



Environmental Services Commission Minutes

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Center for Urban Waters – 325 E D St
Zoom Meeting

June 13, 2024

Chair Beaumier called the meeting to order at 4:12 p.m.

Commission Members Present: Chad Sutter, Mindi Keller, Karen DiNicola, Marty Campbell, Jonathan Paul, Eric Sachs, Matthew Benedict, Jeff Paradise, and Esther Beaumier*.

Commission Members Absent: Bobbak Talebi*, Bruce Martin, Grant Middleton, and David Dailey.

Chair Beaumier welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted a quorum was present.

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.

Approval of the March 14, and May 9, 2024, Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Keller moved to approve the March 14th and May 9, 2024; meeting minutes as presented. Seconded by Commissioner Sutter. Voice vote was taken and carried. The minutes were approved.

2025-2026 Budget Strategy Presentation and Discussion

Christian Curran, Rates & Budget Assistant Division Manager, provided an overview of the City's budget development process, noting she previously presented the 2023 financials and revenue requirements for the next six years. She discussed the baseline budget for the three utilities, stating it reflects the current number of employees, salaries, services, and assessments. She then reviewed infrastructure cost increases, including charts showing construction and other inflation, and other ongoing impacts. She highlighted some of the major concerns in 2025-2026 in the areas of capital, regulations, and financial sustainability.

Ms. Curran reviewed a chart of the 2025-2030 preliminary revenue plan for the three utilities. She discussed ES budget strategies, explaining 2021-2022 was pandemic relief, 2023-2024 was pandemic recovery, 2025-2026 is phased stabilization and planning, and 2027-2028 will be more phased stabilization and planning. She then reviewed some major initiatives and proposals ES is currently looking at in the areas of effective and efficient service levels, equity and climate, new revenue opportunities, long range planning, and customer assistance program

enhancements. She did note while researching minimum staffing level needs in Solid Waste they came across a significant jump in absences from 2022 to 2023, particularly with the use of Sick/FMLA/PFML, equivalent to 11.7 full-time employees. She then stated next steps are to report back to the Commission July 11 with updated 2025-2026 revenue requirements, including more information on potential budget proposals.

Discussion followed regarding the following topics:

1. Staffing Level Proposals
 - a. Chair Beaumier asked about the Home in Tacoma Plan Reviewer position.
 - b. Staff stated the recommendation is for a Plans Examiner to assist with plan review for the utility specifically for new development.
 - c. Commissioner DiNicola inquired further about the Plans Examiner position and noted the city pays high fees consultant services. She then requested more information about the Plans Examiner job duties.
 - d. Staff stated this position is focused on stormwater for new development and ES is working with Planning & Development Services to determine what this position would look like.
2. Customer Assistance Program Enhancement Proposal
 - a. Commissioner DiNicola asked about funding for customer assistance programs and whether funding comes from paying customers.
 - b. Staff confirmed paying customers carry the burden and less than 3% of eligible customers are enrolled in the assistance programs. ES is working with TPU to try to make the eligibility threshold fair.
 - c. Commissioner DiNicola asked what other assistance programs the city is trying to align to with the proposed enhancement.
 - d. Staff stated several housing assistance programs nationally have a similar eligibility requirement.
3. Central Treatment Plant Technologies
 - a. Commissioner DiNicola asked why the Central Treatment Plant does not have better technology to eliminate things like pesticides, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and chemicals in body lotions and hair care products from wastewater prior to going in the Puget Sound.
 - b. Staff stated the Central Treatment Plant has received many awards and is a national leader in wastewater treatment. Acknowledging there is always opportunities to be better.
 - c. Commissioner Sutter stated he had recently gone out with one of the City's Source Control Representatives and discussed the great work they are doing. He noted that the city tests for many pollutants that are not required and conducts source tracing.

Commissioner Other Items of Interest

Commissioner DiNicola shared she attended the public hearing for the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System today. She hoped commissioners could be made aware of other regulatory actions happening and take advantage of the public comment periods. She suggested staff create a slide or calendar that would list upcoming comment periods, action or meetings related to regulatory actions.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:32 p.m.