

Portland Utility Board

Tuesday, March 3rd, 2026, 3:30 p.m.
Virtual meeting using Zoom platform
Meeting #223

Attendees

PUB Members

Kyle Chipman, Co-chair
Cormac Burke
Bruk Berhanu
Lorraine Wilson
Darrel Bobb
Jenny O'Connor
Julia DeGraw
Alexis Rife
Joanne Johnson, Ex-Officio

Absent

Dr. Myra Khushbakht*
Lauren Rosenkranz*
**Notice of absence provided prior to meeting*

Staff

Amy Archer-Masters, Portland Utility Board
Analyst, City Budget Office
Jonna Lynn Bransford, Portland Utility Board
Coordinator, City Budget Office
Ting Lu, Director, Portland Utility
Farshad Allahdadi, Environment Services
Brandon Zero, Water Bureau
Riley Sandel, Budget Office
Sarah Murphy Santner, Water Bureau
Sherri Peterson, Environmental Services

Public

Carol Cushman, League of Women Voters
Michael

Background & Video

Acronyms & Definitions

In these notes PWB or “Water” stand for Portland Water Bureau, BES for the Bureau of Environmental Services, PWSA for Public Works Service Area, PDAT for Project Delivery Advisory Team, ARC for Administrative Review Committee, and PUB for the Portland Utility Board.

Video Recording

The [video of the meeting](https://www.portland.gov/pub/events/2026/3/3/portland-utility-board-meeting) as well as supporting documents can be found here:
<https://www.portland.gov/pub/events/2026/3/3/portland-utility-board-meeting>.

In the below notes the **blue timestamp** indicates the approximate place in the video where a particular topic begins as well as providing a link to that portion of the video. For example, **3:45**

indicates that this topic begins at approximately 3 minutes and 45 seconds into the video. Closed captioning is available by clicking on the CC symbol in the lower right side of the video tool bar.

Discussion, Action Items, Decisions

Summary

The Portland Utility Board (PUB) began with a vote on a co-chair appointment recommendation, with Lorraine Wilson nominated as co-chair for a six-month term. The bulk of the meeting was spent discussing the utilities' budget development for next fiscal year. Director Lu provided updates on the utilities' budget process and three scenarios being considered. PUB members expressed concerns about the limited information available and the tight timeline for providing feedback. The board discussed the need for more detailed information on potential service cuts and the rationale behind budget decisions. They emphasized the importance of transparent communication and early engagement in the budget process. PUB members agreed to focus on advocating for maintaining current service levels and protecting financial assistance programs. The conversation ended with a review of upcoming PUB meetings and announcements about recruitment for new members.

Call to Order

Kyle Chipman, PUB chair, called the meeting to order at approximately 3:30 p.m.

Disclosure of Communications

There were no disclosures.

Public Comment [3:58](#)

None was offered.

Review of Minutes [4:40](#)

Draft minutes from February 3rd and February 19th were distributed and accepted as written.

Co-chair Discussion [5:18](#)

Lorraine volunteered for 6 months as one of the more seasoned members of the Board, offering her expertise and experience to help PUB get through the next 6 months.

Vote

1. Kyle moved
2. Cormac seconded
3. Discussion: Members expressed their thanks for her stepping up into this role.
4. Public comment: none
5. Vote: members unanimously supported.

Budget Updates & Discussion 10:11

PUB staff shared a short summary of available information, sharing that there is a significant gap in funding, especially in the general fund which (among other things) funds housing and public safety. Current Service Levels were discussed at a Council work session last week. This morning was the first Council work session discussion of the gaps and some of the tradeoffs for Public Safety and Community and Economic Development. Next week is Public Works, City Administrator's office, and Operations Service Area. On March 19th, Council will dig more deeply into tradeoffs, etc. April 20th is target for the Mayor's proposed budget. Subsequent to that there will be additional sessions as Council moves toward the Approved budget.

PUB Staff asked that members share their feedback, comments, etc. with PUB staff so that they can get those raised with utility staff.

1. A member expressed concern around the potential for the transportation fee to be added to utility bills.
 - a. Director Lu clarified that the transportation fee would not be implemented July 1. It is still in development, but even if approved would not go into effect on that date. Will see about having DCA Dhanapal come and talk with PUB about that.
2. Concern around how PUB can possibly provide recommendation when they have such limited information.
 - a. Director Lu states that she is taking notes and will talk with leaders about these concerns. Invited PUB to watch their presentation and discussion with Council during the work session on March 11.
3. In alignment with previous member's concerns around delays, sequencing, of information: everyone is being pushed into a reactive state. How does PUB maximize their voice in either written or spoken format? Are Bureaus or Public Works staff concerned about Council's capacity to make informed decisions given the time and resource limitations?
 - a. Director Lu described that from a process standpoint (will get more info out next Monday), they are making sure that staff are there to support PUB in their advocacy. After the work session there will be additional discussion. Councilmembers do have some foundational understanding because of prior presentations that provided to Council (for example, the recent update around Bull Run Filtration Projects).
 - b. PUB staff also replied, saying that they will be watching March 11th meeting and what is shared with Council. Although there may not be a lot of detail in those work sessions, hopefully in the March 19th PUB meeting, as the bureaus have more information they will be able to share more. There really isn't a lot of opportunity for public feedback – some Council members have put out surveys to get information from their constituents. The challenge of those surveys is that they are really high level and they don't typically include information about the actual tradeoffs that Council is considering.

4. Offering some kind of advocacy or feedback on the reduction scenarios, or (in the spirit of another member's point) it is important to avoid surprise fees that make residents feel pushed into a corner. It is concerning to have such a constrained time frame, especially with Council having difficulty coming together to make thoughtful decisions.
5. Another member stated that it would be a good idea for PUB to land on some broad themes and talking points as soon as possible to clarify their own recommendations. Then at the next meeting, designate co-chairs as spokespersons when the opportunity arises to do that. The member expressed concern that there does not seem to be a good opportunity for them to provide their input, but that PUB remains committed to financial assistance and understanding tradeoffs where they are necessary.
6. Where are there conversations or indications of the use of PCEF funds – especially because the Bureau of Environmental Services and Water are linked to the original intent of those funds.
 - a. Director Lu does not know about what the conversation is around PCEF funds right now.
7. A member said he would put it bluntly that the type of information that PUB is lacking and what they hope will come out of the Public Works session: exactly where the reductions will take place if they need to take place.
 - a. PUB staff: one of the challenges is the breadth of questions that are asked. One hope is that staff & leadership will have a higher level of understanding of where Council is leaning in terms of reductions or tradeoffs.
8. The delivery of information is the same day as the next PUB meeting, so it's before the Council meeting. The bulk of the focus is likely to be on the general fund side, though.
9. Member describes being reminded again of last year, and reminds PUB to go back to their charge: that PUB was created because of a legal issues and challenges. They have asked what they need to do to get the information they need to provide oversight. If PUB is not provided the information they need, how can they say that they have provided the oversight they are charged to provide? The Board has a fiduciary responsibility that they take seriously.
10. Another member asked to understand what's behind the decisions that the bureaus are making, what tradeoffs they are making. Also, are there political pressures to do certain things? If so, PUB member expressed a desire to hear specific tradeoffs and what that means in terms of service and dollars, as well as how these scenarios play out in relation to the general fund.
 - a. PUB staff – yes, all general fund allocations or bureaus have been asked to put forward reductions, including Public Safety (as was not asked in the past). That doesn't mean they will be applied across the board, but they're being asked to provide those scenarios.
 - b. March 7th, Council is holding a priority session. No opportunity for them to get input, but it's a chance for them to work together and discuss their priorities as a full council.
11. A member recommended that others listen to the January 22nd Finance subcommittee meeting as it was informative in terms of understanding the context of the fiscal situation the City is in.

12. There is a possibility of PUB's providing some input or guidance to the Council or the Mayor's office so that they can better understand the experience of volunteers. Leverage the Advisory Bodies report to inform that.
13. PUB can "walk and chew gum." Even though the gap looks small for utilities, whatever hits that fan with regards to rates, residents will not be thinking about that gap. The member reiterated a concern that the Bureaus do not understand clearly what they will be facing when Portlanders get this additional (transportation) fee. They expressed a desire not to have the new City Administrator be subjected to that level of outrage and challenge. There is a perception that everything needs to be kept really close to the chest, not getting information. Seeing less of the finance folks from the Bureaus – not having a conversation/back & forth with them.
14. The chair summarized some overall priorities as expressed throughout this meeting and others:
 - a. Intergenerational equity
 - b. Implications of rate increases along with fee increases (real or potential)
 - c. Scenarios in reduction packages and PUB's advocacy, and the rationale behind those decisions
 - d. Combined rate review / projection and the absence of tacked-on additions
 - e. Protections of financial assistance programs
15. A member expressed a desire to understand the reasoning behind the decisions made by the Bureaus, and another member followed that sentiment with a hope that along with those rationales, they clarify the options ("knobs they're able to turn") that they chose and the way those decisions are interrelated and how can the public trace the impacts of them. How to think of them in context with each other. Another member said this is the type of information that PUB has been provided in the past, ahead of the Bureaus' going to Council. That conversation used to start in October or November and PUB complained it was too late then!

Announcements & Next PUB Meeting

- Recruitment for PUB volunteers is live
 - Members encouraged to share with their networks
- ARC meetings
 - Co-chair plans to draft background info to share with upcoming volunteers for future ARC meetings.
- PUB leadership team meeting March 12 – rescheduled from Feb 25.
 - Members encouraged to share their questions ahead of that.

Closing

Meeting adjourned at 5:00 pm

The next meeting will be Thursday, March 19th, 2026.

Possible topics

- Budget updates, feedback, and engagement

- Recruitment

Likely future topics

- Regulatory drivers
- PDAT
- Natural Resources Service Delivery

Potential Future Topics: Carryover from prior meetings, Natural Resources Service Delivery, Permitting reorganization update, strategic & equity plans updates. STEP, PCEF updates, filtration update.