

Portland Utility Board

Tuesday, March 5, 2024, 3:30p.m.
Virtual meeting using Zoom platform
Meeting #171

Attendees:

PUB Members:

Robin Castro, Chair
Alexis Rife
Bob Sallinger
Heather Day-Melgar
Joanne Johnson, Ex-Officio (from ~4:50pm)
Julia DeGraw
Karen Williams
Lorraine Wilson
Roslyn Gray, Ex-Officio

Absent:

Christopher Richard*
Joe Spada, Ex-Officio*
*Notice of absence provided prior to meeting

Staff:

Amy Archer-Masters, Portland Utility Board Analyst, City Budget Office
Angela Henderson, Bureau of Environmental Services
Anthony Locke, City Budget Office
Cecelia Huynh, Portland Water Bureau
Farshad Allahdadi, Bureau of Environmental Services
Jacq Tjaden, Commissioner Mapps' Office
Jeff Winner, Portland Water Bureau
Ken Bartocci, Bureau of Environmental Services

Public:

Carol Cushman, League of Women Voters
Dee White
Lorie McFarlane, Portland Advocates

Items Discussed, Action Items, Decisions

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

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

<https://www.portland.gov/pub/events/2024/3/5/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 then spent most of the time asking questions and discussing the BES and PWB Requested Budget's. The PUB approved testimony for the Rate Hearing.

I. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at approximately 3:32pm.

II. Disclosure of communications [~3:29](#)

There were no disclosures by members.

III. Public Comment [~3:58](#)

PUB Staff/Amy shared public comment that had been submitted in writing by Moira Painter following the February 15th meeting. A few highlights were shared and members were referred to the written version that had been sent to them electronically. A copy of the written comment is attached to these minutes as part of the official record.

IV. Review of Minutes [~6:10](#)

The Board approved the February 6th and February 15th minutes as drafted.

V. Brief Items and Announcements [~7:12](#)

Natural Resources Service Delivery

The Chair shared that Bob confirmed availability to participate in the Natural Resources Service Delivery project team. PUB still seeking another volunteer, Robin indicated she may be able to participate in a meeting but not long-term so would appreciate another volunteer if available.

- The first meeting is scheduled for March 22nd, 9:30-11:30am. PUB Staff shared that they estimated approximately 4-6 hours per month, with that first meeting scheduled and additional meetings will survey participants to try to schedule at times that work for most.
- A PUB member shared that it is likely 3 meetings and that this has a risk of being a “dog and pony show” so a lot of times the work that takes place between meetings is the real work. The process is moving fast, and anticipates it will take more than the time they put down to have an impact.

- A PUB member indicated that they are busy right now but will have a bit more time once legislative session ends so considered volunteering but isn't sure they could have enough time to do it well.
- A PUB member indicated they could participate in the March 22nd meeting. They asked if it could be tag-teamed with two or three of them engaging where possible in addition to Bob? Would that be helpful?
 - Bob shared that he doesn't know enough about the process, but it is better to have more people there than just one so that people can weigh in and report back. The other boards involved have two participants, so it would be good to have two. He can be the consistent participant and sees value in having the second participant be a shared.
- PUB staff/Amy agreed that there seemed to be benefit of sharing that role and noted that they would share the multiple representatives with Shannah at BES. There also is a coordinating meeting on March 12th for the advisory board representatives and then the full project team on March 22nd.
- Karen volunteered to be one of the representatives sharing the second seat. Julia agreed to be a third participant if Bob/others can check-in and bring up to speed when needed. She is on vacation next week so likely cannot make the March 12th meeting.
- A PUB member noted that an ex-officio did offer to participate and we heard back that was not an option and that is unfortunate. They wish the bureaus were more accommodating to allow the advisory boards to nominate who they want to participate as that representative would have been a valuable participant.
- PUB Staff confirmed that they would share the information with BES and participants would receive the availability surveys and meeting information.

VI. **Budget Development** [~19:33](#)

The Chair shared that Requested Budgets have been shared and a Rate Hearing is scheduled for March 6th at 3:30pm. The goal is to ask questions to clarify what has been reviewed, discuss next steps, and identify whether PUB should testify at the Rate Hearing.

BES Budget Questions/Discussion

The Chair welcomed Farshad Allahdadi and Ken Bartocci to answer questions related to BES budget.

- PUB Staff/Amy shared a question received in advance of the meeting - Where are the 11 new positions and what are the priority areas that are impacted? Are there other areas where FTE are reduced to shift FTE to a higher priority?
 - Of the 11 new positions: 5 of them are in the Business Services Group which support the priority of enhancing support functions; 3 are in environmental compliance to support permit compliance and the Fats, Oils and Grease program; 3 are in operations and maintenance to support the treatment and pumping priority by creating a pool of operators in training to help navigate the high turnover. Since the Requested Budget was submitted BES is in the process

of repurposing 9 vacant positions to support the treatment and pumping priority. They expect those positions to be reflected in the Adopted Budget. The work no longer being done as a result of the vacant positions being repurposed is important and valued, but given the financial constraints, our focus is on the most critical missions of the bureau.

- The FY24/25 goal for Watershed Health Index is 5.5 and the target is 8. What investment would be necessary to get to 8? (Maybe clarify the long-term plan/timeline to reach the strategic target?)
 - Ken shared that the strategic target for our Watershed Health goal is really a long-term target. To reach this target requires all city bureaus working together through planning, zoning, code, procurement, and infrastructure elements to stop causing harm, and actively improve conditions. A Natural Resources and Climate Resiliency bureau/entity is one way of focusing on this problem, but it is more than trees.
- Number of Greenstreets inspected FY24/25 goal (2,800) falls short of the target (5,500). What investment would it take to get to 5,500? (Maybe clarify the long-term plan/timeline to reach the strategic target?)
 - Ken shared that to achieve the stated goal of green street inspections (which is a proxy for our Level of Service), we would need to bring the work fully in house and have 5 crews of 4 FTE per crew. Currently we have 1 in-house crew and the rest of the work is contracted and under-funded. However, we believe we can improve the number of greenstreets inspected with the allocated PCEF dollars. The allocated PCEF dollars are going to contracted work, which is less efficient but is the approach for the available dollars.
- A PUB member shared significant concern regarding the role of PUB as a budget oversight body. Before PUB the budget committee began to meet in Fall and met 6-8 times to review all sections in deep detail. PUB was supposed to meet year-round and engage on these topics. They stated that there is not a financial person on the PUB now and this is more a public information forum not oversight. They shared that the originating purpose of the PUB was to have year-round members with deep knowledge to provide budget oversight but that the PUB has been marginalized from the purpose.
 - Ken shared that the bureaus have provided budget detail in the past and it was too much detail to process and now not enough. They are trying to find the right level of detail to provide. This budget process was very compressed, more than any prior experience. He sees value in PUB's input and would appreciate it throughout the year not just during budget process. From his perspective, to stuff it in to a few meetings right before budget submission has not been working well.
 - PUB Staff/Amy added that it has been a challenge and the process has changed year to year based on feedback from PUB members. Former PUB members have shifted the approach to focus on higher level policy issues and spend less time on budget. That was a conscious decision made by PUB, but that doesn't mean it

needs to stay that way or is right for current board members. PUB can revisit the budget approach to determine how to do it differently moving forward.

- A PUB member stated that it is not for the PUB to change their mission and it would be good to look at it and whether we are meeting the charge as well as whether we are recruiting for it appropriately. They were asked questions solely about equity in their recruitment.
- A PUB member noted that in the last budget session they stated that they wanted to be involved sooner in the process, acknowledging that the change in structure has impacted.
- A PUB member shared that whether changing mission/charge or not that they are a strong proponent of making sure we know what acting equitably entails, including transparency and making information accessible before decisions are made.
- A PUB member shared that equity and having somebody with financial and budget expertise are not exclusive. The statements came across that by focusing on equity that we are lowering or compromising the standards. Equity is part of budgeting and if budgets and process are not understandable for all then that is a problem and government should be accountable.
 - A PUB member apologized and said that was not their intent. It was originally skewed too heavily for business and they advocated for non-business people on the advisory board. It seems skewed the other way now and they believe some of the expertise from Citizens Utility Board and other business is missing.
- A PUB member shared that the absence of the program offer narratives limited their ability to understand connections in the budget. In the past those have been helpful to provide context for position reallocations and changes in funding as well as connections to larger strategic documents (equity, strategic, emergency resilience and planning). Another PUB member echoed that the narratives would have been helpful.
- A PUB member shared concern about the large proposed cut to watersheds, natural systems and restoration and biological sciences that were described as “lower priority work and ancillary to the mission of the bureau” that would only continue if Portland Clean Energy Funds (PCEF) are allocated. Who decided these programs were peripheral to BES’ mission and why was PUB not engaged in that decision? Why are no other cuts proposed as an alternative? Is there any discretion over BES cutting these items or is it decided?
 - Farshad responded that it is not as simple as it was framed. The circumstances are not politics but are risk analysis based. The risks of failure due to investment in treatment and pumping have the greatest negative consequences so demand investment this year. Watershed health is core to the bureau and will continue to be core. It is important to zoom out. The budget is not the bureau’s financial plan, it is the implementation of one year of the financial plan and an attempt to balance the available resources with the highest risks that need to be funded.

- The PUB member responded that they do not accept that response. In prior years of their involvement, every year BES proposed cuts to natural resources programs and every year found funding elsewhere. The BES budget document used those words to describe it as ancillary. In a budget this size you can find funding for these things, \$15.7 million is a large portion of the natural resources budget.
- A PUB member asked if BES had the funding from PCEF for the Natural Resources work or if they were likely to lose the programs planned for that funding.
 - Farshad responded that BES believes they have the PCEF funds although the vote has not happened to make it official yet.
 - The PUB member stated that they would like to see a lot more analysis if the programs were going to be cut – environmental, economic, equity, etc.
- A PUB member shared concern about PCEF funds being routed to fill budget shortfalls as that was not what the community voted for in 2018. It was approved as a 1% retail tax to be administered by non-profits and community groups lead by communities of color and historically underrepresented groups to help fight the climate crisis and prepare for climate change. They understand some of the programs will serve that purpose it is not the same as the original intent. Some of the projects funded by PCEF (such as projects 11 and 12) funds are crucial for equity and interconnected with indigenous populations and first foods. The documents say the programs would be eliminated if not funded by PCEF and expressed disappointment in that as these are crucial for culturally important foods to indigenous people.
- A PUB member asked why cost of living was budgeted in contingency rather than personnel and if anything else was covered by contingency.
 - Ken responded that BES has a personnel set-aside they put in contingency every year. They do not know whether Council will approve cost of living increases each year and how vacancy savings may cover some of the expense. It is budgeted in contingency in case they do not achieve enough savings to cover the increased personnel costs. The personnel contingency is just for cost of living (COLA).
- A PUB member echoed concerns that have been raised by other members.
- A PUB member noted that a lot of environmental targets have been changed or removed so you cannot compare year to year. They aren't reaching the targets on those that remain and it should be monitored whether they will get even further away from those targets as environmental programs are cut. Most environmental programs were dismantled a couple of years ago so comparisons year to year are difficult since the positions were reassigned. They would like to see some analysis of environmental resource positions and how it compares to prior years. They note that the Deputy City Administrator is going to make \$307,432 per year (with benefits), which seems extraordinary in a year where cuts are being made. They would like more information about infrastructure in the future. The environmental remediation fund is dropping from \$6million to \$4million, and there is some information but not an explanation for why the amount is reduced so significantly especially when superfund is gearing up.

There are a lot of things in the budget that were hard to track. In prior years there were a lot more details, and department heads would present information about their budgets to really understand how things were evolving, what changes were being made and why. This is the biggest transition we have seen and with less detail and no explanation provided. They plan to express to Council that you cannot have oversight boards and treat them in this manner.

- A PUB member shared concern about the lack of information in a timely manner. The information could have been shared while decisions were being made and PUB's values taken into account and have influence over the outcome. Even if the decisions would have been the same they would have been done collaboratively instead of simply being informed of a decision. As we move forward the PUB needs to get more specific about what we are asking for so that we have the tools to have a better process.
 - Farshad shared appreciation for the sentiments shared. There is nothing about the budget process that has been ideal for the bureau. The ideal process just shared is something they have been working toward with PUB. They had lots of conversations after last year's process, which was also not satisfying for many, with plans to engage early and everything was overturned by the extremely compressed timing window to make these decisions. Up until the last day of submittal there was uncertainty. He is not looking for sympathy but from his perspective meeting those expectations was just not possible this year, not because they don't believe in the vision of collaboration but because it was logistically impossible. There are also many people within BES that are typically engaged in a deeper level on budget development that feel they have been left out and are unclear on budget decisions. There is a lot of dissatisfaction they are managing. Please do not judge them based on this process, this year was an outlier and they know this is not how business should be done, they were forced to due to the circumstances in the City.
- A PUB member asked about page 27 of the budget and employee development funds being reduced with future years blank. When there are blanks/dashes in future years is that an area that you are not investing?
 - Ken responded that the budget document shows all of the old program offers prior to the transition to the new financial system. Those are required to be shown while there is still data in those categories. If it does not have a budget it is likely that it is a program offer that no longer exists. Several years ago Employee Development was a separate program and it is now part of another program area.
 - A PUB member noted that this explanation may respond to some of their prior comments. For example there is no budget under healthy working rivers, treatments for watersheds, sustainable stormwater, etc., all of the environmental programs cannot be found in the budget and they don't know what they have been renamed. It is hard to know if a program listed has been cut, renamed, increased, or what has happened to it. This is a problem when it is

handed to anybody like that, because it looks like a lot has been eliminated. They'd like to understand where these programs live.

- Ken responded that there are a lot of program offers that were eliminated and there is information that shows where they landed. Unfortunately, that does not show in this version of the document and they apologize for that. It was something they knew would be an issue when they reorganized so tried to address that in those expired program offers.
- A PUB member shared that they would like to know more about trees and natural areas being transferred to Portland Parks and Recreation to understand how it shows up in this budget, whether they have been transferred in this budget or if they are in limbo.
 - Farshad responded that final disposition of those programs has not been determined. An engagement with community over the coming months will determine next steps and clarify what transfers where. The programs remain in BES' budget.
 - The PUB member shared concern about the fact that the programs they are fighting to keep are in this budget at risk without PCEF funds. At a minimum it requires more explanation. Why is BES fighting to keep programs that it says are a low priority and threatened to cut? It is important to understand if BES plans to continue funding these programs if they keep them and whether it is a low priority.
 - Farshad responded that this is a healthy dialogue and would struggle to give a satisfying answer with PCEF funding still up in the air. Those programs are planned to continue with PCEF funds currently, but what is to come in the future is unknown.
- A PUB member asked a clarifying question about "DP Comm Partnerships" and what "DP" means and why it shows reduction.
 - Ken responded that "DP" refers to Decision Package so that work would be funded through the PCEF funds, so is excluded in the "no decision package" column.
- A PUB member shared support for the performance measure of feet of stream bank restored with a target of 12,000 feet, which is up from last year of only 3,000 feet. This is good to see that investments are improving reaching the target.
- A PUB member called out the performance measure for 30% of contracted funds for disadvantaged, minority and women owned businesses and recommended that the measure be disaggregated so that funds targeted specifically to BIPOC businesses is called out separate from the others.
- A PUB member shared disappointment that division heads were not present in this meeting since a lot of the questions are for them, they used to attend meetings previously which may have been overkill but not having them here is underkill.
- A PUB member noted that the program offer narratives provided a connection between the program offer areas and the measures within them. It is not clear in the document

that performance measures are drivers of decisions. For example, they found it puzzling that the Leadership program offer has performance measures around affordability. Those are important performance measures, but it isn't clear how the area would be driven by the measures. Another example is Strategy program offer and the watershed health index and education programs. The narratives should spell out the connection to see if budget decisions are on track to move the measures forward.

The PUB took a short break before resuming with discussion on the Water Bureau.

PWB Budget Questions/Discussion

The Chair introduced Cecelia Huynh to answer questions related to the PWB budget.

- A PUB member noted there was a Smart Discount Plan and wondered if it supported multifamily residents that get their water through a third party in their rent?
 - Cecelia responded that the Smart Discount program is being implemented this Fall as a financial assistance program using computer algorithm to identify qualified customers for the discount. The RAMP program has been implemented for customers in multi-family residences that qualify for the Housing Bureau requirements for rent assistance. It was implemented July 1, 2023, and has reached 189 buildings and they are collecting data on the number of residences impacted. PWB could come back and provide an update to PUB on the program.
 - The PUB member responded that they would appreciate an update and that they are specifically interested in getting assistance to residences that do not qualify and are renting from private landlords. Cecelia confirmed the Smart Discount would not reach those customers, only those with a direct account with the City.
- A PUB member expressed support for comments that have been made by other members and particularly an interest in being brought along more throughout the budget process, so their input is meaningful as well as desire for narrative in the budget documents.
- A PUB member asked for more detail about the decorative fountains and Thompson Elk. Under a constrained budget they were surprised to see these funded so wondered if those are a requirement?
 - Cecelia responded that the Elk Fountain was damaged during the riots and the PWB received \$1.5M General Fund to restore the fountain so that is in process. The Decorative Fountains are PWB assets since the 1980's so PWB is responsible to operate and maintain those fountains. PWB has an interagency with Portland Parks and Recreation to maintain those fountains for approximately \$800,000 per year. PWB has presented to Council the option to shift those to General Fund, which would free up rate funds for the City transition costs. They have requested this in the past but due to lack of General Fund and Parks limited funding it has not happened.
 - Jeff Winner with PWB added that for the Elk there is General Fund of \$1.8Million but they also received insurance funds, so the total is approximately \$2.2Million

additional funds besides rate funds. They have reduced the funding for fountains due to the constrained environment, but they continue to advance projects.

- A PUB member asked about workforce equity initiatives. Last year, the rate increase PWB sought was not granted fully and they understand that PWB was unable to fill the 8 additional trainee positions that would have helped diversify the workforce. Are there any workforce equity initiatives that PWB has been able to fund?
 - Cecelia clarified that PWB is continuing to diversify their workforce through the training program. The goal with trainee positions is to bring in a more diverse workforce, train them in the work, and support their growth within the organization. Some of the former trainees are now supervisors and managers at PWB. They had hoped to expand upon that work, but due to the lower rate increase they have not filled those additional positions under assumption that they would need to be eliminated. However, PWB did receive 5 limited term maintenance trainee worker positions that are currently under recruitment. These are more entry level maintenance worker level work with goal to expose people to the trades and potentially apply for trainee or other field jobs in the future.
 - A PUB member asked whether the funds for those 8 positions were reallocated somewhere since they were not filled?
 - Cecelia responded that the positions were approved as authorized positions, but during the rate hearing they were given a lower than requested rate so the funding was not there. The goal was to achieve vacancy savings from those additional positions as well as others to support the budget reductions necessary. They are also being cautious to fund City transition costs that will be allocated to PWB. The bureau has not determined which positions will be cut until they have more information about the Mayor's Proposed budget.
 - A PUB member noted that in the Public Works equity narrative it states that PWB may eliminate 15-18 vacant positions, which include the positions in the water worker trainee program. Cecelia confirmed that 8 of those are the trainee positions and others are additional vacancies and will be determined once more is known about the transition costs.
- A PUB member noted that in the budget document it stated that retail customers use approximately 60% of the water sold but cover 90% of the revenue while wholesale customers use 40% of the water but only cover 10% of the revenue. Is there any plan to adjust that division of revenue?
 - Cecelia responded that there are wholesale agreements that are specific about how they would calculate the rates. The wholesale customers do not cover the costs related to work inside the City such as hydrants, mains, etc. since they do not benefit from those assets and services. The costs of the watershed, supply of water, compliance, etc. are allocated to both retail and wholesale because they both benefit from those services. The way it could shift the ratio is if the City found additional wholesale customers to buy water from the City and thus share in the costs.

- A PUB member noted on page 73 in performance it states assistance program events went from 12 a year to 17 and is projected to only have 10 this next year. Why the reduction in events?
 - Cecelia responded that she would need to confirm. The target is listed as 10 and she is not sure what the targets were in prior years. PWB is not limited to only doing 10, so it may not be a reduction but just a target and they have ended up doing more.
- The performance measure on percentage of calls answered within 60 seconds was clarified to indicate how quickly the customer is connected to staff not how long the calls take once connected.
- A PUB member asked how the budget takes into account the large number of accounts in arrears? How does it factor into revenue expectations and is it different from prior year?
 - Cecelia responded that many years ago PWB shifted to accounting on a cash basis for rate setting. While they do anticipate collecting on their receivable balance, it is not something they are counting on to reach revenue goals. She has not been able to go back yet and evaluate how the increase in rates and other factors have impacted their receivables since the pandemic.
- A PUB member noted that on page 74 of the budget they noted that some numbers seem to reduce or increase significantly, such as intergovernmental and funds transferred. Why do they change so significantly over the past couple years?
 - Cecelia responded that intergovernmental had actuals of \$3.3million in FY2021-22, \$1.3million in FY 2022-23 and budgeted for \$748,000 in FY 2023-24. Per City financial policy they are conservative in projecting revenues, so the projections have been consistent with what is budgeted now for current and next year but have come in higher than projected previously. Intergovernmental includes work on maintenance for the Washington County supply lines, so that is one reason these have come in higher.
 - Regarding funds transfer revenues, the PWB has three funds and operating fund is where they expend all their dollars. When they spend money on capital work, the construction fund reimburses the operating fund for capital expenses. These are internal transfers between those funds. If you look at the capital program, it has been growing with filtration project underway so that results in larger reimbursements to the operating fund.
 - A PUB member noted that leadership has mentioned that construction costs are increasing and becoming a problem. Does the bureau actually benefit from the cost increase with increased revenue from these transfers?
 - Cecelia noted that the transfer line is purely reimbursement for costs so there is no benefit or additional revenue coming into the bureau. The costs are higher for projects, so the transfers increase to reimburse. Construction costs have risen higher than inflation and it is impacting their capital program.

- A PUB member asked how the treatment plant and increased construction costs are impacting the budget long-term? Is it a stable trajectory or do you anticipate more and more challenges in the future?
 - Cecelia responded that they rely heavily on their engineering group to estimate project costs. PWB has updated their capital program to reflect costs of the filtration plant as discussed with Council last summer. They did need to reduce other projects in order to absorb the increased costs. They do their best to project costs accurately until the Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) comes in and rebalance within the Capital Improvement Plan based on updated information.
 - Jeff Winner added that they have been resequencing the bigger programmatic items and the most impacted has been the seismic resiliency plan improvements that have been shifted out. They are also updating the costs of that plan since it has been decades since developed and then resequencing those projects. The Oregon Resiliency Standards require compliance over a 50 year period and the City had been holding a 30 year plan up until now, so now they are more like a 40 year before all improvements will be implemented in the plan. There are about \$300million in the 10 year plan, and about \$200million have been shifted out to keep rate increases consistent.
 - A PUB member responded that it would be helpful to understand how we are shifting risk. There is a lot of pressure to hold rates down. They don't get a good sense of tradeoffs from these budgets, both short- and long-term risk and debt. What will holding rates down now do to future generations? If that information was available, then a body like PUB could share feedback about not agreeing with the tradeoffs of holding rates down now to cost more later.
 - Jeff responded that the sequencing of the budget and capital improvement plan has shifted a bit. Last year was the first year where narrative was not provided on the capital improvement plan in the Requested Budget but instead in the Adopted Budget. This has been helpful since the budget changes throughout the process and then they scramble to fix the rates and narrative. The narrative will line up better with what is actually adopted in the budget. He recognizes that is not ideal for PUB, but the Adopted version will have the narrative.
 - A PUB member asked how a body like PUB could make an informed recommendation if they do not have that information available? How do we balance the competing interests without information? Without it this is simply a performative exercise.
 - Cecelia agreed with the challenge and indicated interest from both bureaus to work with PUB on improvements to the process and information that would be helpful. Historically they provided a lot of detail on how rates were set and then went through a phase where PUB wanted less time on budget details and shifted to a policy focus. This year's budget process had a lot of unknowns. To allow PUB to provide the input suggested it would require a lot more education on long-term debt,

forecast beyond 5 years. This is not a conversation that can happen in January, it would take many months of information sharing to understand it. Their preference would be to have those conversations year-round with PUB, so perhaps we can discuss what that looks like once we get through this year's process.

- The PUB member responded that they think it is a mistake to separate budgets from policy because budgets are where policy is implemented. PUB is good at saying they care about these things but are not marrying it to budget lines or metrics to see if it accomplishes those things. If we say we care about equity then we would identify metrics that show if we are getting closer to them and how the budget impacts those things.

The Chair asked whether PUB had enough to warrant requesting invited testimony at the Rate Hearing or if they wanted to send the recommendations to the bureaus?

- A PUB member asked when the next opportunity would be to provide input? Is there another opportunity to provide oral testimony?
 - PUB Staff/Amy noted that there is not additional opportunity before the next phase in the budget. The Mayor's Proposed is the next phase, so input could be provided in writing or directly to the Mayor over the next month. The Rate Hearing is earlier this year and PUB can request to be invited testimony (Commissioner Mapps would support that). The PUB could request a meeting with the Mayor, which has happened in some prior years. The subsequent phases are Approved and Adopted so the hearings for those have opportunity for public testimony.
- A PUB member shared that they are a fan for taking advantage of every opportunity to be before Council. The PUB should testify at the rate hearing if nothing else to say that we do not have enough information to evaluate the impacts of the rate. The budget did not provide enough information to have a coherent opinion about the tradeoffs implicit in the budget and that is a problem. We should request a meeting with the Mayor to exercise our role and save detailed comment for the Mayor's Proposed. There is value in establishing a presence at each step even if what we have to say is limited.
- A PUB member stated they were in favor of sharing input that PUB cannot make a specific recommendation pro or con on the rate. However, they have some fear because PUB has done that before and by not saying we did support the rate increase then programs PUB did support were sacrificed because we didn't clearly support the rate increase. Think PUB should say something but should gather enough information to be more specific before it is moot.
- A PUB member asked if people have an opinion about requesting a meeting with the Mayor?
 - A member responded that they wouldn't object to it but would want to strategize with Commissioner Mapps' office so that we go into it being able to influence decisions.

- The member responded that there are only so many times you can send a strongly worded letter and testify at hearings. It feels futile to do the same things and would like to try something new.
- A PUB member asked if PUB received information on the difference between what was Requested and what was implemented versus what is now proposed?
 - PUB Staff/Amy responded that we do have information about what was Requested by the bureaus versus what Council funded (lower than requested). Last year when Council asked PUB if they supported the Requested rates and PUB did not have a recommendation at that time.
- A PUB member proposed that PUB provide very brief testimony and there was support for the recommended approach to include the following basic content:
 - The PUB understands the unique circumstances this year with transition, but the extremely short timeline and late changes to process do not provide enough information in a timely manner for the board to effectively engage and provide feedback.
 - The lack of details in the budget document without program offer narratives make it difficult to understand and hinders our engagement. This is a disservice to the public and is confusing even as an advisory board member, so impossible for general public to get enough information from limited documents to understand implications.
 - The board remains concerned about the cuts required and impact on deferred maintenance. When cuts are made it is often to the environmental and environmental justice programs and we do not support these programs being on the chopping block. While there is not enough information to make specific recommendations on the rate increases, the Board definitely does not recommend any lower rate increase than what is requested.
 - Going forward, it is critical as the City transitions that you implement processes and timelines that provide opportunity for oversight boards like PUB to be integrated in foundational ways so that the community is involved and we can provide substantive input.

Bob volunteered to provide the testimony discussed and PUB Staff/Amy will coordinate drafting, coordinating with Commissioner Mapps', and support for testimony.

VOTE

Robin made a motion to delegate writing the testimony and providing testimony at the Rate Hearing. Seconded by Julia.

Discussion –

Bob noted a friendly amendment to ensure that Karen's point about lack of narrative be included as well.

Public Comment: Carol said she was fine.

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

No: n/a

Abstain: none

Motion passes.

VII. Announcements and Next Meeting [~2:11:20](#)

The Chair and PUB Staff/Amy provided the following quick updates:

- Administrative Review Committee – the March meeting is cancelled but still need a volunteer for April 9th, please let Amy know if you are available.
- Recruitment subcommittee is meeting March 11th, 4pm.
- Received support from Budget Director to proceed with recruitment for the PUB staff vacancy, so that will be coming up to ensure PUB is engaged.

Potential future meetings and topics to be determined.

The meeting adjourned at approximately ~5:51 p.m.

Public Comment

From: Moira Painter

Sent: Thursday, February 15, 2024 8:47 PM

To: CBO - Utility Board

Subject: Public Comment for PUB meeting # 170

Dear Members of the Board,

I recently attended the meeting via zoom on 2/15/24 as a member of the public. This was largely to satisfy a requirement in my community leadership class at Portland State University. I am writing a composite community profile and selected this board for a number of reasons, namely:

1. Ease of accessibility. This was by far the most put together website for many of the available community groups around Portland as well as an included agenda and instructions on how to join the meeting. I would like to commend your group for being transparent and accessible.
2. Statements/acknowledgements of institutional and structural racism/inequities.
3. Nature of work. I am an Environmental Studies major.

I would like to make a comment regarding the discussion of tensions experienced at a prior work session that involved adversarial conduct by the council and mayor.

Broadly, the discussion was one that made me extremely hopeful for my future and very satisfied with the representation of my community in these types of processes. Here are some of the highlights I wrote down that stuck out to me:

"[They] should ask questions to understand where we are coming from, not challenge us"

"Equity is the first to get cut when the money gets tight"

"The more delayed the more it costs"

"If high inflation is cited then you should also cite *who* is increasing that cost"

"We are a representation of the communities that have been harmed by the government"

"We are here for a purpose"

Specifically I would like to state that you are all strong citizens, and this is very different from being a strong leader. I believe that you should continue thinking about what Lorraine Wilson brought up towards the end of the meeting. I encourage using the power of questions and focusing on possibilities over problem solving. Attending this meeting was a glimpse of what transformation could start to look like.

Thank you,

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Moira Painter



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