



Environmental Services Commission

Minutes

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Center for Urban Waters located at 326 E D St, Tacoma, WA and via Zoom Meeting

January 11, 2024

Chair Beaumier called the meeting to order at 4:05 p.m.

Commission Members Present: Chad Sutter, Erich Sachs, Mindi Keller, Matthew Benedict, David Dailey, Karen DiNicola, Marty Campbell, *Richard Doenges, and *Esther Beaumier.

Commission Members Absent: Grant Middleton, Alex Harman, Bruce Martin, and Jeff Paradise.

Public Comment

The public comment period is reserved for items on the current agenda only. Comments will be limited to the amount of time announced by the chair, presiding officer, or staff liaison, no more than five minutes per person per meeting.

No Public Comment was received.

Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Kurt Fremont, Business Operations Division Manager, thanked Commissioners Beaumier and Sutter for their service as Chair and Vice Chair last year, noting they did an excellent job. Commissioners held a brief discussion soliciting interest on servicing as Commission Chair and Vice Chair for 2024.

Commissioner DiNicola moved to elect Commissioner Beaumier as Chair and Commissioner Sutter as Vice Chair. Seconded by Commissioner Sachs. Voice vote was taken and carried. The motion was adopted.

Review Meeting Schedule and 2024 Work Plan

Mr. Fremont provided an overview of last year's work plan, noting it included some tours and was all about providing commissioners with an understanding of how the three utilities operate. He reminded commissioners if there is interest in any other tours this year to reach out to him. Alan Aplin, Account Relationship Manager, is scheduling a tour for Commissioner DiNicola of the JMK Facility, Commissioner Sutter requested to be included. Mr. Fremont noted he will work to add Commissioner Dailey on the next available tour of the Central Treatment Plant.

Mike Slevin, Environmental Services (ES) Director, provided commissioners a brief history of the commission, remarking it began in 1994 to seek better feedback from rate payers. He then reviewed the 2024 work plan, mentioning it is a standard order we have used for years; however, if the commission would like to add anything please inform staff as soon as possible. He also mentioned that ES funds are their own enterprise funds, our rate process is linked to the General Fund budget process. He stated that there are two ways to look at rates and what is

recommended to the City Council is a revenue percentage not individual rate. He also highlighted that in August the commission will start work on their recommendation letter to the City Council, and in October ES staff will present rates at a study session where all commissioners are welcome to attend. He concluded by stating the hope is that commissioners bring this information to the groups they represent outside of these meetings as part of the rate setting process. There was interest from Commissioners in obtaining a better understanding of the comp plans associated with each of the utilities. Staff agreed to adjust the work plan and future presentations to include this information.

Review Commission Role and Purpose

Director Slevin reviewed the purpose of the commission defined in the Commission Charter:

“The purpose of the Environmental Services Commission is to review and make recommendations to the City Council, City Manager, and City staff on wastewater, surface water, and solid waste rates, rate structures, services, policies, and programs developed by Environmental Services. Commission members will consider the environment, equity, cultural and economic responsibilities, and the duties, obligations and limitations under state, federal and local laws and regulations.”

Commissioner DiNicola requested he also read the responsibilities of the Commission:

“The Commission shall review, advise, and make recommendations to City Council, City Manager and City staff regarding changes to the following programs, services, policies, rates, or rate structures proposed by Environmental Services:

- a) Residential and commercial utility programs and services.*
- b) Short-term and long-range planning.*
- c) Environmental Services rates, rate structures and rate assistance programs.*
- d) Capital Investment Program and financing structures; and*
- e) City of Tacoma policies directly related to Environmental Services utility functions.*

Members shall be expected to consider the full interest of their customer class and report Commission discussion back, where appropriate.”

Director Slevin stated the goal is to only raise rates by what is necessary to meet expectations. He showed commissioners ES Financial Policy Statement, and pointed out Section I.B. that mentions the commission:

“ESD will solicit comments and feedback from the Environmental Services Commission (ESC) as a part of the rate-setting process before developing final rate recommendations.”

Commissioner Sutter inquired how capital projects are viewed in the bonding process. Director Slevin discussed ES's bond rating and bonding process, and how capital projects are managed. He then noted that Moss Adams presents their audit finding to the commission, but if there were interest, he would look into having bond counsel present to the commission as well.

Commissioner DiNicola inquired what the comp plans are for the three utilities, noting she feels uncomfortable asking about rates without knowing more about the comp plans and how they all come together. She then requested staff provide a chart of the different comp plans and where we are at with each. Director Slevin noted ES has a comp plan for wastewater and stormwater, but Solid Waste is part of the regional Tacoma-Pierce County Solid and Hazardous Waste Management Plan. Discussion ensued regarding future plans for solid waste after the contract with LRI expires in 2030, rail vs. barge, where the garbage will go, whether the City could ever deviate from the County, and how Pierce County Solid Waste Advisory Committee (SWAC) and the Environmental Services Commission align.

Commissioner Other Items of Interest

Director Slevin provided a litigation update, stating there were two lawsuits relating to regulatory issues. The Stormwater MS4 permit was correct, and the court supported the City. The Nutrient General Permit was successfully challenged in superior court, successful at appellant court, and the appeal to the Pollution Control Hearing Board is in a stay. Commissioner Sutter inquired who pays for legal fees. Director Slevin stated they are paid for by rates. Commissioner Keller inquired about the MS4 permit challenges.

Cassandra Moore, Environmental Compliance ADM, mentioned she is coordinating a stormwater inspection ride-along for Commissioner DiNicola.

Discussion followed about recycling and Call-2-Haul for multi-family residence.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:14 p.m.