

Portland Utility Board

Thursday, November 20th, 2025, 11:00 a.m.

Virtual meeting using Zoom platform

Meeting #215

Attendees

PUB Members

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

Absent

No absences were noted at this meeting.

Staff

Amy Archer-Masters, Portland Utility Board Analyst, City Budget Office
Jonna Lynn Bransford, Portland Utility Board Coordinator, City Budget Office
Priya Dhanapal, Public Works Service Area
Quisha Light, Water Bureau
Ting Lu, Environmental Services
Sherri Peterson, Environmental Services
Eli Rosborough, Environmental Services
Erich Pacheco, Water Bureau
Brandon Zero, Water Bureau

Public

Carol Cushman, League of Women Voters

Items Discussed, Action Items, Decisions

Acronyms & Definitions

In these notes PWB stands for Portland Water Bureau, BES for the Bureau of Environmental Services, BPS for Bureau of Planning & Sustainability, DCA for Deputy City Administrator, CA for City Administrator, and PUB for the Portland Utility Board.

Video Recording

The [video of the meeting](https://www.portland.gov/pub/events/2025/11/20/portland-utility-board-meeting) as well as supporting documents can be found here:
<https://www.portland.gov/pub/events/2025/11/20/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.

Meeting Summary

The meeting began with updates from DCA Dhanapal, which led to a discussion among PUB members about their preferences for engagement on high priority items such as the hiring of the unified utility director. The bulk of the meeting was spent learning about the Bureaus' affordability framework and then discussion of PUB's questions about the framework. Time was cut short for discussion of PUB's engagement strategy, which they decided will be the top priority for their next regular meeting.

Call to Order

Lauren Rosenkranz, PUB co-chair, called the meeting to order at approximately 11:02.

Brief Updates

Portland Utility Director Hiring

DCA Dhanapal provided an update on the search for a new Portland and Public Utility Director, announcing the three finalists. She invited PUB members to view a webinar scheduled today from 2-3:30 PM during which the finalists will share presentations with staff. All observers will be invited to complete a survey to provide their feedback. The board discussed the timing and process of the selection, with DCA Dhanapal confirming the decision would be made by the end of the year in consultation with Mayor Wilson and City Administrator Mike Jordan.

PUB Member Questions, Concerns, Comments

1. Timing of the selection, who is making the selection or other high level logistics?

Response

The decision would be made by the end of the year. DCA Dhanapal is the hiring director, in concert with Mayor & CA Jordan. Panelists, union leaders, Council representatives. staff will have a chance to listen to webinar and provide feedback.

2. Last minute notice – is the webinar going to be recorded and can that be sent out to PUB?

Response

No, it will not be recorded so we can respect confidentiality of applicants.

3. Another member noted that the pace is moving very quickly, with quite limited time for engagement with PUB or other stakeholders after this point. Member pointed out that in the previous recruitment for BES director, a PUB member was part of the search committee.
4. Overall, PUB members expressed a sense of dissatisfaction with the level of engagement in the hiring process for the Utility Director position, as well as with the very short notice given for them to observe the candidate presentations today and to provide their feedback by the end of the same day.

Disclosure of Communications [24:29](#)

PUB voting member described having met with Kaitlin Lovell, the Director of the Oregon Department of State Lands as well as with David O'Longaigh from PWB to discuss an overview of projects that they are working on.

Public Comment

None were offered.

Review of Minutes [25:48](#)

Minutes from November 4th, 2025 meeting were distributed prior to the meeting and were accepted as submitted.

Affordability Framework [26:19](#)

Erich Pacheco (Strategy Integration Policy Manager) and Sherri Peterson (Revenue Programs Manager) shared a presentation with PUB on the development of an affordability framework for water utilities. They outlined the bureaus' guiding principles, including transparency, access, stewardship, and continuous improvement, and discussed the importance of addressing affordability challenges. The presentation covered the bureaus' history with customer assistance programs, recent initiatives, and plans for future work.

PUB Member Questions, Concerns, Comments

1. Member wondered whether the presentation would be given to City Council or a larger decision-making body.

Response

The hope is that it would be give to Council and/or DCA, but that is up to leadership.

2. Member wondered if findings other than the [Hatfield Resident Fellowship Project Brief](#) are available for review.

Response:

Bureau staff were not aware of external-facing published items, but they do have internal-facing deliverables that were provided to them within the scope of the project, which could be made available (though the PUB member clarified that what was provided online was sufficient for them to understand the content).

3. Member asked about the customer portal launch -timing of that and how it interacts with the customer portal timeline and their affordability work?

Response

Staff are working hard to meet the April accessibility deadline. Right now they expect to be ready for on time delivery of customer portal, with some parts potentially coming in a little later. They are trying to update such that customers have access to information in the portal. Once AMI is in place, there will be more data available. As

those smart meters get turned on, they will review after 90 days and then that customer's data can be turned on in the Customer engagement portal.

4. PUB member asked if could be engaged on user feedback, especially on UX Feedback prior to final utilization.

Response

Director Light explained that she is requiring customer/public testing, not just employees in order to get feedback around real use.

5. As the bureaus integrate, how are they tackling knowledge based management, schedule and project management, and communication management internally, along with the significant change that is happening. Are staff feeling motivated around a shared vision, or is the team more stuck in fight-or-flight?

Response

Regarding timeline, Erich shared that starting in January, he and Sherri will work on establishing measurable outcomes for each of the strategies, assemble the right teams, and let the teams develop the work plans. This is not the only thing they will be working on, so they need to be nimble in how they manage the work that will be happening under them. There is a lot of change happening, with some staff moving up to the Service Area level and the merging of the utilities, so it would be surprising not to experience stress related with all of this change.

Directly Lu followed up to share that they are actively prioritizing what will be the most impactful for the community, which means affordability is a big part of the outcome they hope to achieve. They are also using a phased approach, hoping to turn this into 1-year, 3-year, and 10-year plans.

6. Member wants to be sure that these efficiencies won't make it impossible to talk with a person – wanting to ensure that not everything will go through the portal

Response

Director Light explained that this is meant to make space for conversations, so that they are not necessarily ending up going to ARC (for example) when situations can otherwise be resolved prior to that. For folks who wish to be able to access help online (e.g. through a portal), that will be possible and will free up staff to work with folks who want to speak with someone personally.

7. Voting member described a nervousness about the infrastructure backlog and how that is being addressed or not within the affordability framework. A co-chair shared this sentiment and stated his intention to bring up citywide asset management and backlog in the next leadership team meeting and at a work session with Council.

Response

Director Lu explained that this is a priority and part of their holistic strategy to figure out how to keep rates affordable while continuing strengthening assets. There are

multiple ways that of prioritizing this maintenance: looking to the most impactful to the communities, as well as the high-risk assets that could cause failure within the community. It's an ongoing balance of CIP and making sure operations continue to be efficient and optimized.

8. The member followed up to request that PUB get an update about high level risk assessment.

Response

Director Lu that they have a risk assessment team that focuses on large-level risk assessment and prioritization on a portfolio approach from BES and they can follow up on getting a presentation to PUB later. She said she would like to coordinate with the Director Light to look into how they can share a joint utility perspective.

9. Another member mentioned the importance of holding City leadership accountable for past decisions which contributed to the large backlog, especially to make sure the City is doing what needs to be done to avoid catastrophic failure.

10. A member asked about equity in rate structure – how much room/latitude is there for revisions or evaluations? Is there opportunity for a totally different form of rate structure or are those conversations happening/ongoing?

Response

Ultimately Council determines rates. There have been some really exciting studies in other jurisdictions around using other data to inform rate structures. They all come with various benefits/drawbacks.

PUB was invited to share other feedback with Bureau staff as they have it.

PUB Budget and Leadership Engagement

PUB lacked time to engage on this topic due to unexpected items brought forward for today. Plan was made to move this item to the front of the next PUB meeting agenda.

Announcements & Next PUB Meeting

The meeting concluded with discussion of logistics for tomorrow's field trip and mention of the upcoming leadership team meetings, encouraging members to reach out with priorities.

Closing

Meeting adjourned at 12:33pm

The next meeting will be Tuesday, December 2nd, 2025.

Possible topics

- Carryover from this meeting
- Others?

Likely future topics

- Budget Development

Potential Future Topics: Carryover from prior meetings, One Water director hiring, Natural Resources Service Delivery, Permitting reorganization update, strategic & equity plans updates. STEP, PCEF updates, filtration update.