



The League of Women Voters of Portland

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DATE: February 1, 2018

TO: Portland Utility Board
Colleen Johnson and Allan Warman, Co-chairs

FROM: Frances Dyke and Doreen Binder, Co-presidents
Carol Cushman, Action Committee member

RE: PUB's January Budget Letter

The League of Women Voters of Portland has consistently monitored the Portland Utility Board (PUB) since its inception and would like to offer feedback to the PUB on the letter you submitted regarding the Portland Water Bureau (PWB) and Bureau of Environmental Services (BES) budget requests. We are concerned that although you have a staff member who is funded by ratepayers to analyze the budget, she is not called upon to assist you in providing detailed advice to PWB and BES or an independent analysis of the budgets of these bureaus. PUB's charter indicates that staff should be your liaison with the bureaus and serve in a monitoring role for items of potential interest to the PUB. The intent was that staff "be experienced and skilled in financial analysis, utilities, and government operations within the context of environmental stewardship."

PUB has been a functioning commission since Fall 2015 and delivered its first budget letter in January 2016. At that time, PUB was relatively new in its role and understandably wrote a general letter. Even then it made specific comments on the number of new positions requested and expressed concern about Capital Improvement Project funding. We are now in the third budget cycle since your creation and your January letter continues to be very general, though it covers a broader scope of issues. The PUB made a conscious choice to withhold comment on any of the decision packages until you received the City Budget Office (CBO) report. The CBO's role is to provide budget analysis to the City Council, not to the PUB. Their assessments are valuable and should be reviewed as the PUB continues to provide budget advice. However, the Blue Ribbon Commission recommended that PUB have its own analyst to provide an independent analysis. We believe it is a mistake not to use your staff person for this purpose.

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