



**Community Advisory Committees
Annual Meeting
Seattle Municipal Tower 4050/60
March 11, 2009, 3:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.**

Attendance:

- **Solid Waste (SWAC):** Mike McComber, David Ruggiero, Nicole Riss, Theo Mbabaliye, Rita Smith, George Kukahiko, Eric Johnson
- **Creeks, Drainage & Wastewater (CDWAC):** Steve Ruden, Nancy Malmgren, Suzie Burke, Eric Dripps, Jay Stark, Lydia Heard, Douglas Mora
- **Water System (WSAC):** Alice Lanczos, Tom Grant, Valerie Cholvin, Dick Follis, Laura Markley, Eric Anderson, Rachel Cardone
- **SPU Staff:** Vicky Beaumont, Deborah Caul, Linda Rogers, Craig Omoto, Renee Burchfield, Martha Burke, Julie Burman, Sue Morrison, Neil Thibert, Sherri Crawford, Aurora Mendoza., George Sidles
- **SPU Executive Team:** Ray Hoffman, Nancy Ahern
- **SPU Leadership Team:** Tim Croll, Trish Rhay, Dave Hilmoie, Sherry Crawford

Networking and refreshments were held from 3:00 – 3:30 p.m.

The meeting opened with welcome and comments by Utility Systems Management Branch Deputy Director, Nancy Ahern. Recognition and thanks to outgoing members Kim Ducote, Dick Follis, and Marilyn Bucsko.

Acting Director, Ray Hoffman made remarks regarding SPU business challenges and drivers for 2009 and beyond. A question and answer period followed.

Cost Drivers in 2009. Major projects and cost drivers in 2009 for SPU in the three lines of business, Solid Waste, Drainage & Wastewater, and Water System include: new Solid Waste contracts, North and South Transfer Station rebuilds, flood control and stormwater, NPDES permit requirements and inspections, Chester Morse Lake permitted pumping plant and reservoir covering projects.

Revenues and the Economy. Market conditions have an effect, even though SPU is a revenue-generating department. All funds are anticipating reductions in 2009. Lower than forecasted water usage due to conservation, a cool, wet summer, and a slowing economy results in lower water system revenues. Sewer revenues, which are based on billed water usage, are also lower. Solid Waste revenues are lower; garbage is a leading indicator of economic tough times, construction and demolition collection is down to zero. SPU is committed to maintaining current employment levels and will hold vacancies open rather than cut staff.

Rates. The rates effect on SPU lines of business in 2009.

- City Council authorized a three-year rate period from 2009 – 2011 in the Water Fund. Due to the slowing economy the City Council required permanent productivity gains; in addition, the hydrant ruling that rate payers are not required to pay for the City's hydrant installations impacted rates by both a customer rebate and surcharge.
- City Council authorized a two-year rate period for 2009 – 2010 in the Solid Waste Fund. Changes during the rate period include the new collection practices, a new bag fee, and forecasts of the recyclable commodity market.
- SPU provided a zero-percent rate increase proposal in the Drainage & Wastewater Fund in 2010. This has an affect on the 2009 budget as well. Plans on how to manage are in the process of being developed at this time based on SPU Strategic Business Plan.

Strategic Plan. SPU has three areas of focus in the Strategic Plan.

- Improving project delivery
- Focus on customer service
- Move from “data rich” to “knowledge rich”

An example of using data to inform cost-effective infrastructure decisions is the choice of using grey vs. green infrastructure in various locations such as Ballard or the Seattle waterfront. Other drivers of these decisions include public health and safety, regulatory requirements, social and environmental issues and City initiatives.

Q&A.

Q. Will SPU provide a list of CIP projects that were proposed, cut or delayed?

A. Decisions are on-going, but a list of CIP projects maintained, delayed, and cut will be provided;

Q. What costs are associated with badly done CSOs?

A. SPU is making flood-related investments at Madison Valley (\$35M), South Park (\$10M) and Thorton Creek due to emergency storms. Costs result from claims can be provided; litigation is mainly people not satisfied with the claims process. SPU may not legally provide the information on litigation;

Q. Will there be cuts as a result of less spending at SPU?

A. SPU is holding some positions and not filling them. We are moving forward with some hire processes, but each vacant position is run through an analysis of need.

Q. Is Federal Stimulus money available to help?

A. Federal funds of \$2B Drinking Water, \$6B Wastewater, and \$20B Transportation are available through a competitive process for shovel-ready infrastructure projects which SPU is actively pursuing through a coordinated process within the City. These may be either grants or low-interest loans and are State of Washington controlled funds. SPU proposals may be South Park and Venema Creek.

Q. What are the customer payment trends like due to the economy?

A. Delinquency rates are tracked slightly differently because City Light has meters at every unit, resulting in greater number of meters compared to SPU which has meters at each building. SPU has seen a slight increase in delinquency rates and requests for low-income assistance.

Q. Is source separation feasible?

A. Mr. Hoffman responded with an explanation of how source separation is one important aspect to the success of our solid waste system, and we're asking our residents and businesses to do more than before. Our success means less will end up in the landfill, but even so, we're always looking for ways to make the most of it. One way that SPU is handling this is by buying power generated at the Arlington land fill through methane reclamation.

Q. How will SPU address pollution such as nitrogen from West Point Plant in Puget Sound?

A. SPU is looking at demand management solutions for Drainage & Wastewater, such as street sweeping which is cheaper than an “end of pipe” solution. Committees can help answer the question “What would baseline behavior look like in 10 years and how does SPU operate without burdening the system and resources.”

Deputy Director Ahern went over the CAC Survey results, see attached.

Each committee sojourned to small group discussion to answer three questions related to increasing effectiveness and communication of the committees and the committee chairs reported the results, see attached.

The meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

**Solid Waste
Small Group Discussion
Mike McComber, Chair**

1. Suggestions for ensuring SPU is getting input from the diverse ratepayers it serves, including those who tend to not participate in public meetings, etc.
 - Get word out to community based organizations
 - Focus groups – market based
 - Change focus groups – not use same all the time
 - Take advantage of the Call Center
 - i. When caller/s talk about specific issues, as about being referred to a focus group
 - ii. Where are already touching the customer – get additional feedback
 - iii. Use website – use to provide feedback
 - iv. Recognize and use Point of Service contacts

2. What more can the committees do to communicate about utility programs and issues to the neighborhoods and constituencies they represent?
 - Visit problem areas – talk to people in area about what is working and what isn't

3. Other ways CACs could be providing SPU with more timely or useful advice on important policy and program issues.
 - Revisit and review past issues; identify which events were significantly impacted by SWAC input
 - Look at own case studies
 - Receive input from management on political drivers – won't change input, but possibly how it's submitted
 - Ask management to look at input and indicate would appreciate a response
 - Meeting time – make time for deliberation and reach a conclusion / decision
 - Provide platform for debate
 - Work together with other CAC groups in areas of common interest / concern, e.g., illegal dumping issues – encourage neighborhoods to be extra vigilant, improve signage to provide contact for notification of illegal dumping

**Creeks, Drainage and Wastewater
Small Group Discussion
Suzie Burke**

1. Suggestions for ensuring SPU is getting input from the diverse ratepayers it serves, including those who tend not to participate in public meetings, etc.
 - Use maps to make an interactive tool with an accessible format that shows location of pipes and drainage systems.
 - Include insert in customer bills to sample households
 - Use geocoding to plot responses and link to zip code.
 - Implement an Adopt-A-Drain (or Adopt-A-Curb) to keep drains clear.
2. What more can the committees do to communicate about utility programs and issues to the neighborhoods and constituencies they represent?
 - Liaison with other community and special interest groups that members attend
3. Other ways CACs could be providing SPU with more timely or useful advice on important policy and program issues.
 - Have subcommittees do research on issues
 - Formalize CAC response through letters and memos to SPU Executives.

**Water System
Small Group Discussion
Rachel Cardone, Chair**

1. Suggestions for ensuring SPU is getting input from the diverse ratepayers it serves, including those who tend not to participate in public meetings, etc.:
 - Solicit feedback from existing community organizations that are currently underrepresented in WSAC.
 - Choose 4-5 issues that citizens care about (e.g. chlorine taste in water) and go to community groups and organizations such as community centers, PTA's, churches, Pacific Islander Group, etc...
 - Members agreed that there are not many contentious issues regarding the water system.
 - Include a postcard in the water quality report that asks the citizens to provide feedback to the utility regarding issues of concern. The committee expressed concern that not all customers would receive a mailing because apartment occupants don't receive a water bill.
 - Conduct WSAC meetings at community centers and open the meetings to the public for input/feedback. Make it clear that the WSAC does not represent SPU, but would like feedback from the public.
 - It was noted that members who serve on WSAC have an interest in Water System issues. This may not be true of the general rate payer population, which might make it difficult to get input from a wider/more diverse group.
 - Concern was expressed regarding member diversity. The question was "What is SPU trying to accomplish? What groups/types is SPU trying to represent?"

2. What more can the committees do to communicate about utility programs and issues to the neighborhoods and constituencies they represent?
 - Offer to speak at community meetings.
 - Provide notes from WSAC meetings to the local newspapers.
 - Provide information to newspapers regarding local water related incidents such as the reason for the leak in front of Ballard High School.
 - Provide general information regarding water quality, rates, and subjects of interest such as why the reservoirs are being covered to water customers. This type of communication could be inserted with the bills, and mailed to customers. Similar to City Light's "Light Reading" which is sent out with the bills. The communication could also include WSAC recruitment reading such as "5 reasons why you might want to participate in WSAC". A concern regarding mailing was raised again. Apartment dwellers do not receive water bills and therefore would not receive this communication.
 - Create an SPU blog to reach a different group of people (younger audience). Publish facts, issues, and recruitment information on the Blog.
 - Use Twitter to further SPU communications.

 - Add information from SPU to local blogs such as the West Seattle Blog, Ballard Blog, etc...

3. Other ways CACs could be providing SPU with more timely or useful advice on important policy and program issues.

Time ran out to gather input from WSAC regarding this question.