems

and the economic pay-back of such approaches. The first ecoroof in Portland was installed on his garage roof in 1996, over the next several years BES initiated the construction and monitoring of numerous green demonstration projects which all proved to be very successful. Before coming to Portland, he started his career as a parks, forestry and lake restoration planner with the city of Orlando FL. Designing his first “green” stormwater management project in 1978. In 1980 he, with his family, moved to Portland. He went into the private sector working on commercial and residential developments and the first light rail project in East Portland. He has been recognized for this green infrastructure work and has presented papers at more than 200 conferences in the USA and internationally. He volunteers with GRIT (greenroof advocacy), Urban Greenspaces Institute, 82nd Ave Coalition and he testifies at city council, PSC, Urban Forestry, and Design Review regarding green infrastructure. In his book, *Sustainable Stormwater Management*, (Timber Press 2017) he documents 40 years of green infrastructure. Today he continues to research the benefits of vegetative systems and provides pro-bono consultation to developers and municipalities. Term: January 1, 2021 - June 30, 2023.

FY 2020-21 Ex officio Members

Amy Chomowicz is a governance policy analyst for the newly-formed Project Management Office (PMO). During her 25-year tenure with BES, Amy has held several different positions which combined technical and policy work with program management. Amy started at BES at the grant manager for a \$10 million EPA grant for watershed restoration. She has managed several programs such as the Columbia Slough Watershed program, the city’s Ecoroof Program and the Stormwater Stewards Tree Team.

These programs were public-facing and focused on providing services to multiple types of populations in Portland using an equity lens. Amy has served on many bureau committees including the PEER program and the Committee for Equity and Diversity. Amy also has a background in energy conservation and electric utility experience.

Outside of work, Amy volunteers with Friends of Trees, and she is on the board of the Green Roof information Think-tank, a small non-profit that provides education about sustainable stormwater management. Amy has a Bachelor of Science degree in environmental science from the University of New Hampshire, and a Masters in Urban Planning from the University of Washington. Term: July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021. Reappointed: July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022.

Brian Laurent serves as the Environmental Specialist for the MS4 and TMDL regulatory programs that manage the City’s compliance with federal and state requirements to protect and enhance water quality in stormwater and surface waters. He joined BES in 2006 and his experience includes program/project management, industrial permitting, monitoring, investigations, enforcements, data systems, organizational development, process improvement, public speaking and the BES PEER Program. His prior experience in private consulting includes technical work specializing in assessment and restoration of surface water

environments and precision surveying for industrial and manufacturing customers. He is a graduate of the Environmental Studies and Geography programs at UCSB and as a resident of Portland, has volunteered with the North Portland Soccer Club and the SMART Reader Program. Terms: July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020. Reappointed: July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021.

Sara Petrocine is the Legislative Affairs Coordinator for the Portland Water Bureau, where she administers the bureau's state and federal legislative programs. She has nearly fourteen years of experience in policy analysis, policy making, project management, and intergovernmental relations, including representing the bureau in statewide forums, such as the League of Oregon Cities Water/Wastewater Policy Committee. Sara joined PWB in 2012 after serving over six years as a Policy Advisor in City Hall for Commissioner Leonard and has extensive experience working with diverse groups of stakeholders on a wide range of issues across the city. Recently, Sara served three years as an officer of the Oregon Water Utility Council, a statewide committee that monitors and engages in legislation, regulations, public policies, and court actions that could impact water providers. Terms: July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020. Reappointed: July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021.

Appendix B

PUB Beliefs, Values, and Anti-Racist Principles

Portland Utility Board Beliefs, Values and Anti-Racist Principles

We believe that:

- Every person is entitled to clean and affordable drinking water, healthy communities, and healthy watersheds.
- A failure to address policies that continue to drive racial inequities is a form of racism.
- We must hold ourselves and the Bureaus accountable for identifying and addressing racism, systemic racism, and structural inequities.
- Those most directly affected by racial and economic inequities should be afforded culturally appropriate opportunities to speak for themselves.
- We are all learning how to support each other on this anti-racist journey. As long as individuals are willing to learn, we are willing to engage.
- While every person has the right to share their personal perspective, we stand against wrongful conduct, particularly any conduct that is targeted toward people that are made vulnerable by systemic inequities.

Putting Our Principles into Action

We will act in accordance with our principles. To that end, we will:

- **Speak up and speak out.**
Remaining silent while observing wrongful conduct maintains the status quo and thus perpetuates the system that empowered that conduct to occur in the first place. Thus, we will not be bystanders to wrongful conduct.

- **Each person is empowered to maintain the culture of the Portland Utility Board.**

A culture that leaves speaking up and speaking out as the sole responsibility of the person or population most impacted by wrongful conduct is a culture that perpetuates indifference and inequity. Thus, to foster a culture of inclusion and trust, each board member is empowered to speak up and out when they observe wrongful conduct. Too often the effort to speak up falls onto those in the impacted group. We thus encourage each board member to speak up and out regardless of their seniority, leadership status, or their membership in an impacted group.

In the moment, we may not have the right, perfect or most elegant words to speak up and speak out. Indeed, we may even need time to react internally, process and think. In those moments, we will raise an alert, such as:

- “What was said didn’t sit well with me,”
 - “That action is not okay with me,”
 - “Something feels wrong to me,” or
 - “What was said seems inconsistent with our established values”.
 - “I condemn that hate speech.”
- **Focus on the impacted individual or population, condemn the conduct (not the person).**

We will prioritize having empathy and the need for healing for the impacted individual or population, while condemning the wrongful conduct. In condemning the conduct, we recognize that our bureau employees, board members and community members possess widely varying levels of experience and understanding about, for example, anti-racism; diversity, equity and inclusion; English as a second language communities; gender identity; immigration status; multiculturalism; Native American heritage and legacy; racial trauma; sexual orientation; structural inequities; systemic racism; and white privilege. While we will not tolerate the wrongful conduct, we will demonstrate compassion for the individual.

Wrongful conduct means conduct that is or fosters bigotry, intolerance, harassment, discrimination or hate based on, for example, age, color, criminal justice system impacted, gender identity, immigration status, military status, marital or family status, national origin, physical or mental ability, religion, race, sex, sexual orientation, or socio-economic status.

These guidelines are intended to guide the conduct at our meetings. They are not intended to restrict anyone’s right to speak or compel anyone to speak in a particular way.

Appendix C

FY 2020-2021 Portland Utility Board Communications to Council

Contents

Date	Communication Topic
January 29, 2021.....	Requested Budgets for FY 2021-22 for the Bureau of Environmental Services and the Portland Water Bureau
April 13, 2021.....	PUB Recommendations for the Bureau of Environmental Services and the Portland Water Bureau FY 2021-22 Requested Budgets

PORTLAND UTILITY BOARD

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Gabriela Saldaña-López

Karen Y. Spencer

Karen Williams

Ex-officio Members:

Amy Chomowicz

Brian Laurent

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City Budget Office
1120 SW 5th Ave, Ste 1010

To: Mayor Ted Wheeler
Commissioner Carmen Rubio
Commissioner Dan Ryan
Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty
Commissioner Mingus Mapps
Auditor Mary Hull Caballero

Re: Requested Budgets for FY 2021-22 for the Bureau of
Environmental Services and the Portland Water Bureau

Date: January 29, 2021

The Portland Utility Board (PUB) serves as a community-based advisory board for the Bureau of Environmental Services (BES) and the Portland Water Bureau (PWB).

This initial budget letter, in compliance with City practice for budget advisory committees, is an early opportunity to share our preliminary work and the considerations that will guide our next several months of budget work. The PUB views this letter as the first of several touch points with City Council throughout the annual budget and planning processes.

The PUB has begun our work focused on gathering information, providing feedback, and building the foundation needed to understand the complex budgets for both bureaus. Particularly with four of our members newly joining the board as of January 1, 2021, there is substantial work ahead as we orient to the budget, expand our knowledge, learn about what is being requested and formulate recommendations for Council this budget year.

Program offers and PUB's approach to budget

The PUB continues to be supportive of the City's program offer budgeting process and to collaborate with the bureaus to develop the best ways to work together within the budget process. The bureaus continue to refine development of program offers, including significant changes to accommodate the reorganization within BES and continued work needed to develop and refine performance measures within the program offers.

Beginning last year, the PUB adjusted our review process to maximize

the effectiveness of our budget advisory role. While the board continues to do a basic review of the full budgets for both bureaus, the PUB has identified some high-interest program offers for more in-depth review. By focusing on a strategic number of program offers in-depth, the PUB aims to provide more focused feedback to the bureaus as well as to engage earlier and more effectively at the policy/programmatic level that ultimately drives budget optimization. The PUB appreciates the increased level of information that the bureaus provide for the high-interest program offers as this allows the PUB to have greater context and provide more valuable feedback.

PUB's Values and Work Plan Frames

The PUB remains focused on the values that have been developed in recent years and continuing to refine them and understand their connections. The PUB has also developed four key frames to guide our discussions and evaluation of work:

- Racial Equity – Ensuring racial equity is centered in decision making. Current distribution of burdens and benefits analyzed as well as consideration of reparative actions to address harm done by past inequities.
- Inter-Bureau Collaboration – Is successful collaboration happening? Are resources such as staff expertise and equipment being effectively shared across bureaus? How can barriers to collaboration and resource sharing be removed?
- Outcomes Oriented – Issues where there is opportunity to influence Council and bureau decisions or otherwise impact bureau operations, policies, and budget are prioritized.
- Sustainability – Is the City using resources wisely, investing wisely, considering issues of long-term resiliency, prepared to respond to emergencies in equitable ways?

The PUB recognizes that it is important to balance the tension among the various values and frames we use in our work. PUB recognizes that rate increases are borne more easily by some and are more challenging for others. Rate increases are necessary but need to be balanced with impact on customers. Some values such as equity also cut across all other values.

PUB's Values
Affordability
Assistance to low-income residents
Efficiency of operations
Equity
Improvement and sustainability of infrastructure
Long-term value to residents of Portland region
Protection of public and watershed health
Regulatory Compliance
Service Delivery
System resilience and reliability
Transparency and inclusive public engagement
<i>In alphabetic, not priority order</i>

Affordability, Financial Assistance and Budget Guidance

The Mayor's budget guidance directs the bureaus to build their budgets within rates approved as their multi-year financial plan presented last year, for a combined rate increase of approximately 4.9%. The PUB holds in reserve its support of this rate increase until the budget process is completed. We do support the additional guidance for the bureaus to work collaboratively to enhance current financial assistance programs and to continue to find cost savings and efficiencies to offset financial impacts caused by the pandemic. As continues to be a

theme of our feedback, the PUB is very concerned about affordability for all Portlanders but particularly for residents that already bear the brunt of structural inequities. In light of COVID impacts, the bureaus may need to revisit their multi-year financial plans.

The PUB continues to engage directly with the bureaus to provide feedback on financial assistance programs as well as other activities such as the recent efforts to resume billing notices to customers. Some recommendations to the bureaus that may go beyond specific programs include:

- Partner earlier with PUB to allow ample opportunity for feedback and co-creation, particularly when policies or decisions will impact customers.
- Increase proactive outreach regarding assistance available including increasing visibility on bills and notices with emphasis of availability of payment options and financial assistance programs.
- Conduct analysis of who is receiving important information about rate increases and financial assistance programs and of demographics of those asking questions or using the programs. Is information transparent across all groups? Are programs only used by particular groups of people? Identify potential gaps to develop priorities for outreach.
- Partner with community-based and/or housing organizations for outreach and more equitable information distribution. Evaluate what measures are already taken for communities that do not receive information in the same way as others and identify potential gaps for enhanced partnerships.

The PUB recognizes that this is a tough time that many customers, both households and businesses, are going through and is especially harder for people who are the most impacted by this public health crisis particularly Black, Indigenous and People of Color and other historically underrepresented communities. It is our job to make sure that the bureaus are providing help to people who are really in need and ensure that no one is left out.

Next steps

Over the coming months the PUB anticipates more comprehensive review of the FY 2021-22 proposed operating budgets, program offers, and capital improvement plans. We look forward to analyzing and evaluating the bureau's requested budgets and the City Budget Office (CBO) analysis and providing additional feedback to City Council. As the budget develops, the PUB will provide a letter with recommendations regarding the budgets, participate in the budget work sessions in March, the utility rate hearing in May, as well as discuss budget issues with the Mayor and City Council if requested.

The PUB is grateful for the significant support we receive from the bureaus' directors, staff, ex-officio members, Commissioners and their staff, the City Budget Office, and PUB staff. We look forward to providing you further input as the budget process continues through the spring. We welcome open communication with City Council and any feedback you have regarding our proposed approach to FY 2021-22 budget work as well as the values and frames that guide our work.

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Masters@portlandoregon.gov

To: Mayor Ted Wheeler

Commissioner Mingus Mapps

Commissioner Carmen Rubio

Commissioner Dan Ryan

Commissioner Jo Ann Hardesty

Auditor Mary Hull Caballero

Re: PUB Recommendations for the Bureau of Environmental Services and the Portland Water Bureau FY 2021-22 Requested Budgets

Date: April 13, 2021

The Portland Utility Board (PUB) serves as a community-based advisory board for the Bureau of Environmental Services (BES) and the Portland Water Bureau (PWB).

The PUB is grateful for the significant support we receive from the bureaus' directors, staff, and ex-officio members as well as the Council, City Budget Office, and PUB staff. The PUB has held multiple board meetings over the last several months focused on gathering information, reviewing analyses, building the foundation needed to understand the complex budgets for both bureaus, providing feedback, and considering the requests in balance with the PUB's values and workplan frames. This is our second letter during this budget cycle and summarizes our recommendations to Council on the bureaus' FY 2021-22 Requested Budgets and priorities.

FY 2021-22 Requested Budgets

The Bureau of Environmental Service's (BES) FY 2021-22 budget request includes \$410.9 million in operating and capital expenditures in the next year, with no change in positions. There are no decision packages to consider. The total rate of increase for the typical single-family household to support the bureau's requested budget would be 3.15%.

The Portland Water Bureau's (PWB) FY 2021-22 budget request includes \$273.1 million for operating and capital expenditures for the next year, with no change in positions. The decision packages include a small General Fund reduction package and a request for \$1.5 million General Fund for American Disability Act (ADA) compliance to remove

barriers at PWB properties for recreational purposes. The total rate of increase for the typical single-family household to support the bureau's requested budget would be 7.8%.

Including the proposed rate of increase for both the PWB and BES, the combined monthly utility increase would be 4.8%. This results in a typical single-family residential bill increasing by \$5.95 from \$122.74 per month up to \$128.69 per month. The final rate of increase will depend on the items that are approved by City Council through the budget process.

Affordability and Financial Assistance

The PUB remains concerned about the affordability of water and sewer rates and understands there is a delicate balance between affordability and the capital investments needed for long term infrastructure maintenance. Although both bureaus met budget guidance with their budget requests, the resulting 4.8% combined increase could prove unaffordable to many Portlanders and could disparately impact residents that already bear the brunt of structural inequities. We are also concerned about how the \$20 million dollars of accounts in arrears may affect BES and Water bureau services, staffing, and rates and therefore could impact capacity to expand and promote financial assistance programs.

Financial Assistance Programs

Improvements to increase visibility and maximize impact of the financial assistance programs are even more essential as financial circumstances for many Portlanders have worsened with the pressures of the pandemic. Last year the PUB provided advice on some key areas for improvements to the financial assistance programs including; suggestions regarding accessibility of information, marketing and outreach opportunities, leveraging resources of related programs, addressing administrative challenges and improving data tracking and analysis ([see April 1, 2020 letter to Council for more detail, excerpt provided at the end of this letter for reference](#)). The PUB recognizes the pandemic may have delayed investigating and responding to some of these suggestions and this year we provide some complements to the earlier recommendations. The PUB appreciates the efforts made by the bureaus to mitigate customer financial impacts and supports the expansion of critical financial assistance programs including the increase to \$250,000 for fixture repairs and the continuation of \$600,000 for rental assistance.

The PUB understands there may be lower utilization than expected of some components of the financial assistance programs and recommends the bureaus continue to address the lack of awareness of these critical resources, as well as other incentive programs such as BES's Clean River Rewards. The bureaus should enhance coordination across programs and with other bureaus, building on successful practices to improve outreach efforts. The PUB recommends increasing the use of diverse outlets to provide more accessible information and in different languages. The bureaus have a very positive partnership with Home Forward that helped addressed some of the gaps in the assistance programs but also has limitations. The bureaus could further their reach within the community by working with organizations already doing

effective regional outreach such as local county libraries or trusted public service providers. The recent PWB small business relief program had significant success with strategic outreach that could be utilized by the financial assistance programs to increase impact, including use of multi-lingual mailers, Community Engagement Liaisons to do outreach in specific linguistic and cultural communities, and advertisements in resources that reach diverse communities.

The bureaus have made significant efforts in recent years to participate in a range of community events to broaden their outreach. The PUB commends this approach but also recognizes that there could still be barriers for many to feel comfortable approaching information tables at events, particularly for Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), and people that primarily speak a language other than English. The PUB recommends that the bureaus explore ways to increase their cultural representation at outreach events, including use of Community Engagement Liaisons when appropriate, to build on their efforts to remove barriers for Portlanders that may not be aware of the programs and resources available.

The PUB supports the City Budget Office recommendation for utility bureaus to promote the voucher program for multi-family dwellings administered by the Portland Housing Bureau to increase access for those with the greatest need. We also recommend the bureaus increase program flexibility of resources to ensure usage that better reflects the needs in the community. For example, if demand remains low in the voucher program, we suggest modifications to reallocate funds to other financial assistance programs with higher demand. The PUB anticipates that increased awareness and use of potential discounts and resources may allow struggling customers to pay partial bills, also improving revenues and helping the bureaus reduce amounts in arrears.

Small Business Relief

The PUB appreciated the opportunity to engage in the development and implementation of small business relief grants (SPUR) in 2020 and is monitoring potential legislative efforts to provide state-level resources that could complement local efforts. The PUB is eager to advance the goals of the SPUR program and recommends another round of SPUR grants be funded, with a continued focus on short term relief for BIPOC and women owned businesses to support businesses most negatively impacted by the pandemic.

Rate Development

The PUB also recognizes that the available programs cannot reach every Portlander that needs utility rate assistance. We encourage BES to expeditiously complete the rate study that may provide another avenue to address stormwater rates and the inequities of existing rate methodology. The PUB supports use of finer-scale methods, rather than defaulting to averages to assess the fairness of fees. One area PUB suggests BES explore is its methods of calculating private property stormwater fees based on impervious area averages. The PUB acknowledges that the reduction to the rate study budget next year is not indicative of reduced priority for this work but just a shift due to the delayed timing. We recognize that 2020 was a challenging

year and appreciate BES's commitment to invest in and make time for thorough public engagement. The PUB supports the expanded community engagement related to the rate study and is eager to provide feedback in the coming year.

The PUB recognizes that this is a tough time for residents and businesses and is especially harder for people who are the most impacted by this public health crisis, particularly BIPOC and other historically underrepresented communities. It is our job to make sure that the bureaus are providing help to people who are really in need and ensure that no one is left out. Affordability will remain a focus of many future discussions and recommendations.

Employee Development and Investment

The PUB recognizes that employees are a critical resource that requires investment and focus to ensure that the bureaus are developing and nurturing a sustainable and equitable employee culture. The PUB has previously supported the addition of positions at both bureaus for a more coordinated focus on employee culture and investments that advance components of the equity and strategic plans.

The bureaus have responsibly addressed planned reductions in revenues by identifying efficiencies, cost-containment and savings, including holding positions vacant to reduce expenses. We commend this approach but also recognize the work has not decreased and therefore holding vacancies can increase workload burdens and negatively impact remaining staff. The PUB encourages the bureaus to monitor workload and consider filling vacancies if the revenues come in higher than expected.

Beyond monitoring overall employee impacts, the PUB recommends an increased focus on improving hiring, retention and mentoring for BIPOC employees. The PUB recommends that the bureaus look to their bureau equity and strategic plans and ensure there are components to adequately address the ongoing challenges of this work. The PWB has demonstrated some success with their apprenticeship program and mentoring to result in increased hiring of BIPOC employees, particularly in positions traditionally favoring white males. Similarly, BES has success with internship programs but may still struggle to convert those positions into permanent employees. There may be an opportunity for the utility bureaus to partner and build on recent good work, continue to expand opportunities and create more equitable work cultures.

Performance Measures and Project Delivery

The PUB supports the BES and Water performance measures for the coming year and will continue to work with the bureaus as they further develop and refine measures. We support the change to calculate the rate increase impact by quintile household income instead of median household income. This is a more accurate and fair way to assess economic impacts on lower income households. We suggest that the bureaus also develop measures to estimate how

the benefits of Capital Improvement Projects are distributed among different household incomes.

Finally, we commend both bureaus for the strides they are making towards equitable project delivery and community impacts. The PUB shares BES' optimism about the new Project Management Office (PMO) and acknowledges that it seems to be positively influencing project delivery. The PUB agrees with the bureau's plan to use the PMO to lead an overhaul of the Capital Improvement Project prioritization process and develop associated equity measures. We recognize BES for progress made in developing a Community Benefits Agreement for the Secondary Treatment Expansion Project (STEP) and piloting the contracting program to expand utilization of minority-owned, women-owned and other disadvantaged businesses. We appreciate these efforts and look forward to future programs.

Decision Package – PWB Capital Set-Aside Request - ADA Barrier Removal

There was just one decision package to review with a request for approximately \$1.5 million in General Fund for removal of ADA barriers identified on PWB properties in the Citywide Transition plan. The PUB supports the intent of the package to ensure that hydroparks and other facilities are accessible to the public and reducing potential liability risks. However, we also recognize that this request must be prioritized among other City projects so encourage funding when appropriate compared to other competing demands. The PUB defers to the City Attorney and City Budget Office to determine which portions are appropriate for rate-payer funds versus General Fund.

Next Steps

The PUB views this opportunity to comment on the bureaus' budget submissions as one of several touch points with City Council throughout the annual budget and planning processes. If you have any questions or suggestions, please reach out. We look forward to continued conversations about the budget and utility services.

Excerpt from PUB's [April 1, 2020 Letter to Council](#) regarding FY 2020-21 Requested Budgets

...Particularly as rates continue to increase, the financial assistance programs are a critical component of the bureaus' programs to support residents equitably. The PUB is supportive of expansions to the financial assistance program over the past year, and in addition have identified the following areas of recommendations to ensure these programs are increasingly effective and equitable (list order is not prioritized):

1. Accessibility – The website is difficult to navigate to locate information about the financial assistance programs, particularly the opportunities for multi-family residents. If PUB members struggle to find information, even as an insider with knowledge of what to look for online, then it causes great concern for the customer that urgently needs these resources but does not know they exist. PWB should use Google analytics and other tools to evaluate and implement changes to improve accessibility of the financial assistance programs for the public. At a minimum, the website should be updated to provide easier access to the public to the dedicated line for the financial assistance team, more graphic materials should be developed on how to access programs, and crisis information should be provided in multiple languages similar to other assistance resources online.
2. Marketing and Outreach – the financial assistance program has been established but has a gap in marketing and outreach to ensure all residents in need are aware of the resources and connected to appropriate opportunities. Although PWB has made some efforts in outreach to religious organizations they report that it has not been successful. The PUB recommends a more thorough evaluation of why these efforts have not worked and identify changes to improve the impact of efforts to religious organizations and immigrant and refugee partners. The PUB recommends that resources be dedicated to the marketing and outreach for a focused push to get the word out to the public. One example could be the hiring of summer interns to staff at community centers to connect with the public.
3. Leveraging Resources of Related Programs – Both BES and PWB have other programs that could assist residents that are at risk and struggling to afford their utility bills, specifically the PWB Water Efficiency and the BES Clean River Rewards programs. Although you cannot compel residents to participate in these voluntary programs, the PUB recommends strengthening the connection between the financial assistance program and these other programs so that residents are effectively advised of the opportunities for assistance on home repairs and other improvements that could reduce their utility bills. An Auditor report previously identified that the Clean River Rewards program has primarily benefited middle class homeowners and has not effectively reached low income customers. BES has recently conducted outreach to financial assistance program participants and had a positive response. The PUB supports this expanded outreach and recommends that the connections continue to be strengthened,

as well as new partnerships explored such as with the renter's assistance program in the Housing Bureau. With effective messaging and repeated announcements, the bureaus may be able to increase participation and help customers that are struggling to afford their utility bills.

4. Address Administrative Challenges – Although the financial assistance programs have been successful, the PUB is eager to support efforts to close the gap between those who are qualified to receive assistance and those who are receiving it. We have heard concerns about the capacity for Home Forward and the STRA agencies with existing resources. The PUB recommends that PWB:
 - a. inquire with Home Forward and STRA agencies about bottlenecks,
 - b. identify whether there are needs for additional administrative support,
 - c. identify whether internal resources or additional funding could address these challenges, and
 - d. conduct an annual review of the relationship with STRA agencies to identify opportunities to influence their processes and ease access for community members needing resources.
5. Data Tracking and Analysis – As the bureau works toward closing the gap on who is receiving resources, data will be very important to determine how to improve marketing and outreach. The PUB recommends strengthening the tracking of the demographics of who is being served and analyzing who is missing to inform program activities. The PUB also recommends tracking the collaboration partners and relationships so that these can be clearly communicated with the PUB and public and used to help identify gaps and recommendations for expansion.