

Portland Utility Board
January 10, 4 – 6:30pm
Room B, Portland Building
Meeting # 19 Minutes

Attendees:

PUB Members: Alice Brawley-Chesworth, ex officio
Allan Warman
Cindy Dietz, ex officio
Gwynn Johnson
Janet Hawkins
Julia Person
Kendra Smith
Lee Moore
Robert Martineau
Colleen Johnson

Absent:

Marie Walkiewicz, ex officio*
Meredith Connolly*

*Notice of absence provided prior to meeting

Staff: Mike Stuhr (Director, Portland Water Bureau)
Cecelia Huynh (Director of Finance and Support Services, Water)
Jonas Biery (Business Services Manager, BES)
Gabe Solmer (Communications Director, Water)
Liam Frost (Policy Director, Commissioner Fish's Office)
Claudio Campuzano (Principal Analyst, City Budget Office)
Ryan Kinsella (Senior Analyst, City Budget Office)
Melissa Merrell (Principal Analyst, City Budget Office)
Megan Callahan (Public Affairs Manager, BES)
Jim Blackwood (Senior Policy Director, Commissioner Fish's Office)
Dawn Uchiyama (Assistant Director, BES)
Jennifer Belknap-Williamson (Principal Engineer, Asset Management, BES)
Jessica Letteney (Senior Management Analyst, Water)
Jeff Winner (Capital Improvement Program Planning Supervisor, Water)

Public: Janice Thompson (Citizen Utility Board)
Carol Cushman (League of Women Voters)

I. Call to Order, Introduction of Any Audience Members

The Board approved the December minutes as drafted. Janet disclosed a conversation with Claudia Sterling at BES.

II. Administrative Review Process

Catherine Howell then spoke about her role on the Administrative Review Committee as the public representative on behalf of PUB. She then provided a summary of her experience on the committee.

PUB then discussed the fiscal implications for sewer and water hook-up or modernization on lower income residents, especially in east Portland. There was consensus that this issue be addressed, especially the equity implications, at a future meeting.

III. Budget Update

Water

Cecelia presented some updates to the group. The bureau is now forecasting a 6.7% rate increase for next year and the next four years. This includes smoothing the rate and accounting for possible Portland Building costs. This is considerably less than previously presented to the PUB.

Cecelia then provided responses to questions at the last meeting by Colleen regarding forecasted rates, bond expenses, and rate stabilization.

Allan asked about the combined rate increase over the next five years. Cecelia noted that the current forecast has several assumptions and that the combined rate is based on compounded rates.

BES

Jonas told the bureau was expecting the budget request to include a 2.8% annual rate increase, with a 0.1% possible swing as decisions were finalized. Jonas then provided responses to PUB questions from the last meeting. Jonas also noted that the requested rate change may be different than the rate that will be adopted by Council in May. Changes to assumptions or changes to overhead costs, for example, may impact final rates. BES will provide any updates to PUB on possible changes.

Kendra asked about contract employees and about the differences between these employees and full-time employees. Melissa offered to provide PUB with a document that summarizes these distinctions.

IV. Customer Service Survey for the Water Bureau

Jessica Letteney then provide an overview of the 2016 Customer Survey. She presented the survey purpose, response rate, highlight of findings, and next steps. This [presentation](#), which is available on PUB's website, includes the information provided by Jessica to PUB. After the presentation, Jessica answered questions from members. She said the survey was available in

multiple language and both in paper and online formats. The bureau made best effort, economically, to reach as many people as possible. They didn't get the diversity in responses they'd like but are working on ways to get more feedback. Jessica said a focus group might get a some of those other voices in answer to a question from Allan. Colleen suggested that partnering the public library might be an option. Jessica said they did the best they could to make it accessible without being specific in who they reached out to.

Lee commented that when Clackamas River Water had done a similar survey, the cost of water was 9th on list of importance or concerns. Quality was higher. Lee posited that the blended rate is what hurts Portland. There is some confusion on the part of ratepayers regarding cost. Kendra suggested that working together as a 'water' (i.e. all water) survey or effort would help to address the blended rate issue. Jessica responded that they considered reaching out to commercial and wholesale customers, but they decided that they needed to focus limited \$46,000 budget. Janet commented that there is a need to work with community partners to really get the voices of underrepresented groups.

V. Recommendations for Candidates to fill Open Seats

Rob presented the process and recommendations for new members. He reminded PUB members that there are currently three openings (one vacated by Gwynn and two newly approved by Council) and one opening coming in April (Kendra's seat when she moves north). Rob provided the members with the skill assessment that Melissa did to identify skills areas of the board as a whole that could be improved and a matrix of the four recommended candidates showing how they fit those needs. To get to these recommendations, all Pub members were invited to participate in the review process. Rob, Kendra, and Allan (with Melissa staffing) reviewed the 20 applications received and invited 8 candidates to meet with them. These meetings weren't publically announced. The group met with 7 candidates and selected four candidates: Scott Robinson, Ted Labbe, Micah Meskel, and Mike Weedall.

Janice noted that the League had recommendations in the Fall – a need and skill assessment. (Done.) Feedback from OEHR on implicit bias. (Done.) Have outside people provide input. Kendra responded that Melissa reached out to Commissioners, Directors and management teams, OEHR, ONI, and the DCL program. Janice didn't feel this counted as the outside input that she felt was agreed to. Janice was of the understanding that outside people would participate on the selection committee. The PUB agreed to continue to improve the process going forward.

All the selected four are men. Very few applicants (three of 20) were women. One was invited to an interview. She cancelled for personal reasons. Carol expressed that there wasn't a lot of diversity. Melissa agreed and noted that they did reach out to OEHR to help get the word out. She reiterated the commitment to work to improve the outreach process and welcome all suggestions.

Rob noted that all members had opportunity to participate. The report now can be accepted or not. Janet moved approval of subcommittee recommendations. Lee seconded. The recommendations were approved by unanimous voice vote.

The next step is that it goes to the Commissioner in Charge and then to the Mayor.

Colleen asked how city boards identified new members. Melissa noted that she had contacted many boards when helping the board set procedures last spring. Most vacancies are filled by staff or director identification - the PUB is using a thorough process.

VI. Racial Equity Plans

Dawn Uchiyama, Assistant Director, Bureau of Environmental Services and Gabriel Solmer, Assistant Director, Portland Water Bureau presented the equity work of both bureaus.

Gabe, who worked on the Water Bureau's racial equity plan provided a powerpoint [presentation](#). Management assigned staff from all sections of the bureau to serve as the core team. She described the genesis, process, objectives, and outputs of the process including strategies and actions. They've submitted their plan to Office of Equity and Human Rights (OEHR) and it is now on OEHR's website for public comment.

Kendra checked to see how many members have read the plans (about half) and suggested that reading it be a homework assignment for all members. Gabe noted that the Equity tool will be submitted as part of the budget process and also that the racial equity plan is a living document.

Dawn then talked about BES and [presented](#) the bureau's equity plan. BES does not have a specific equity specialist; the work had been done throughout the bureau. Now, as Deputy Director, it will be within her responsibilities. She'll be doing the budget equity tool for this year's budget. Next year, she hopes to incorporate it more into the process itself in conjunction with the PUB.

Kendra suggested that this conversation should be continued and that possibly the low-income discount subcommittee could recast their discussion around equity.

VII. Budget Letter

Kendra introduced the draft budget letter and facilitated a section by section review and amendments. Janice from CUB and Carol from the League of Woman Voters also provided comment.

Colleen made a motion to approve the letter as amended with grammatical corrections. Janet seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously by voice vote. Melissa will incorporate all changes and circulate before submitting to the bureaus for inclusion in their budget submissions.

VIII. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn by Allan. Seconded by Janet.

The meeting adjourned at 7:10 PM.