

DATE: February 2, 2018

TO: League of Women Voters of Portland (LWVPDX)
Frances Dyke and Doreen Binder, Co-presidents
Board of Directors

FROM: Colleen Johnson and Allan Warman
Co-chairs, Portland Utility Board (PUB)

RE: League of Women Voters of Portland's letter of 2/1/18

As the Co-chairs for the Portland Utility Board, we would like to acknowledge Carol Cushman's regular attendance at the Portland Utility Board meetings. We appreciate the League supporting our activities since we believe it is exceedingly important for the PUB to fulfill its purpose to "advise the City Council, on behalf of and for the benefit of the citizens of Portland, on the financial plans, capital improvements, annual budget development and the rate setting for the City's water, sewer, stormwater, and watershed services." (3.123.010)

As set forth in City Code, the PUB was created to ensure that ratepayers continue to benefit from "the establishment of fair and equitable rates, consistent with balancing the goals of customer needs, legal mandates, existing public policies, such as protecting water quality and improving watershed health, operational requirements, and the long-term financial stability and viability of the utilities." (3.123.010)

Following the recommendation by the Blue Ribbon Committee, the ordinance creating the PUB stipulated that "the CBO will assign a minimum of two full-time, senior-level staff to the public utilities. One full-time equivalent staff will support the ongoing CBO utility budget analysis. One full-time staff will be dedicated to and directed by the PUB, with hiring and administrative management by the CBO Director." City Code 3.123 further states "The City Budget Office will provide staffing for the Board, with logistical and topic-related support from the Portland Water Bureau, the Bureau of Environmental Services, and other bureaus or agencies as may be needed. Staffing should be experienced and skilled in financial analysis, utilities, and government operations within the context of environmental stewardship."

Given the above language and our belief that the PUB has indeed exercised its duties and responsibilities with integrity and commitment, we are puzzled and surprised by the letter from the LWVPDX Board of Directors questioning how we have conducted our review, thus far, of the BES and PWB budgets. We would like to know what prompted the LWVPDX to write this letter. Was there a meeting at which these issues were discussed and if so, why was the PUB not informed of such a meeting? Were concerns raised by your members, members of the public, editorials, etc. that lead to this letter? At our last meeting, we specifically asked for public comments, including from the League's representative, and none were forthcoming.

As co-chairs, we believe it would have been more productive to provide us the opportunity to talk to the LWVPDX Board of Directors and discuss our process, if serious concerns were raised which prompted the letter from the Board of Directors.

Further, we are very concerned that the LWVPDX would suggest that our staff analyst is not assisting the PUB in its work and/or not performing her job as recommended in the Blue Ribbon Commission and set forth in the City Ordinance (3.123). At this time, no one from the League has talked to us or our analyst to understand her duties and responsibilities and the value that work brings to the Board or even broached this as a potential issue. We would welcome such a conversation.

If there are questions, either of the Board's decisions and processes and/or the staff performance in the future, we would much prefer that the LWVPDX air those grievances prior to writing a letter that is both in poor form and incorrect. We prefer discussing issues face-to-face rather than trading letters.