

# Portland Utility Board

Thursday, August 21, 2025, 11:00 a.m.  
Virtual meeting using Zoom platform  
Meeting #209

## Attendees

### PUB Members

Lauren Rosenkranz, Chair  
Lorraine Wilson  
Alexis Rife  
Kyle Chipman  
Darrel Bobb  
Bruk Berhanu  
Dr. Myra Khushbakht  
Jenny O'Connor  
Cormac Burke  
Joanne Johnson, Ex-Officio

### Absent

Julia DeGraw\*

*\*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  
Quisha Light, Director, Portland Water Bureau  
Becky Anicker, Portland Water Bureau  
Sherri Peterson, Bureau of Environmental  
Services  
Cecelia Huynh, Portland Water Bureau

### Public

Carol Cushman, League of Women Voters  
T.J. Anderson, Disability Group Advocate

## Items Discussed, Action Items, Decisions

In these notes PWB stands for Portland Water Bureau, BES for the Bureau of Environmental Services, AMI for Automated Metering Infrastructure 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/2025/8/21/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.

### Call to Order

Lauren Rosenkranz, PUB co-chair, called the meeting to order at approximately 11:03.

### Introductions & Disclosure of Communications [4:10](#)

Members introduced themselves, with new members providing information about recent or upcoming developments they are proud of or looking forward to.

1. Rate increase advocacy resulting in reversion to rate originally proposed in Bureaus' financial plans.
2. Unified CIP, maintaining & improving infrastructure.
3. Thinking strategically about how to represent the communities that we come from within the new form of governance, especially collaboration with council members and the bureaus.
4. How consolidation and collaboration are happening, and keeping an eye on how power is aligning within the new governmental structure.
5. Tracking how communication happens, ensuring it's in a format that residents understand, and that residents aren't asked to decipher high-level jargon that is meant to exclude. Breaking things down such that community members understand.
6. Affordability strategy work
7. Opportunities to convey the impact of investments on the community.
8. One Water initiative and Public Works/utility changes, bringing everything under one umbrella, seeing how that can better serve the citizens of Portland.
9. Opportunities to understand how finances are managed in the utility space, especially within the context of budget constraints.
10. Contribute to how initiatives are conveyed to the public, particularly working with maps of Water/BES infrastructure and tracking that things are where they are supposed to be – working with team to fill in gaps so that information about assets is available for the public.
11. Infrastructure, deferred maintenance, and asset management. Climate activism and adaptation of natural resources (part of BES).
12. How One Water will shape the way that public works infrastructure works going forward.
13. How environment impacts public health and health outcomes. Specific interest to see if there are ways to engage communities that are underserved and amplify their voices in water initiatives.

There were no required disclosures.

### **Public Comment [22:00](#)**

No public comment was offered at this meeting.

### **Review of Minutes [23:07](#)**

August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025 minutes were accepted as drafted.

### **Multi-family Shut-off Process [24:10](#)**

Becky Anicker from PWB provided an overview of the resumption of customer disconnections for multifamily accounts, explaining that while commercial (2021), single-family residential (2022), and financial assistance customers (2023) have already resumed collections, multifamily accounts are just beginning this process. She presented data showing that multifamily accounts now have the highest arrears at over \$5 million, with about 1,000 of 15,500 accounts affected, and explains the phased approach started with letters in August, followed by potential shutoffs for small multifamily units (2-4 units) with balances over \$4,000 in October. Becky outlined the notification process including letters, bills, reminder notices, courtesy calls, and door hangers for tenants, and requested PUB's feedback on how to better protect tenants during this process.

The majority of multifamily water accounts are held by property owners, not tenants, with approximately 70% being smaller units (2-4 units) and 30% larger complexes. PWB staff described a common situation where tenants pay for water as part of their rent, but landlords fail to pay the water bill, leading to potential disconnections. Director Light noted that door hangers warning of disconnection often prompt tenants to contact landlords, which frequently results in payment, though this creates an unfortunate burden for tenants who have already paid their share. The discussion revealed that some property owners are exploiting the moratorium on disconnections by deliberately withholding payment.

## PUB Member Questions, Concerns, Feedback

1. Clarification requested around what types of properties/customers are being described. What type of owners are they – is there information about which properties are small vs large?

### *Response*

~70% are from the smaller units

~30% are in the larger units.

2. Clarification: tenant is paying their rent, assuming that they are paying for water through the rent. What is the process that they will go through.

### *Response*

Unfortunately, the majority of the account holders are the landlord, where the landlord is failing to pay the bill. The Water Bureau does not have ability to make arrangements with individuals who are not the account holder.

3. What is the impact on the utility to provide the services.

### *Response*

When moving through to disconnect, the ones impacted are the ones who've already been paying it. Oftentimes the door hanger notice to the renter is sufficient to get the landlord motivated to pay it.

4. For the 1,015 accounts, are all of them the property owner is the one failing to pay?

### *Response*

Whoever set up the service is who is responsible and who PWB is in conversation with. In some cases landlords are not the ones paying. Unfortunately, some customers have heard that disconnections are not happening and because of that they are not paying.

5. Is the 7 days likely to be sufficient to prevent cutoff?

### *Response*

They find that it is enough, with tenants putting pressure on the landlord.

6. Is there a way to separate the three services (water, sewer, stormwater) and make arrangements for only one of them?

### *Response*

Disconnection and payment would be for all three services.

7. Are there geographic trends for where the shutoffs are happening?

*Response*

Becky did not have that information handy, while Director Light also did not see that information for multi-family. There is some clustering in different parts of the City, which is another reason that it's important that they've tried to avoid getting to this situation. However, these things are also disbursed across the City – where certain business owners (larger properties especially) see it as a free loan if there are not specific consequences for failure to pay.

8. Is there an ability to provide a small volume of basic needs water to those tenants such that they are not left totally without water.

*Response*

In consideration of the bottled water, PWB has not done that in the past. There are other agencies in the country that have done that. Director Light confirmed that this is something they could look into in a situation where the property owner isn't able to come to a payment arrangement or agreement with PWB.

9. Is there a way to identify why the bills have gotten so high, like in terms of leaks?

*Response*

There is an efficiency team that is very good at identifying leaks, which helps residents figure out what's wrong, identify leaks in the system. It's not normally that there is a leak. There could be other things happening in the building (ex: "my dishwasher doesn't work well and my landlord won't fix it so I have to run the dishwasher twice.").

10. Has there been a trend of recurring failure to pay by certain people, or is it one-time?

*Response*

Unfortunately, once folks get into arrears, it becomes very challenging to get out of that situation. Anecdotally, they often get the response of "why did you let me get so far behind?"

11. What determines the threshold for when to send out notices?

*Response*

They are starting with the larger balances, which operationally allows them to limit the amount of customers they're working with at the beginning. Allows them to give the attention needed to each customer.

12. Is there a way to determine at what phase they are getting more responses, feedback about what is the best way to get notices.

*Response*

Primarily in the hard copy space – some email and text messages. PWB is limited in how customers would like to be communicated with. They are moving more into the space – with AMI - of telling the agency how they'd like to be communicated with, but they aren't there yet.

13. Is there a requirement or what is the requirement for landlords to track use of individual tenants?

### *Response*

There are not necessarily requirements for how they do it. Some of it is controlled by the rental contract. Some have sub-metering and some don't. Some do a calculation based on the number of individuals in a unit, but some don't do that.

14. When you have communication with the building owners, have you come to some kind of understanding of what the root causes of this are?

### *Response*

A variety of reasons. For the remaining ~1000, a lot of the anecdotal response has been "let us know when you're looking to disconnect and we'll work with you then."

15. How much gets written off by the Water Bureau?

### *Response*

Average of about \$600k per year in bad debt from Water. BES (Sewer/Stormwater) is about the same, so for last year the total write off was about \$1.2 million.

16. Do the tenants have the option to opt into a sub-metering option, once they realize they are in a situation where the landlord is not properly paying funds to the Water Bureau?

### *Response*

Not really – they have to go through the property owner.

## **PUB Review of Founding Documents [1:15:20](#)**

### **Beliefs, Values, and Anti-Racist Principles**

Amy led a discussion about the annual review of the PUB's governing documents, focusing on the beliefs, values, and anti-racist principles. She explained that these documents could be readopted or revised, noting they were last updated to include language about water as a human right. When prompted, Amy clarified that the principles guide how the board operates in meetings while other documents address policy priorities. A voting member expressed concern about potential future pressure to remove anti-racist language, but Amy reassured that as a city advisory board funded by ratepayer dollars, they have authority to maintain these principles.

Members reviewed the Beliefs, Values, and Anti-Racist Principles document together and then decided to move forward with approving them for the 2025-2026 fiscal year.

### *Vote*

Motion by Cormac Burke

Seconded by Alexis Rife

Final Discussion/public comment:

*One member of the public expressed thanks for PUB's work.*

Motion passed unanimously.

### **Code/Bylaws**

With limited time, PUB staff recommended operating under existing bylaws until PUB staff can provide updates and then PUB can discuss at an upcoming meeting.

## Announcements & Next PUB Meeting [1:29:15](#)

### Co-chair nominations

A description of the co-chair role was shared, along with a request to inform PUB staff by Saturday, August 23<sup>rd</sup> if they are interested in the role. Nominees' names will be shared as part of public notice ahead of the September 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting, when PUB will likely vote to appoint a new co-chair to work with the current chair.

### Public Utility Director Recruitment

Info session upcoming, PUB staff will keep PUB in the loop about any developments.

### Final Report & Work Plan

Pub staff will send draft bylaws with proposed edits to board members next week for September meeting discussion

### PUB Co-chair

Board members interested in co-chair position to contact Jonna Lynn or Amy by next week for inclusion in Tuesday's agenda posting

### Announcements Not Discussed

*The following items were not discussed in the meeting due to time constraints, but will be sent with read ahead for the first September meeting.*

#### *ARC Meeting*

There is already a volunteer for September 9<sup>th</sup>, but new PUB members may want to observe so they can feel comfortable taking that on soon.

#### *Photos/headshots*

PUB staff are asking members who are comfortable with it to submit photos that can be used for the website. No obligation.

#### *PWB Media Digest*

Members can let PUB staff know if interested in signing up. No obligation.

## Closing

**Meeting adjourned at 12:34pm**

**The next meeting will be Tuesday, September 2, 2025** (day after Labor Day).

Possible topics

- Annual report discussion.

Likely future topics

- Filtration update – September 18<sup>th</sup> meeting
- Affordability strategy discussion – likely early October

Potential Future Topics: Carryover from prior meetings, One Water director hiring, Advisory bodies enhancement project, Natural Resources Service Delivery, affordability strategy, Filtration update (Sept 18<sup>th</sup>), Permitting reorganization update, strategic & equity plans updates. STEP, PCEF updates, filtration update.