

## Portland Utility Board

Tuesday, February 15, 2024, 11:00a.m.

Virtual meeting using Zoom platform

Meeting #170

### **Attendees:**

#### *PUB Members:*

Robin Castro, Chair  
Alexis Rife  
Bob Sallinger  
Christopher Richard  
Karen Williams  
Lorraine Wilson (from ~11:30am)  
Joanne Johnson, Ex-Officio  
Joe Spada, Ex-Officio  
Roslyn Gray, Ex-Officio

#### *Absent:*

Heather Day-Melgar\*  
Julia DeGraw\*  
\*Notice of absence provided prior to meeting

#### *Staff:*

Amy Archer-Masters, Portland Utility Board Analyst, City Budget Office  
Cecelia Huynh, Portland Water Bureau  
Dawn Uchiyama, Bureau of Environmental Services  
Farshad Allahdadi, Bureau of Environmental Services  
Jacq Tjaden, Commissioner Mapps' Office  
Jeff Winner, Portland Water Bureau  
John Maloney, Bureau of Environmental Services  
Ken Bartocci, Bureau of Environmental Services  
Shannah Anderson, Bureau of Environmental Services

#### *Public:*

Moira Painter

### **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 or Parks 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/2024/2/15/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.

The Board briefly discussed Natural Resources Service Delivery and request for volunteers to serve on a project team. The Board also discussed and approved content for the PUB's [Requested Budget Letter](#).

**I. Call to Order**

The Chair called the meeting to order at approximately 11:04am.

**II. Disclosure of communications [~3:27](#)**

There were no disclosures by members.

**III. Public Comment [~4:02](#)**

There was no public comment.

**IV. Brief Items and Announcements [~4:46](#)**

Natural Resources Service Delivery

The Chair welcomed BES Director Dawn Uchiyama to provide an update regarding Natural Resources Service Delivery (NRSD) planning. Dawn shared appreciation for Shannah Anderson as the project manager for NRSD and the point of contact if PUB needed additional information or to provide feedback. She shared that they wanted to follow up on the work session and implementation of Resolutions 37609 and 37635 and the ongoing conversation between BES, Parks, Water, Portland Bureau of Transportation and Bureau of Planning and Sustainability.

Dawn acknowledged the process has not been easy to follow and shared appreciation for PUB's involvement. They hope to course correct and improve opportunities for feedback and clear outcomes moving forward. Dawn shared appreciation to PUB and particularly Bob and Roslyn for their testimony, perspectives and observations provided at the work session. Dawn requested PUB's involvement in the future workplan, inviting two PUB members that could tag team and be a part of the work plan development. Rather than the City doing work and then asking for feedback, they would like to do things differently and integrate the community's involvement in co-creating the work plan, exchanging information in real-time. Actively participating in the project team is the most effective way to influence how the work plan is developed. They are also inviting Parks Board and Urban Forestry Commission to also identify representatives, so that each can speak from your areas of expertise. Scope and schedule are

still being defined, but they want to respond to what PUB needs to effectively engage in this effort.

Shannah shared that there are two asks – short-term ask is for two PUB members to help with refinement of the work plan that is due to City Administrator by May. The project team would consist of representatives from the advisory boards, the five bureau directors, and bureau subject matter experts. They estimate it would be about 4-6 hours per month for meetings with materials to review in between meetings. The longer-term ask they can come back and speak to later, but would focus on the implementation of the work plan.

- PUB member Bob volunteered to participate. Ex-officio member also volunteered.
  - PUB Staff/Amy noted that the PUB did not yet have a quorum in this meeting so could not reach any formal decisions, but that they noted the volunteers and could come back to the topic as needed.
  - Dawn noted that the request for two members was for the project team but they could also look at other ways through a subcommittee to have backup for those engaging in the team.
- A PUB member shared appreciation to Dawn and the BES team. This is responsive to PUB's discussion at the prior meeting regarding the joint meeting and feels this project team is a better model to get practical work done.
  - Dawn noted that it is open to refinement, they just want to get feedback from all stakeholders. She said they could formalize the request in writing if needed.
- A PUB member shared that the work session went better than they expected, but was still left with a disconnect. The budget cycle is in process. What is the moment where it will be formally integrated or not, when does rubber hit the road?
  - Dawn shared that she thinks of it in budget cycles, and this budget cycle they were not ready and there was unanimous agreement by the bureaus that they could not be prepared by the February 16<sup>th</sup> deadline for Requested Budget. Budgeting happens year-round, but really each year the framing is by November/December each year. She sees this next November as the goal to have a plan figured out and ready to be loaded into the next budget cycle. There will be a new administration in February when budget is loaded but if they show good process and have support then they should be able to carry those recommendations forward to the new administration. There also are two tracks – what is in the resolutions and the definition of operations and maintenance (possibly incremental improvements on who is maintaining natural areas) and then also where are we going in the long-term (How does it fit with Climate and Sustainability Officer's agenda? How does it fit in a larger natural resource management strategy?).
- A PUB member asked them to think about adding natural resources to the org chart, as it will not be the largest priority for the new administration and do not want it to get lost. That would allow the new administration to inherit an org chart that reflects the recommendations. Does that seem feasible?

- Dawn suggested that is absolutely something the PUB member on the project team could recommend as an outcome to achieve by November.

## V. **Budget Development** [~24:13](#)

The Chair shared the goal for today was to have a quick debrief on the Public Works budget work session, then finalize a Requested Budget Letter from PUB and discuss next steps.

Robin shared that they attended the meeting in person and testimony went smoothly. She shared appreciation for Commissioner Mapps for arranging the invited testimony and those that helped prepare the testimony. She did not love the reaction from the Mayor and statements that PUB was baiting him. He shared disagreement later after she could have engaged in discussion. We should be able to be in the space and have disagreement without it being interpreted as a personal attack. She wondered if it was worth conversation with Commissioner Mapps for support in those circumstances.

PUB staff noted for the record that the Board reached quorum as of approximately 11:30am.

- Jacq shared appreciation to Robin for testifying. They did note tension in the room and their office would be happy to meet and discuss how to support in those moments. There is a lot going on behind the scenes as well as navigating a political space. PUB does have the freedom and the role to share things that bureaucrats and some Council members cannot state. In future, if they can provide preparation on what is going on in the background they could do that. Overall the work session went well and they received lighthearted comments and did not receive any push back on the requested rates.
- A PUB member shared that this Council is one that seems to go after testifiers in a way they have not seen before. Some members seem comfortable jumping into the middle of testimony and calling testifiers out in ways that are problematic. They also know there is inter-Council tension and they seem to be taking that out on the public. They urged the Commissioner to take back and note that when volunteers are giving of their time that they should be asking questions to understand where we are coming from rather than challenging to put them in their place. The nature of public testimony is to be out of line sometimes. It is essential to have more than one member there so there are reinforcements when challenged. It is their prerogative to reject what we say, but they need to create a space where these issues can rise up and be better understood.
- A PUB member shared recognition of the power we have as members and to be mindful of that power in those spaces.

## Requested Budget Letter Development [~35:13](#)

PUB Requested budget letter draft was sent to PUB members in advance of the meeting. The draft was pulled up on screen for review and discussion. The Chair noted that it was a combination of the November letter and some components of the recent testimony and walked

through the document. They noted there are some areas they would like it to be “harder hitting”. They also suggested that some of the comments just made about interactions with public giving testimony may be good to add to the letter. Following are the key points of discussion during the review:

- There was discussion about being clearer about the challenging Council decisions were just last year, of being supportive of rates as requested and not hearing push back in the work session.
- There was agreement regarding including reference to the recent decisions to exclude some parties from rates though not significant amounts do have impact over time (over water structures).
- There was brief discussion regarding the use of PCEF funds included in prior testimony, and PUB Staff noted that they did not include reference to whether use of the funds was appropriate since some response had been provided during the work session.
- There was discussion regarding the framing in guidance around high taxation, and agreement to highlight the 2022 report from City staff, identifying other issues related to infrastructure and connections to affordable housing.
- There was some discussion regarding language that might be less adversarial in how the information is presented, acknowledging that the disagreement is not just with the Mayor but with overall guidance, and suggestion to be constructive in the feedback. There was suggestion to be clearer with guidance with positive framing rather than stating the negative, identifying potential points of agreement.
- There was discussion regarding acknowledging the cause of the inflation and impacts on Portlanders.
- There was discussion regarding natural resources, suggestion of reflecting the recent request from BES for PUB to engage in project team and acknowledge the value in that approach. There was also discussion regarding highlighting remaining concerns, and concern regarding transfer of assets. Staff clarified that there is not a transfer of assets in current budget, the only transaction being fee for service for removal of trees on private property. It was suggested that the framing be provided that no assets should be transferred unless the issues are addressed.
- There was discussion regarding adding clarification at the beginning of the letter highlighting the main points of the letter. It was suggested that key takeaways include investing in long-term infrastructure and framing concerns.
- There was discussion regarding the role of the advisory board and noting that we take it seriously, allowing expression even when we do not align.
  - There was suggestion to reference privilege as well as power.
  - There was discussion about the intended outcomes of including the tensions in the letter. Interest shared of providing framing of the PUB’s intended role.
  - There was discussion about understanding the harm experienced by marginalized communities and pattern of harming them and then telling them what they feel. This is not a new pattern of behavior. They question the need to pacify the person with greatest power. What is the intended outcome of trying

to pacify? Wordsmithing to worry about the impact on those in power is concerning. It is important to think about PUB's purpose and focus on that.

- There was discussion about being constructive and the need for leadership.
- There was support shared for both being constructive but not passive, being clear about what is not acceptable even when uncomfortable.
- There was discussion acknowledging the attempt to work within the dominant culture and appreciation for a PUB member bringing that to the surface as an issue.

PUB staff/Amy acknowledged the thoughts and perspectives shared and that where they ended may change some of the prior changes suggested. They asked if there were any volunteers to help finalize the letter the same day to ensure that the final edits would align with where the PUB ended their discussion. (Note, the final letter is [available online](#))

### **VOTE**

Karen made a motion to approve the draft budget letter as discussed and revised, with final edits and submission by PUB staff and up to 2 PUB volunteers. Alexis seconded the motion.

Discussion –

Robin suggested possibly mentioning passivity in the executive summary sentence if appropriate.

There was no public comment.

Yes: RC, CR, KW, AR, BS, LW

No: n/a

Abstain: none

Motion passes.

Next Steps: Staff will send out an update regarding Natural Resources to identify any volunteers. They asked whether there was desire to confirm representatives to participate? They noted that they still wanted to reach out to missing PUB members, particularly if community members are desired over staff representatives. There was general agreement from members informally supporting the project team approach and whoever volunteers could opt in to participate.

Staff will get budget documents out to PUB as soon as they are available (due February 16<sup>th</sup>, will be shared as soon as available). There is one more meeting prior to the March 6<sup>th</sup> Rate hearing, but that is a short window between the meeting and the hearing.

**VI. Announcements and Next Meeting [~1:28:48](#)**

PUB Staff/Amy provided the following quick updates:

- Recruitment subcommittee is reviewing the 11 applications received and will report more at future meeting.

Potential future meetings and topics to be determined, likely focus at upcoming meetings are budget and natural resources.

The meeting adjourned at approximately ~12:37 p.m.