

## Portland Utility Board

Tuesday, May 7, 2024, 3:30p.m.  
Virtual meeting using Zoom platform  
Meeting #179

### Attendees:

#### *PUB Members:*

Robin Castro, Chair  
Heather Day-Melgar  
Joe Spada, Ex-Officio  
Julia DeGraw  
Karen Williams  
Lorraine Wilson  
Roslyn Gray, Ex-Officio

#### *Absent:*

Alexis Rife\*  
Bob Sallinger\*  
Christopher Richard  
Joanne Johnson, Ex-Officio\*  
\*Notice of absence provided prior to meeting

#### *Staff:*

Amy Archer-Masters, Portland Utility Board Analyst, City Budget Office  
Anthony Locke, City Budget Office  
Cecelia Huynh, Portland Water Bureau  
Gabriel Solmer, Portland Water Bureau  
Farshad Allahdadi, Bureau of Environmental Services  
Jacq Tjaden, Commissioner Mapps' Office

#### *Public:*

Carol Cushman, League of Women Voters  
Rachel Whiteside, PROTEC17  
Sara Gardner

### 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/2024/5/7/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 discussed the Recruitment Subcommittee Process and Recommendation, PUB Budget Process Recommendations and the PUB Work Plan for current and next year. Due to a lack of quorum, the meeting operated as a subcommittee and no formal decisions were made.

**I. Call to Order**

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

**II. Disclosure of communications [~3:21](#)**

There were no disclosures.

**III. Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**IV. Review and Approval of Minutes**

Drafts of the March 25<sup>th</sup> subcommittee and April 18<sup>th</sup> full PUB meeting have been provided to Board members. PUB staff noted that there was a lack of quorum so minutes review and approval was postponed.

**V. Brief Updates [~4:59](#)**

Recruitment Subcommittee

Subcommittee members Karen and Heather provided an update from the recruitment subcommittee, which also included Alexis Rife(PUB), Jacq Tjaden(Commissioner Mapps' Office) and Farshad Allahdadi(BES). There were three group interviews of 7 candidates, down from 11 originally due to withdrawals. The subcommittee is recommending candidates B, D and I for appointment and alternates C and E. They all bring a range of skills and interests in government, water protection/watershed/environment, financing, organizational management, visualizing data, engineering and ecology as well as strengths in equity, innovative thinking, energy and integrating community. They demonstrated collaborative and respectful communication and problem solving. The process was quite different than prior years, thanks to Jacq bringing an alternative process to the subcommittee of group interviews. PUB Staff asked questions and groups of 2-3 candidates responded in a conversation with each other, recording them so the subcommittee could watch and review on own time. It was a learning experience and more facilitation from staff but less of a logistical challenge for subcommittee. The scoring was based on thematic areas to evaluate skills in categories, which was challenging as a reviewer but a much more engaging process. It was a very rewarding process as an interviewer. Names are not

shared since the subcommittee just finalized yesterday, but will share once all candidates have been confirmed. They believe the PUB will be very satisfied with all the candidates.

- Jacq shared appreciation to staff for coordinating the process so that subcommittee could focus on the reviewing and scoring, and appreciation to the PUB volunteers that dedicated the time to be on this panel. They also appreciated the intentional conversations and checking of bias throughout the process.
- Farshad echoed the thoughts shared and believes the innovations this year resulted in a positive process improvement allowing a richer understanding of the candidates. He also shared how encouraged and motivated he is to work with such an excellent group. Every year it is a testament to our community, how much the PUB volunteers are willing to give to this process and the energy candidates bring to this work as well.
- Amy noted that they are reaching out to candidates. Since there is not a quorum, this will come back to the next PUB meeting for approval and then will go to Council. The process takes time so likely will plan onboarding in June and start by July.
- The Chair noted that prior recruitments created some reflections and it would be good to add the learnings from this year to build on the good work each year.

#### **VI. PUB Budget Process Recommendations [~19:30](#)**

The Chair introduced the continuation of a brainstorm from last meeting on potential improvements to the budget process in response to Commissioner Mapps' request at recent hearing for feedback on engagement in the budget process. PUB staff pulled up the document on screen that pulled from the notes of the April 18<sup>th</sup> meeting, adding comments from the conversation. Amy noted that the goal is to brainstorm and later PUB can determine the appropriate audiences, if some are more internal decisions and others are intended for Council or the Commissioner. The following issues were raised to add to the list:

- Challenge understanding City's budgeting process even with financial background elsewhere. Need to simplify budget process if intent is for lay people to understand it, and for community to understand it. Until that is done, we will be challenged, and people kept out. Expediency seems to be the focus, particularly late in budget process and input at risk. Perceived Role of PUB/BAC: understanding budget, providing input to the budget, and having a conversation about changes being made so I can understand the decision and speak to it with knowledge. Public brought in late, and information shared is limited.
- Understanding budget and priorities. After budget adopted, before next is under way, bureaus come to PUB and have conversation about how PUB input considered/used prior year, how incorporated and why, how budget is manifest/implemented. Have not quite achieved previously – so in July or soon after, reflection on process and outcomes. PUB can use that as foundation to provide input in a way that is actionable and may influence decisions earlier.

- PUB mainly engages with Business Services/Financial staff and there are many others within bureaus to engage with including managers/supervisors of different areas that align with PUB's workplan (ex: financial assistance input past year, engaging with relevant manager to be informed as recommendations develop). This helps PUB ask better questions.
  - BES org chart provides detail on managers over different divisions, would like that information from PWB as well to navigate who to talk with.
- Reflect on what PUB/Bureaus tried in past – would like to bring back idea of program offer approach as a way to show areas of focus/resource allocation and how it ties together with strategic/equity goals. Connection to policy/programs delivering services. It does take away some of the line-by-line detail some desire, may need both perspectives but program offers are more accessible and are closer to being publicly digestible.
- Set meeting once/month or more during budget season? Perhaps more preparation earlier in the year to be grounded before it starts in Fall.
  - Like idea of a status update, maybe monthly or every 2 months. Some standing items on specific agendas for status updates on key areas, and that is where the information about how things turned out in prior year could be incorporated. Actual expenditures in targeted areas, example of trainee positions that ultimately were not filled. (support for this idea shared by others)
  - Perhaps a subcommittee could be helpful in identifying targeted areas as well.

## **VII. PUB Work Plan Review and Update [~49:16](#)**

The Chair transitioned into discussion of the PUB's current year work plan to identify progress made this year and priorities for the coming month, as well as begin to identify issues to include in the work plan for FY 2024-25. PUB Staff pulled the work plan document on screen and updated with notes as issues were discussed. Staff noted that as usual as the year has progressed, there has been a lot of activity and discussion on the topics in the high priority topics that PUB planned to dedicate meeting time to this year. One of the exceptions is in the area of Hiring, Retention and Promotion of BIPOC staff as a follow-up to a prior PUB report, other than raised in the course of other discussions like budget.

- Some areas of focus suggested for the remainder of this fiscal year included:
  - The Hiring, Retention and Promotion of BIPOC staff be an area of focus for the remainder of this fiscal year, inviting the bureau Equity managers to give an update on that area.
  - Update regarding tiered rate structure, implementation of rate study and how it is being communicated with impacted customers. BES Rate Implementation update planned for May 16<sup>th</sup> meeting.
- Some areas for updates or changes to FY 2024-25 work plan:
  - Suggested removal of Comprehensive Rate Study in future work plan, reporting out the final results.

- “Sustainability of Infrastructure” needs to be revisited and discussed to be clearer about what is intended.
- Refining of Billing, Debt Recovery and Financial Assistance – still a high priority but given the time we are in now post-pandemic and government transition, what is realistic financial assistance look like? Also bridging the gap with multi-family residents beyond RAMP.
- Climate and Environmental programs that could be grouped together with Natural Resource Service Delivery or grouped as a climate crisis group as area of focus (Climate Action and Adaptation Strategies, Green Infrastructure, Tree Program, Urban Heat, Endangered Species Protection Recovery).
- Filtration Project updates or Advanced Metering Project and impacts on financial support (does it help discern where support is needed, was the cost worth it).
- Alternative structures for making water affordable for everyone. Possibly broaden topic to “Affordability of Water” and include the various ways – financial assistance, alternative funding, different ways to measure and charge, advanced metering, tiered rates, etc.
- Bureau Strategic Plan updates. PWB Strategic plan coming to an end, how did they align, outcomes, next steps. BES status update midway through their plan.

The Chair encouraged members to take a look at the plan and identify 3-4 areas that they feel PUB should be focusing on in upcoming meetings as well as what to flag for next year. They also would like to think about setting goals quarterly so that we can see how we are moving on those goals. PUB staff encouraged members to call or email with any items to prioritize, particularly as the Chair will be meeting with leadership to plan for coming months and would appreciate input from all of PUB.

#### **VIII. Announcements and Next Meeting [~1:21:18](#)**

PUB staff shared brief announcements including:

- The Mayor’s proposed budget was released as well as announcements with executive leadership and the change in bureau structure for permitting. Information has been sent by email.
- As of May 6<sup>th</sup>, the City Budget Office Director has resigned and Ruth Levine is the Interim Director and available as a point of contact for PUB if they have any questions or issues they want to escalate above PUB staff.
- Citywide workforce demographics are available [online](#), see email for more details.
- Co-chair vacancy remains – contact staff or former chairs for information.
- Administrative Review Committee meetings – will be emailing to seek volunteers for future months.

Next meeting is just next week. Potential future topics include BES Rate Study Implementation, carryover from this meeting, future budget process recommendations (particularly having a wider frame of audience with the change in governmental structure and future engagement of Deputy City Administrators), and Natural Resources updates.

The meeting adjourned at approximately ~4:58 p.m.