

Portland Utility Board

April 2, 2019 4:00pm – 6:00pm
1900 SW Fourth Avenue, 1900 Building, Room 2500C

Meeting #65

Attendees:

PUB Members: Ana Brophy, ex officio
Allan Warman
Colleen Johnson
Dan Peterson
Dory Robinson
Heidi Bullock
Micah Meskel
Mike Weedall
Ted Labbe
Vera Zaharova, ex-officio

Absent:
Robert Martineau
*Van Le, ex officio

*Notice of absence provided prior to meeting

Staff: Gabe Solmer (Deputy Director, Portland Water Bureau)
Jonas Biery (Business Services Manager, Bureau of Environmental Services)
Cecelia Huynh (Director of Finance and Support Services, Portland Water Bureau)
Cristina Nieves (Representative, Commissioner Fritz's Office)
Amy Archer-Masters (PUB Analyst, City Budget Office)
Cinthia Diaz Calvo (PUB Coordinator, City Budget Office)

Public: Carol Cushman, League of Women Voters
Dee White
Lisa Reynolds
Lorie Mcfarlane

I. Call to Order

Allan called the meeting to order. He reminded everyone that the meeting was of community volunteers tasked to advise City Council on items related to the Water Bureau and the Bureau of Environmental Services.

He gave an overview of the agenda which included the lead update from the Portland Water Bureau and the finalization of the PUB letter of recommendations to City Council.

II. **Public Comment**

Allan noted the sign-up sheet for public comment. He noted comments were limited to three minutes.

Carol commented that regarding budget and performance measures, the Women's League is concerned about what the bureaus are counting for their performance measures. They do not think they are reflective of their role. She mentioned that counting widgets is ok but that additional performance measures are needed. The Women's League has heard comments on the PWB and corrosion control, they want metric goals on the level of corrosion. A system of evaluation needs to be established. She provided examples of questions such as asking, "What's happening with the health of the river and the fish in the water?" She recommends the PUB to stretch themselves and the bureaus to see beyond budget.

- Colleen supported Carols comment saying she would like time set a aside to talk in general about performance measures and decide who's job is it? Given the change in budget process figuring this out is critical to establish performance meaasures. It's easier to masure widgets than effectiveness.
- Carol supports Colleen and the PUB to be stronger with the Bureaus.
- Ana asked what the community would like to know?
- Carol suggests the number of times the river overflows and suggests connecting with the organization that manages the superfund to get more ideas from the community.

Katie Gillerpie, software engineer for water utilities, commented on the Portland water loss treatment and water loss rate. She states that this is an issue that needs more attention in Portland. From PWB there is an estimate cost of over 2.5 million dollars in water loss. She states that it's the responsibility of the Water bureau to be accountable for the water loss and they should be accountable for the public water audit for this fiscal year. The bureau can compare their performance and work on the theory that what is measured acan be improved. Will this rate increase be passed on to them?

- Colleen asked about Katie's background.
- Katie suggested reconnecting after the meeting and exchange information.
- Ted asked Katie to continue staying involved to drill down on the water loss issue. While 10% is considered "ok", that can always change.
- Gabe said that she would love to be in touch with Katie.

III. **Prior Meeting Minutes**

Cinthia circulated the draft minutes from the March 14th meeting. Allan asked if there were changes or correction to the minutes.

Micah said that a correction might be on Pg 3, on "interest for dual role". He suggested stiking the rest on that sentence after "role".

The minutes were accepted as amended.

IV. Disclosure of Communications

Heidi said she discussed public involvement with...

Allan said she discussed about consulting engineers with the PWB.

V. PWB Update on Lead, Scott Bradway, Portland Water Bureau.

Scott introduced himself and the content of his [presentation](#) which included an update on lead, and changes that PWB is making for the next years and beyond. Scott stated that Water is not the source of lead. Sources of lead are copper pipes and old plumbing used in the 70s in **1,200 (?)** Portland homes. Older fixtures installed prior to 1985 can contribute to lead in water. He said that what Portland has done with support of the State of Oregon is to ban the use of leadbased solder in water systems in 1985. They removed all the known lead pigtailed and replaced 364 large lead component meters. He went over slide 5.

Scott said that existing treatment facilities would have been over \$20 million. The concern was that the big investment would only benefit a small population and therefore PWB directed their resources to educating and created a broader Lead Hazard Reduction program. He went over slide 6.

Mike asked regarding the study of sources of lead why water was not even in it at all (slide 7).

- Scott said that because water was not the source of lead. He said that there were other sources that were greater. He said that when there are complaints, the reports say that water is not the main source of lead. He said that often times when water is tested it turns out that there are other sources of lead that pose a bigger threat than water.
- Lorie said that PUB can clarify that with Sarah and that PWB cannot validate that information or the results of the assessment.
- Mike said that the sample Scott was presenting to PUB is a self-selecting sample; like self-reporting.
- Scott reiterated the reasons why water was not in the sample.
- Mike asked about refugee country of origin, and why that was on the sample and not water.
- Scott explained that people's exposure of lead in their country of origin is important to note. He said that he isn't saying that water is not an exposure.
- Lorie said that what Scott is presenting is an inference. She said that excess of lead in the blood stream cannot be traced to its origin in the blood. She said that if the PWB is not even testing the water then that's a problem.
- Micah asked a question about the process of testing the water.
- Scott explained that it would be an address match. He said that PWB has been doing 3-part testing.

Scott continued with slide 8. He said that PWB monitors customer's tap water every 6 months. The tests that are collected considered to be the worst-case scenario. They do quarterly pH and alkalinity at 25 sites. He explained the sampling history and showed a chart that exceeds a few times, but it's been better than the levels in 1992.

Mike asked a question about the samples.

- Scott explained that when they use samples they amplify it to make an estimate of the City and those results are the worst-case scenario. During the Fall the water is warmer, bacteria is more active in water and can drive up pH. In 2012 CDC said that there is no safe level of lead exposure. Low level exposure does have an effect in your body. In 2013 exceeded. The bureau concluded that improved treatment is the best approach. Looking ahead they will have corrosion control treatment in place. Later this month when they get filtration media, they can use that data to enhance treatment.

Allan asked Scott if he had final comments before wrapping up.

Scott quickly went over Pg. 14 on education and testing and their actions to meet new state regulations.

Dory asked why instead of passing that responsibility onto homeowners, if it's possible that the PWB can apply some of those funds to give loans to homeowners to change the fixtures. She said that the burden shouldn't be on the homeowners. It should be a City issue.

- Scott said that it costs about \$70k to change the plumbing in a house and the bureau has not...
- Gabe said that they are working with what they have and that the funds they do have they are using on rural areas where there is more need. There are some programs in place, but the homes have always been seen as private. The City cannot use public money on a private home.
- Scott said that as part of their new move in packet they provide information to home owners.
- Micah said that there is no actual focus on removing the pipes that have lead, which is the root of the problem. He asked how many staff members the bureau has working on innovating and coming up with a solution to the root of the problem.
- Gabe said they are not using public money on private homes. So they don't have FTE dedicated to innovating that aspect. But they are educating the public.
- Scott said that unfortunately the standard on corrosion is what the PWB is being held up to, but once the levels are not a compliance the private home situation is a challenge.

Micah said that he City should be thinking outside of the box. Specific to the City, what are some things the City can be doing and potentially budgeting opportunities?

- Colleen said, so there is no lead in the water, and the lead that comes through the lead plumbing is when it is contaminated with lead.
- Dan said there is none.
- Mike clarified that there is lead in the meters too.
- Colleen asked, so the solution is to adjust the pH in all of Portland to deal with this relatively small number of houses.
- Scott said that there is a public health benefit for everyone.
- Lorie said something...
- Scott said that it is high performane and that PUB should be looking at it as a whole array of parameters.
- Katie said the focus was on private homes.
- Dory said the problem is bigger than this.
- Cecelia explained about private properties that water bureau cannot get involved with.
- Gabe explained that the jurisdiction can be ignored but that would only benefit some homes vs treating the water with pH, which would benefit everyone.
- Ted appreciates the PWB for corrosion control, but in addition to this, he said it would be great to spend time to look at crafting water loans. Leveraging public and private

funds to solve this problem. Talk in a sense of environmental and equity justice. He said that there is so much more the City could be doing to grow green collar jobs and improve the health threat situation.

Lorie said that she has a couple paragraphs that sums it all up. She said that if the water is treated, it will affect our plumbing and private homes by releasing more lead. There is a tradeoff that they have done that actually puts more lead in the water. Higher than the whole western region. She said that there is lead-containing piping everywhere, and that these other cities have less lead in the water.

- Scott explained that the partial treatment does include a tradeoff and that they will be treating the other exposures of lead in the water. He said that he expects that PWB will try to optimize, but that's not up to them to determine, it's determined by state regulations.

Lorie asked what the PWB was doing to protect their city, like all the other cities.

Colleen proposed the need for more time for this discussion. She would like to understand more the partial treatment.

- Mike said he echoes other PUB members and urges PWB to start a dialog to explore other options to resolve this issue.
- ACTION: Colleen said the irony is that we are using rate payers money to solve the alternative "problem", instead of using it directly to fix the actual source of the problem and asked if everyone agreed with more time to talk more. There was general agreement.
- Gabe said the bureau is happy to take questions if PUB had particular questions or areas of interest. She asked for PUB to specify areas of topics.

VI. Letter Recommendations Discussion

Amy asked the PUB how they best wanted to go over the letter. She explained the edits of the letter and mentioned that the topics highlighted in the letter were topics that were still up for discussion. She suggested starting from the beginning and provided an outline of the letter.

Colleen said that she agrees that the rate of increase almost doubling could be removed.

- Amy said that Colleen had also wanted to include the chart to reference the comparison to other jurisdictions.
- Colleen suggests shorting the message that explains the chart.
- Heidi disagrees that the chart should be included and doesn't understand why PUB wants to include the comparison. She said that the reader wouldn't understand if Portland's rates are good or not and therefore doesn't understand what the PUB is trying to say with that. She asks for clarification.
- Colleen responds to her question by referring to the bureau's choice of using those cities as a comparison in their requested budgets. She said that she isn't sure why they picked them and that it's their analysis.
- Heidi said that precisely because it is not PUB's analysis and because PUB doesn't know why those cities were picked, that the chart should not be included in the letter.
- Colleen agrees with Heidi that the PUB didn't make that analysis, but that the chart does show the sort of comparison of the cities. Colleen thinks that the commissioners are smart enough to realize that Portland is different from other cities. Nobody is saying that they're the same.
- Heidi then asks Colleen what the chart is saying.

- Colleen said that its simply showing the relative position of Portland among other cities.
- Heidi asks “and the positions is...?”
- Allan says, “in the middle of the road.”
- Colleen says no.
- Heidi then asks what the middle of the road means, because that paragraph is also the one in which PUB states that the rates will increase 20% in 5 years, but PUB doesn’t know what other Cities’ rates are doing.
- Colleen agrees with Heidi that PUB doesn’t know what other Cities’ rates are doing.
- Amy said that the table is compiled based off the data that was put together by the bureaus for the rate hearing and would eventually be seen by Council.
- Cecelia said that PWB has always provided a comparison but she forgot where that chart is coming from.
- Colleen said that PUB didn’t ask for that comparison.
- Micah said that PUB has had this discussion before (a year ago) and that thye have agreed that there are too many variables in the comparison of the cities.
- Colleen asked Cecelia, why then were those cities added in their requested budgets, because I am positive that this group did not ask the PWB to add other cities to their report.
- Jonas added that the origination of the table for city comparison was for credit ratings and bond reports for submittal to investing public and credit rating agencies. It was requested in context of budget and the list was narrowed down at the request of the PUB. He said he can only speak for his bureau, and he understands that in the end they might not compare with one another but it only goes to recognize how our data fits in compared to other cities.
- Cecelia adds that she remembers that something was mentioned in a previous conversation in this meeting that led to the charts being requested.
- Dory has a problem with perpetuating vague information and suggests just including a reference but no chart.
- Colleen suggested to add a statement and the chart.
- Amy suggested adding statement only at the end of the section that is most relevant to the topic at hand.
- Ted suggests not to add it at all. He said that the chart comparison would take away from the statement that PUB is trying to make on the 20% escalation. The reason being that the the chart makes it seem like Portland rates are average compared to other cities.
- Colleen said no. She doesn’t think that that it would take away from PUB’s statement
- Allan suggests sticking with just a statement.
- Colleen said maybe moving it to the end of the paragraph.
- Amy said it can be done and a qualifying statement might be added.
- Dory suggested a vote on where PUB wants to keep it in or
- VOTE: Dory raised the motion to keep the chart.
 - Colleen second it.
 - Allan said for is in favor of leaving it in and who is in favor of taking it out.
 - Motion failed, because there was a tie.
- VOTE: Dory moved a motion to add a qualifying statement as a general point of reference.

- Heidi second it.
- Agreed unanimously.

Allan said next suggesting to move on the next section.

Amy said Staffing impacts and said the change there was adding “If new positions are approved by the Council, the PUB requests specific and measurable performance metrics for those programs so that we will be in a position to evaluate the effectiveness of these staffing increases in the next budget cycle.”

Micah asked clarification as to what PUB was asking. Metrics on packages and metrics on positions?

- Heidi clarifies that she thinks its metrics for the program offers.
- Amy said that the performance metrics relate to the program but those will change as it relates to staffing.
- Colleen thinks it would be metrics for the program but that there will be additional metrics as it relates to the employees and their effectiveness.
- Micah asks if its applicable or reasonable, he is concerned that Coucil will see it as an impossible ask.
- Colleen said that there should be a metric as it relates to the effectiveness of the program that ties to the FTE.
- Ted suggests that performance measures should be higher level. There must be a measure on affordability and rate of increase. He thinks that the sentence may not even be required.
- Heidi agrees and asks for clarification that what the PUB is asking is for appropriate metrics relative to the effectives of the program and not the FTE.
- Amy asked if the PUB would like to take a vote or if there is general agreement that the sentence be removed.
- DECISION: There was general agreement to remove it.

Allan said next.

Amy said on low income there is the section that was edited “The PUB recognizes that the challenge of multifamily housing affordability is a concern for all of Council that requires a more wholistic approach than just focusing on utility rates. The PUB respectfully requests to be included in the broader City discussion as it happens.

- Colleen said that she didn’t agree with requesting to be included in the broader City discussion. She said that it might be too much for the PUB to take on. Colleen asks the PUB if they really want to get involved in converstations relating to low income discount.
- Heidi supports leaving the section as is because its important to leave the door open for conversations and engagement with the bureaus.
- DECISION: Amy asked if there is general agreement to leave it as is.
 - There was general agreement to leave it as is in the letter.

Dory suggested adding a stronger ended and or call to action.

- Amy said that generally Council doesn’t respond to letters from advisory bodies.
- Colleen suggested “if you have questions, please reach out”
- Dory said that sometimes letters like these read like a newsletter and she wants the letter to project the dynamic of the PUB’s discussion.
- Amy asked Dory if she wanted to edit or add a new sentence.

- DECISION: Dory said to add on to it suggesting something along the lines of “if you have questions, please reach out. We look forward to continued conversations”. There was general agreement.

VOTE: It was moved and second to accept the letter as amended. Vote was unanimous.

VII. Discuss Recruitment & Board Opportunities, Cinthia Diaz Calvo and Amy Archer-Masters, CBO Staff.

Cinthia said that because PUB is on its 3rd week into the open application period and the poll of applicants its very small. She said that there had also been questions expressing concern around time commitment and the workplan that was still in progress; and that there have also been questions around demographics of the current board.

- Colleen asked who the questions were coming from.
 - Cinthia said that the questions regarding time commitment and work plan were asked by applicants and by commissioner staff and that questions around demographics because she is interested in more targeted outreach to Native American communities.
- Amy added that Commissioner Fritz is also interested in outreach more broadly, for example we were asked questions were “What’s your representation of through out the areas of the city and we couldn’t anwer those questions.” So we want to help gather that demographic to help them target their outreach to where we have potential gaps. And that might take a little but more time.
- Cinthia said that the CBO staff recommendation is to extend and have the deadline at the end of April, moving the recruitment subcommittee to May so PUB had plenty of time to coordinate schedules.
- DECISION: There was general agreement on the proposed shift.
- ACTION: Dory, Heidi, Ana and Colleen volunteered to be in the recruiting committee.

VIII. Discuss next Meeting Agenda

May 7, 2017, 4pm, 1900 SW 4th Avenue, Room 2500 C

Agenda: PWB/BES Spring BMP, CBO Reviews, and Workplan.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00pm.