

Portland Utility Board

Tuesday, January 9, 2024, 5:00 p.m.
Virtual meeting using Zoom platform
Meeting #167

Attendees:

PUB Members:

Alexis Rife
Bob Sallinger
Christopher Richard
Heather Day-Melgar
Karen Williams
Julia DeGraw
Robin Castro, Chair
Joanne Johnson, Ex-Officio
Joe Spada, Ex-Officio
Roslyn Gray, Ex-Officio

Absent: Lorraine Wilson

*Notice of absence provided prior to meeting

Staff:

Amy Archer-Masters, Portland Utility Board Analyst, City Budget Office
Brandon Zero, Portland Water Bureau
Farshad Allahdadi, Bureau of Environmental Services
Jacq Tjaden, Office of Commissioner Mapps
Ken Bartocci, Bureau of Environmental Services
Michelle Rodriguez, Office of Commissioner Mapps
Sarah Santner, Portland Water Bureau
Scott Hansen, Bureau of Environmental Services

Public:

Carol Cushman, League of Women Voters
Marianne Fitzgerald
One unidentified “***044”

Items Discussed, Action Items, Decisions

In these notes PWB stands for Portland Water Bureau, BES for the Bureau of Environmental Services, PUB for the Portland Utility Board and PP&R for Portland Parks and Recreation.

The [video](#) of the meeting as well as supporting documents can be found here:

<https://www.portland.gov/pub/events/2024/1/9/portland-utility-board-meeting-joint-board-commission-meeting>

Note that PUB held a meeting from 5:00-5:45pm, then adjourned to join the PP&R Board meeting. Minutes and video of the PP&R Board meeting will be available at <https://www.portland.gov/parks/portland-parks-board>. The PUB joins their meeting approximately 43 minutes into the video.

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.

The Board discussed updates regarding the Proposed Columbia Slough Agreement and Budget, as well as prepared for the joint meeting with PP&R Board regarding Natural Resources Service Delivery Assessment.

I. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at approximately 5:02pm. Quorum was reached during routine business by approximately 5:06pm.

II. Disclosure of communications [~3:18](#)

There were no disclosures.

III. Public Comment [~3:51](#)

There was no public comment.

IV. Review of Minutes [~4:33](#)

The December 5, 2023 minutes were accepted as submitted.

V. Brief Items and Announcements [~5:13](#)

Proposed Columbia Slough Agreement

The Chair noted that BES is going to Council with the proposed Columbia Slough Agreement on January 17th and PUB needs to determine whether to engage by providing support or comment during the hearing. PUB staff reminded that BES provided information regarding the agreement in December and that no action was required but if feedback was desired it could be provided verbally or staff could submit in writing.

- A PUB member shared that they would like to see PUB issue a simple statement in support of the agreement (not a formal letter, just a brief statement). As presented it

seems to be a thoughtful, financially prudent and relatively inclusive strategy. The concern is that based on the response from staff that the agreement could proceed even though the higher increased rate was not accepted at the level requested. It is important to support proactive planning. PUB supported the larger increased rate because items like this were in the budget. They would like to make that point that they are concerned because there seems no appetite for increased rates so support things that require those rates without taking resources from other important work.

- A PUB member shared agreement with the statements and for a simple statement. There was general support expressed from other members.

VOTE

Karen made a motion that PUB issue a short statement of support for the Columbia Slough Agreement, including a statement of concern regarding having the necessary rate increases to fund forward looking proposals such as this one. Chris seconded.

There was no further discussion or public comment.

Yes: RC, KW, HDM, BS, JD, CR, AR

No: n/a

Motion passes.

Budget

The Chair noted that it is budget season and PUB would need to determine whether the existing letter from PUB in November is sufficient providing our values for the Requested Budget or whether additional expansion desired for the initial letter.

PUB Staff/Amy noted that the Mayor's two guidance memos were shared via email. The Budget Office has a calendar being approved later this week and includes the following key items:

- Work sessions in February. February 8th is the Public Works budget session, around 2pm.
- Requested Budgets due February 16th
- Utility Rate Hearing March 5th – typically later in process, currently same day as a PUB meeting. Goal to have Council have rate discussion earlier in process so it is decided as budgets move forward through process. It does change PUB's timeline.
- Public Listening Sessions in April
- Mayor's Proposed May 2nd

There are several questions for PUB to consider:

- Does PUB want to use November values letter for the Requested Budget Letter from PUB or have other content to add?

- It is not clear yet whether advisory committees are expected to submit a letter, but that has been the standard in the past. PUB's first letter usually is focused on values and framing similar to what was provided to the bureaus in PUB's November letter.
- There may be more information PUB wants to cover in addition to values by the February 16th submission date.
- PUB can continue the conversation at the January 18th meeting.
- What are PUB's next steps for engagement?
 - Plan is for bureaus to share more information in February regarding budget requests. Any areas of focus?
 - Service area work sessions occurring through February, provide potential opportunity for feedback.
 - Rate hearing in March

Announcements

- Seeking volunteers for Administrative Review Committee meetings through June. See email for specific dates and let staff know if available.
- Recruitment Update – reminder to share posting broadly as the recruitment closes January 22nd and so far only one application received. Please let PUB staff know if willing to be contacted by potential applicants if they have questions.
 - A participant asked if there were specific skills PUB was seeking? There is a broad list of skills desired generally but there is not a clear targeted skill set with this recruitment. PUB continues to try to diversify and balance the board. Gaps in the past identified include public health. The application was written very broadly so that applicants do not have to identify specific skills.
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has a public hearing on the Lead and Copper Rule Improvements (LCRI) on January 16th. Information has been sent out via email previously. Today – January 9th – is the deadline to preregister to speak at the hearing but they do take registration through the date of hearing but spot is not guaranteed.

Preparation for the Joint Session regarding Natural Resources

The Chair shared the desire to prepare for the joint meeting regarding Natural Resources and opened for discussion any expectations and how to make it successful.

- A PUB member asked whether PUB could ask questions or if they are there to listen. They noted the question of whether legal has weighed in yet on the transfer of resources for natural resources. Should this be a question to ask now or do we wait?
 - PUB Staff/Amy responded that PUB should ask questions if there is time at the meeting. All three boards involved are equally engaging even though it is during PP&R Board meeting so they are leading getting it started but bureau directors and their staff are providing information. The work groups have continued to meet and work through issues so some answers may be a part of the presentation. If your question is not answered, raise it during the meeting even if it needs to be answered later. The goal is to make sure that all the boards are

receiving the same information as requested so that if you desire engaging in the work session that you have current information. PUB members have a different link than the general public one specifically so they can engage fully and ask questions. If there isn't enough time, questions could be raised at the subsequent PUB meeting as well.

- A PUB member shared that they have some opinions and concerns but they have a work obligation so cannot make the subsequent meeting. They do not want to miss an opportunity so asked if they could share with staff that it could be passed to another board member or staff could share on their behalf.
- A PUB member noted that they assumed there may not be enough time to ask all our questions since there are three boards and such a short time. If questions provided that require written follow-up they would like to see all three boards get the same information.
- The Chair welcomed Michelle and Jacq with Commissioner Mapps office and asked if they had information to share since they are closer to the inner workings. Michelle noted that the Natural Resources work session is on February 1st, and public testimony is not taken at work sessions. However, the PUB could ask during the meeting what the plan is for advisory bodies at the work session and if so the role and engagement. They expected the meeting may be more engaging but the agenda doesn't appear to provide a lot of time for questions and discussion. It may be something PUB would like to request. If PUB wants to be invited testimony at the work session then it would be good to make that request clear and staff made aware of the request. They also encouraged questions at the joint meeting and feel empowered to engage fully as the Commissioner's office sees that as PUB's role.
 - A PUB member asked if City Attorney would be present?
 - Michelle noted that it is not clear but they do not typically attend unless specifically requested. They did note that legal has responded that although it was a resolution it has the same authority as if it was an ordinance.
 - The amendment did not provide enough detail for decision-making required so discussions should further clarify the specificity including the legal questions.
 - The PUB member noted a pattern of the City doing something, being sued and then having to have General Fund pay it back. It seems that given prior experience with the Anderson lawsuit to learn from that experience. Michelle noted that other participants at the meeting likely do not have the knowledge of Anderson lawsuit to the degree PUB members have been exposed.
- There was brief discussion about changes to the budget process and noted that the work sessions were unclear as the budget office is still working on guidance. PUB staff noted that the speed provides challenges for PUB since there may not be a PUB meeting between when guidance released and the work sessions so PUB may need to testify as individuals instead of collectively.

VI. Transition to Joint Board Meeting/Closing

PUB Staff/Amy provided on screen a link to the subsequent joint meeting with PP&R Board, noting that PUB members should have received a different link directly from Zoom so that they can engage fully rather than as a member of the public. Staff on-site notified that the Portland Building is now locked so any staff with a badge can get in but if any other PUB members or members of the public needed to gain entry to let PUB staff know so that we could coordinate BES staff to let them in.

PUB staff/Amy noted that a PUB member had flagged before they left the meeting that Commissioner Gonzalez had introduced an amendment that would suspend ecoroof requirements. Staff will follow up and identify whether time is needed at an upcoming agenda.

Potential future meetings and topics to be determined.

The meeting adjourned at approximately ~5:48 p.m. with video and minutes for the PP&R Board video and minutes (not yet posted) available at <https://www.portland.gov/parks/portland-parks-board>.