

Seattle Public Utilities Customer Review Panel

Monday May 18, 2020

1:00 – 4:00 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	X
Maria McDaniel	X		
Staff and Others			
Keri Burchard-Juarez		Andrew Lee	X
Kathleen Baca		Natasha Papsoueva	X
Alex Chen	X	Ellen Pepin-Cato	
Jeff Fowler	X	Dani Purnell	X
Brian Goodnight		Karen Reed	X
Mami Hara	X	Rick Scott	
Wylie Harper		Karen Sherry	
Akshay Iyengar	X	Jonathan Swift	X
Paula Laschober	X	Keith Ward	X
Goodnight	X	Kelly O'Rourke	

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

Meeting Summary

Welcome: Karen Reed opened the meeting with a roll call of the Panel members and reviewed the virtual meeting protocols. Noel, Suzie, Bobby, Rodney and Laura were in attendance. Puja, Thy, and Dave joined later.

Mami Hara, General Manager/CEO of Seattle Public Utilities (SPU), welcomed those in attendance. She thanked them for joining the virtual meeting and for their patience with the technology. Mami thanked the staff for work preparing for today's meeting and reviewed the agenda. Mami expressed gratitude to the panel for their hard work over the past year. Karen and Jonathan will discuss the plan for reconvening for later this year. Meeting topics will include re-looking at the rate path, impacts from Covid-19 to programs and the City's general fund, additional reporting and background information including green jobs, and areas where there are more questions such as the South Park Improvement District.

Standing Items: Karen Reed asked if there were any questions about the Agenda. There were none. Karen asked for any corrections or additions to the meeting summary from the April 17, 2020 meeting. There were none. The meeting summary for April 17, 2020 was approved.

SPU in the News/GM Comments. Mami expressed her appreciation to all the work our front-line employees are doing. Ellen Stewart, ICS Commander will provide more detail in her report.

Q: Regarding the West Seattle Bridge –if the bridge goes down, will it affect the pipelines under the bridge? **A:** We have been doing a lot of collaborative planning with SDOT and other departments if the bridge comes down in an unplanned way. ***We will get back to you at the next meeting.***

Q: There is a fire suppression system on the bridge? This needs to be taken into consideration. **A:** ***We will make sure to address that in our response.***

Discussion of proposed schedule/plan for reconvening Panel and completing the Strategic Business Plan. Jonathan walked through the proposed Panel and Strategic Business Plan schedule for the remainder of 2020. There are currently four meetings planned. There will be a short meeting in August that will include typical quarterly reporting as well as a start to a report out on accountability. The Panel will also have an opportunity to give their perspective on lessons learned about the Panel’s process and what they would like to see for the future. No rate path update will be presented at that time.

In the fall and winter three additional meetings are planned to review areas in the plan not yet briefed for the Panel and confirm any changes to the document. The plan is to approve the document in December and transmit it to Council in the first quarter of 2021.

Karen Reed let the Panel know the goal for the remaining 2020 meetings was to try to get out of the two meetings per month cycle. Karen asked for comments from the Panel. Concern was expressed about the Panel letter being transmitted after the budget. Noel answered that the Council would have the Panel’s initial recommendations by then.

Karen asked if it would be possible to let the Panel know about any planned budget impacts to items in the SBP at the September meeting. Paula Laschober, CFO, let the Panel know that the budget goes to the City Budget Office on June 17. The Council sees it the last Monday in September. ***A budget highlight presentation will be added to the August meeting.***

Q: Clarify that December is last meeting in this cycle. **A:** Yes.

Mami let the Panel know that after the plan is submitted, SPU would like to work with the members to adopt a process improvement playbook. We and hope to craft this together in order to streamline the Panel’s time.

Q: In 2021 we hope we will have an opportunity to meet with SPU and the City Council committee to review the plan. **A:** We hope so.

Proposal for Members with Expiring Terms. Mami reviewed that she has reached out to each of the three members with expiring terms to thank them and to see if they would agree to stay on through 2020, as they are eligible to continue serving until a replacement is appointed. They have

all agreed. SPU is very grateful to these members for their willingness to continue until the formal process of replacement and appointment proceeds.

Comments: I think it's good that we serve to the end of the year. We have a fairly new Council that does not know our process well yet, so getting together with them in the new year would be good. This year has been not a good year to do that due to the circumstances we are in. **A: We agree and can re-extend an invite to the Council Committee.**

SBP Draft Document Discussion. Dani Purnell, Corporate Policy Director and Vanessa Lund, Cocker Fennessy, walked through the Draft SBP section by section with the Panel. Vanessa asked if there were any overall comments from the Panel before she started the review. There were none. Comments from Panel members about the draft SBP are below:

- General comment: We have learned a lot about packaging.
- Page 6 - I am struck so far by how the fundamentals of SPU are not our vision of the future. It's nice to think about the future but let's acknowledge what the basics of the business are now. **A:** We know that people know what SPU does, and what our services are. We are hoping to strike the right balance between describing what we are doing now, and what we would like to do in the future.
- Page 7 – Karen Reed said she had been thinking about how the Panel requested that SPU engage businesses in interviews. SPU said this was difficult. How did that work – did you learn anything from this, and what would make it easier next time? **A:** For the most part, the business did not feel they had a relationship with SPU, so they did not understand why they were being asked for their input. The lack of existing relationships was an issue. We heard the same thing about community interviews. There was not an existing relationship. Recommendation – there need to be stronger relationships built.
- **Comment:** One of the problems is that businesses don't think of themselves as diverse or non-diverse. They just consider that they are people getting a job done. It's way more about getting a job done. Sometimes we put them in categories that they don't put themselves in.
- **Comment:** Recognize the CACs work with the Lines of Business. They meet year-round and provide input.
- Page 9: I really like this.
- Page 11: Dani Purnell told the Panel that SPU has chosen to lead with the essential service piece on how people know us and what we do every day.

- Page 12: Dani reminded the Panel that it was suggested we not focus only the great things we have accomplished, but also include what we have learned. We will be doing that in the call out boxes.
- Page 13: Comment about small font.
- Page 15: **Comment:** regarding the real-world example, can we get more of these – maybe from Keith Ward with the Ship Canal Work? **A:** Keith – yes.
- **Comment:** Can we include what we have learned about unhoused? **A:** Yes. It's in the final bullet point
- Page 16: **Comment:** -No mention of businesses in here. Please include.
- Page 20 – 22: Dani explained that items shown in red on table are the items we want to come and talk with you in more detail about in the fall. The Panel gave a thumbs up to all items not in red.
- **Comment:** Some of these relate to your Risk and Resilience study and your Accountability and Affordability study. It might be nice to cross reference these or provide references to these studies in the appendices in these. **A:** We are happy to do both these things. Good idea.
- Page 23 -27: This section will receive a significant update due to Covid-19.
- **Comment:** Appreciate any work you do on informing the public on this subject. It's important.
- **Comment:** On the business side. Is there any way to put a note that drainage fees are on customer's property taxes and not on their monthly bill? **A:** Yes, we can do that.
- **Comment:** I'm wondering about typical bill example. Is there a way to show more businesses typical bills by using an example or a link to a website? **A:** We can look into that. We could send them to a website.
- **Comment:** We are now in the preliminary stage regarding rates. It was 4.3% annual average over the 6-year planning period. Do we want to leave it at that, so you have leeway to account for the unforeseen? **A:** Paula said that given that this all will be redone – we decided to leave it at 4.2%. Mami added that we appreciate the comment and will update the Panel as we go.
- **Comment:** Later in the document the rate of 4.3% is brought up. **A:** We appreciate these comments.

- Page 27-28: We will be linking to published plans here. Accountability and Affordability, Risk and Resilience, Race and Social Justice, etc.

At this point the Panel took a short break.

List of Possible Topics for Panel Letter on 2021-2026 Strategic Plan

Noel shared that he, Laura and Rodney put together the draft document of possible topics and would like to know what Panel members thoughts are here—different ideas, or additional topics. This document will remain a draft that we will work from in the late fall when putting together the Panel’s letter; since the Plan remains unpublished and could change, we’re not going to wordsmith a final letter at this point in time. Comments offered included:

- Restate the role of the Panel and seek to meet with Council and Mayor’s representatives.
- Note importance of Accountability and Affordability and Risk and Resiliency work.
- Businesses don’t see themselves as an underrepresented class.
- Need to do more work to understand customers due to COVID—online is not necessarily the best way.
- Include more language about the problem, lack of notice on King County rate increase and why it is a problem.
- Missed targets from last plan are still important.
- Work to help unsheltered populations is important but must remain a general fund obligation, not a ratepayer obligation.
- More specifics on workforce development needed.
- Seismic projects will be needed for wastewater, not just sewer. What can SPU tell us about this?
- Would like side sewer assistance made permanent, not just a pilot project.
- SDOT needs to cover costs of street sweeping in bike lanes.
- Culvert repairs in roads—those should be transportation costs, not SPU costs.
- Would like to see continued work to find cost-effective response for RV waste.
- What is the funding for the South Recycling Center? Timeline? Cost? Would like more information from SPU on this.
- Workforce development – Panel would like more information on current efforts and priorities in the fall on this topic.
- Mention North and South Operations Centers, Cedar Falls on facility efforts needing strong oversight—these projects support crew safety and efficiency.

Next Steps: Karen will revise the topics matrix to incorporate Panel’s input today, and to seek additional input. She will circulate to Panel for review and comment.

Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 3:50 PM