



The League of Women Voters of Portland

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DATE: November 1, 2016

TO: Portland Utility Board

FROM: League of Women Voters of Portland
Frances Dyke, president
Carol Cushman, Action Committee member

RE: Portland Utility Board Member Recruitment

The League of Women Voters of Portland places a high priority on transparency and public participation in government. These principles are the basis for the following suggestions on the process for making recommendations to City Council for new Portland Utility Board (PUB) members.

Our suggestions are intended to help insure a robust and diverse pool of PUB applicants as City Council, the Office of Neighborhood Involvement, the utility bureaus, and other potential partners work to add and replace members of the PUB Board.

We appreciate PUB's willingness to screen applicants and make recommendations to City Council. We believe, however, that it is not appropriate for an appointed board to be solely responsible for selecting and nominating its own replacement members. Clearly, PUB members should be key players in the process, because they are keenly aware of gaps in knowledge or experience that could be filled by new members. Ideally, the process should be transparent and include individuals who are not PUB members. Above all, please keep in mind that the PUB will benefit from adding new perspectives and expertise to the board.

League suggestions for items to include in the recruitment and nomination process:

- Conduct a needs assessment that summarizes the assets of current PUB members in terms of knowledge, expertise, and affiliation with key constituencies. Evaluation of new applicants can then focus on addressing gaps in a clear and transparent manner.
- Request an implicit bias coaching session for the PUB membership subcommittee from the Office of Equity and Human Rights.

“To promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government.”

- Include at least one or two non-PUB members as subcommittee members to get stakeholder input with as much focus as possible on filling the gaps identified through the needs assessment.

Including these suggestions in the PUB bylaws merits consideration, but at the very least the League of Women Voters of Portland recommends using these as guidelines for operational practice. Such a practice would demonstrate the PUB's commitment to transparency and the willingness to consider broad input in developing its new member recommendations.

Thank you for considering these suggestions.