

## Seattle Public Utilities Customer Review Panel

Friday April 3, 2020

1:30 – 4 pm

Virtual Meeting held via Skype

Panel Members			
Suzie Burke	X	Noel Miller	X
Bobby Coleman	X	Thy Pham	X
Dave Layton	X	Rodney Schauf	X
Laura Lippman	X	Puja Shaw	
Maria McDaniel	X		
Staff and Others			
Keri Burchard-Juarez	X	Andrew Lee	X
Kathleen Baca		Natasha Papsoueva	X
Alex Chen	X	Ellen Pepin-Cato	
Jeff Fowler	X	Dani Purnell	X
Brian Goodnight	X	Karen Reed	X
Mami Hara	X	Rick Scott	
Wylie Harper		Karen Sherry	
Akshay Iyengar	X	Jonathan Swift	X
Paula Laschober	X		

Underlined text indicates action items. ***Bold Italicized text*** indicates follow up items.

### Meeting Summary - FINAL

**Welcome:** Karen Reed opened the meeting with a roll call of the Panel members and reviewed the virtual meeting protocols to be followed.

Mami Hara, General Manager/CEO of Seattle Public Utilities (SPU), welcomed those in attendance thanked them for joining the virtual meeting and for their patience with the technology. SPU will be holding virtual meetings until at least the end of the Governor’s “Stay Home, Stay Healthy” directive. Mami expressed appreciation for and acknowledgement of the staff work that went into the preparation and materials today. She then reviewed the topics the Panel would be hearing about at the meeting.

**Standing Items:** Karen Reed asked if there were any corrections or additions to the meeting summary from March 20, 2020. No corrections or additions. The meeting summary for March 20, 2020 was approved.

**SPU in the News/GM Comments, COVID Update.** Mami provided the Panel with an update on the City’s response. Mami has asked for rotations to SPU’s Incident Command Structure (ICS). The current ICS team will provide guidance while this transition takes place. The planned rotation provides current ICS team members with a break as well as gives an opportunity to other staff. Mami thanked Andrew Lee, current ICS Commander, for his outstanding work.

From the citywide perspective for operational aspects – all City departments have developed a

joint Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP), as well as top projects for all departments. SPU has been asked to develop a list of essential staff to support the Citywide COOP. SPU developed a "Priority One" list of citywide capital projects, and we are ready to ramp work up or down as needed.

HR update: SPU has implemented Alternative Work Arrangements (AWAs) for staff until further notice. The City Budget Office (CBO) has implemented a hiring freeze citywide, but departments may be able to hire if the position is essential. The CBO is developing further directives on halting contracts and procurement until approved by CBO.

Update from Andrew Lee, ICS Commander:

- Mayor sent out guidance for high risk employee to telework or be at home.
- SPU has shifted to essential functions.
- SPU has implemented health screening comprised of six questions asked when an employee shows up at work. If they answer yes to one of the questions the supervisor can send them home.
- SPU had developed a COOP plan prior to this event. We were able to confirm we have the right activities in the COOP and have identified the essential functions that must happen to keep providing key services identified below.
  - Support wastewater collection, transmission, and facility operation
  - Provide maintenance and repair of essential equipment
  - Provide drainage and flood control management
  - Provide watershed protection and emergency response, dam safety, reservoir safety, and landslide monitoring and response
  - Provide Contact Center, metering, billing, and customer service activities
  - Provide sanitation services to people experiencing homelessness
  - Maintain work on authorized public works capital projects
  - Manage solid waste collection and transfer station operations
  - Maintain closed landfill monitoring and management
  - Provide services (e.g., administration, IT support, customer contact center, billing, payroll, human resources, communications, etc.) necessary to support mission essential functions.

Last week on Thursday and Friday we made the shift to essential functions. Staff who are not essential are teleworking or at home. We are doing our best to ensure those employees have work available to them. SPU will continue this practice through the duration of the Governor's order.

Q: Are you using special PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) for sewers crews? A: Generally speaking, we are using standard PPE. If in close quarters, staff is using special equipment.

Q: Have you seen any drop off in demand for water? A: We are tracking it daily. For the last five or six days, we have seen less water use than usual. A week's worth of data is not enough. We will report back next time when there is more information.

**Recap and Guidance: Planned Facilities Projects.** Andrew Lee, Deputy Director of Drainage and Water, presented. Andrew gave a recap of the presentations from January and February. There has been one significant change in the facilities plan. All projects have experienced delays and scoping changes. SPU is adjusting project schedules to be more accurate and more conservative in estimates. SPU will re-estimate costs after scoping and design are complete. Revised projections show that the rate path still generally stands.

*North Operations Center (NOC at Haller Lake).* This property is owned by the City, not SPU and is used by Drainage and Wastewater (DWW) crews. At the end of last year, SPU was asked if we wanted to make major changes to property. SPU has decided to seismically retrofit the property instead of major changes.

*South Operations Center (SOC):* This site is occupied by 2/3 of our DWW maintenance staff. The original plan was to knock it down, but we have adjusted the scope significantly, and will instead do minimal but important improvements. The current plan to extend the building life 20 years.

*Cedar Falls – Phase 2:* The SPU Executive team spent a day at the site and have revised the project. There is a separate project at Cedar Falls – a power upgrade project at the site. These are two separate projects.

*Seattle Municipal Tower (SMT):* Covid -19 has significantly impacted plans. What was planned is no longer prudent, but we are now provided with an opportunity. We may be able to lower our footprint in the building and allow more teleworking. This is a potential game changer in how we work. We have budgeted \$1.5 M per year in this effort.

Comment: Panel member noted that we will not be the only ones doing this. Everyone is looking at how they use space.

Q. Regarding Cedar Falls, is there any cost sharing with SCL or is it all SPU? A: It's all SPU except the power upgrade project is shared with SCL.

Comment: The Facilities Master Plan Update was identified as an action item. This is clearly important.

Q. There are concerns and comments that we have placeholder numbers for NOC and SOC. A: The Facilities Master Plan will impact the NOC. SOC improvements are happening regardless for the 20-year life-expectancy of the building.

Comment: Make sure you do what is necessary.

Karen Reed commented that looking at the numbers, there appears to be an overall savings of \$5 to \$6 M from the last Plan estimates. Karen asked for a vote from the Panel for a thumbs up or down on the facilities plan. All Panel members gave it a thumbs up.

**Panel Letter to King County (Wastewater Rates).** In the past couple of days, King County has come forward with new wastewater treatment rate options that are more favorable than their

initial proposal. Andrew Lee spoke to the latest information from King County on the rates. Maria Coe provided more details on the rate paths. Noel says his hope is that sending this letter will encourage the County to adopt a lower rate path. The panel then suggested edits to the letter. **Jonathan will make the edits.**

Roll call on letter: Panel members endorse the letter, subject to review of the final language. Final letter will come to panel members before the end of the day. **Karen Reed will finalize the letter and work with Noel and the Utility to send it out, hopefully on Monday.**

**Community Outreach – Summary and Findings.** Vanessa Lund, consultant with Cocker Fennessy, presented an update focusing on community outreach and public engagement (versus business interviews, briefed at an earlier meeting). Vanessa reminded the Panel about what has happened to date. All in person community outreach work had to be taken offline due to Covid-19. This created an earlier than expected pause in community outreach. Vanessa reviewed the results. As of March 26, 905 responses have been received to the 5 questions survey. Response themes include:

- SPU services are viewed as essential
- Recognition that future challenges (pop. growth, climate change, etc.) impact service delivery/cost
- Appreciate SPU trying to genuinely and effectively engage communities; continued improvement is desired/needed
- Want to know how feedback is used/see results in service delivery/engagement
- All SPU services are generally favorably rated; water leads the pack
- Focus areas: aging infrastructure, affordability, service equity, waste/plastics/toxics

Survey Results: On a scale of 1 (extremely dissatisfied) to 10 (very satisfied) how satisfied are you with the overall cost and value of SPU services (drinking water, garbage, recycling, composting, sewer, drainage flood prevention)? 11% = 1, 15% = 2, 34% = 3, 27% = 4, 12% = 5

Top three focus areas where participants would like to see improvement:

- Aging infrastructure
- Rate affordability
- Waste, plastics and toxics reduction

Vanessa will come back to the CRP in May with additional follow up.

Comment: Good info and good coverage across the City.

Q: Can we get additional input from the SPU Citizen Advisory Committees (CACs)? A: Document attached with some comments from January, but CAC's are cancelled right now and will not resume until after Covid-19 lockdown.

Q: Are you disproportionately not reaching certain communities? Any language barriers? Struck by number of people who responded with a three. Any way to drill down to that to find out why?  
A: We do not have enough data to drill down to that level. We will see what we can do with that we have.

Comment: Did you do enough outreach to the business community? A: The scope of outreach to, and input from, the business community was presented to the Panel at an earlier meeting this year.

**Strategic Business Plan (SBP) Elements:** Mami led with what the current emergency means for the SBP. While SPU doesn't know yet, we are committed to moving forward the priorities the Panel has helped us shape. SPU is committed to finalizing the SBP by June. Mami expressed her thanks to everyone for their work and commitment especially during this time. Covid-19 does not change the essential nature of our work, but it does amplify what is important. Affordability, sustainability and equity: we are still committed to these principles. We recognize that this crisis could be an opportunity in certain aspects. There may be opportunities for green jobs in with the federal stimulus as we move into recovery. Mami then turned the presentation over to Dani Purnell, Corporate Policy Director.

Dani gave a summary, reviewed the plan elements, including an updated mission and vision and how the plan is shaped.

- Updated Vision statement: One Water - Zero Waste - All People for healthy waters, sustainable resource use, a thriving community.
- Updated Mission: We protect and enhance our health, environment, and economy by partnering with community and customers to manage water and waste resources now and for future generations.

Comment: When I see the phrase "empowering our community" I always think about our rates and how these effect communities. A: Dani reinforced SPU's commitment to affordability.

Comment: It would be good for SPU's client community to know how much we are focused on affordability and that it is a priority.

Dani reviewed the priority areas and goals. The 2021-2026 SBP will have four focus areas. Each focus area has a set of goals and action times. The focus areas are:

1. Stewarding Environment and Health (2 goals)
2. Empowering Our Community and Employees (3 goals)
3. Strengthening Business Excellence (3 goals)
4. Essential Service Delivery

Comment: I get stuck on the rates. I hope our letter to the County helps us make some progress.

Comment: It looks like it is coming together. Lot of information to digest.

Comment: Echo the rates comment, and the comment that it is all coming together. Sensible approach.

Comment: Seems very long. May we have a summary at the beginning? A: We hear you and will incorporate that into our re-look. It absolutely makes sense.

Comment: An executive summary would be helpful. The table of contents is concise. May we add a footer to the to the rates page that says that the rates could change. A: We can.

Comment: Support the need an executive summary.

Q: What are the action items for essential services? A: We will focus on service delivery and metrics and challenges the LOBs are focused on. It will be structured slightly different than the other three.

Comment: Looks good. I support the executive summary idea.

Dani asked the panel about the letter and invitation in the beginning of the Strategic Plan document. What do people think?

Comment: Are there strategies in place to share content or make this more accessible. A: ***We will follow up on the translation and accessibility question.***

Comment: Panel member had issues with sending invitation, given that the role of the panel is to advise Council, Mayor and SPU. Staff will talk offline with panel member to discuss.

Q: Is this invitation different than the letter that we send to the Council? Raises a possible optics issue in terms of neutrality. A: It doesn't touch the substance of the plan. We think you could do both things at the same time. The substance of the invitation can be reviewed and looked at to be sure there is no conflict.

Comment: Excited about the idea. Very original and positive.

Comment: Like the invitation.

Comment: Supportive of the concept. We need to individually review. Let's send comments or ideas to Karen Reed.

Comment: I am a bit am confused. Is this invitation a part of the SBP? A: In the past the letter from the GM has been the past practice. We are thinking now opening with this invitation for/ from the employees and the community as we are stewards.

Comment: Echo the previous comments. Have the Panel look at this document and wordsmith it. Like the invitation aspect.

Comment: Panel letter goes to Mayor and Council. Comments due before our next Panel meeting.

Feedback due by April 10.

We are hoping to move next meeting to Friday, April 17. Panel members said this date would work for them.

Meeting adjourned at 4: 05pm