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To: PUB Members and PUB staff person Melissa Merrell
From: Janice Thompson, Citizens' Utility Board of Oregon
Re: Follow up on August 2 discussion of CUB's August 1 memo on Portland's Revamped Public Utility Oversight System

August 29, 2016

Thanks and Offer

Thanks for the discussion at PUB's August 2 meeting of some aspects of CUB's August 1 memo with observations and suggestions regarding Portland's revamped public utility oversight system. Time was short, however, and I am more than happy to discuss other points in the memo at your next meeting. Discussion on the following correction and response to a question posed at your last meeting is also welcome.

Correction

I incorrectly stated that a code change is required to establish two standing committees. What I should have written is: If the PUB wanted to adopt two standing committees (to facilitate "deeper dives" and to provide more scheduling flexibility for when regular PUB meetings don't dovetail with the budget process timeline), and if that approach would be easier with eleven rather than nine PUB members, then a code change is required to increase the size of the PUB. Of course, a two standing committee approach could be taken with just nine PUB members. If a two standing committee approach is not adopted, however, then the possibility of adjusting the scheduling of regular PUB meetings during the spring of 2017 for improved dovetailing with the budget timeline should be considered.

Response to August 2 Question

The question was posed about other ways to structure two standing committees besides forming a BES committee and a PWB committee. I found this question intriguing but didn't have an immediate response at your last meeting. Upon further reflection, however, here is a possible configuration of two standing committees focusing on key functions of both BES and PWB:

- Capital Improvement and Financial Planning Committee
- Operations and Maintenance Committee

Other topics could be divided between these two committees on either an ongoing or an as needed basis. For example, debt management is an important topic that would seem most appropriate for detailed discussion by the Capital Improvement and Financial Planning Committee. Another example is that questions or concerns about customer service and communications could be assigned to the Operations and Maintenance Committee. More discussion is suggested about how other topics would fit into this two standing committee configuration as part of evaluating the merits of this function-based approach.

Regardless of standing committee configuration, however, it is very important that frequent reports back to the full PUB for discussion and decision making by the entire group be integrated into agenda setting. This might be particularly helpful to avoid a mini-BES PUB and a mini-PWB PUB if standing committees were divided by bureau, but would also be needed to ensure the effectiveness of standing committees organized around key functions of both bureaus.

A final point is that a two standing committee approach doesn't have to be permanent, and could be adjusted or dropped based on actual experience.