



MEMORANDUM

EUGENE WATER & ELECTRIC BOARD

Rely on us.

TO: Commissioners Brown, Carlson, Barofsky, McRae, and Schlossberg
FROM: Anne Kah, Administrative Services Manager; Frank Lawson, General Manager
DATE: January 26, 2022 (February 1, 2022, Correspondence)
SUBJECT: EWEB Headquarters Property – Public Engagement and Communications Planning
OBJECTIVE: Information / Feedback

Issue

A communications framework has been created with the primary goals of marketing the Riverfront property to prospective buyers and developers, fostering customer trust and confidence in the solicitation and selection process, and assuring customers that selling the property best serves EWEB customers and the community at large. A copy of the framework is included herein.

Discussion

EWEB's Headquarters Property is a prime location adjacent to an emerging neighborhood that will be part of Eugene's thriving downtown. Customers may hold strong sentiments about the future of the property, and it is important to understand their values. As elected representatives, the Board is entrusted to make sound decisions that balance competing priorities and best serve the interests of our customer-owners.

During the January 4, 2022 Board Meeting, Commissioners acknowledged the importance of selecting a proposal with an intended use that will benefit the community. The Board also appreciates that community benefits come in many forms, and individuals hold various perspectives around the potential value that future uses may bring. This highlights the importance of creating evaluation criteria and scoring that reflect the Board's, and by extension the community's, values and priorities.

Diverse methods of communication are needed to reach our customers and we will use a variety of tactics, described in the Strategies & Deliverables section of the communications framework, to disseminate information to a wide audience. In February we will begin informing and engaging the public with a media release announcing the Board's intent to conduct an RFP solicitation and our projected timeline. As we raise awareness, some customers may choose to provide feedback through existing opportunities such as public input at board meetings and emails to the Board, while others won't have strong opinions.

Responsive to Board feedback, Project Team members are exploring survey options to gain a better understanding of EWEB customers' opinions. To ensure statistically reliable results, from a diverse sampling of all EWEB customers, a quantitative survey could be conducted by an external consultant. The potential survey would consist of a few questions meant to yield useful information that can be realistically used by the Evaluation Team and the Board as they consider proposals.

Staff would rely on the expertise of a consultant to formulate specific questions and offer unbiased context to help customers make informed responses. For example, the survey could ask respondents to rate the importance of RFP evaluation criteria. This input could be used to further refine the scoring methodology within each criterion. While a survey aims to fulfill a noble purpose, the viable use of its data will depend on the proposals received. The survey is not intended to lead to the creation of a particular proposal; rather, its practical use will be to aid the measurement of proposals against one another.

The Project Team will provide an update on public engagement options, including survey cost and proposed timeline at the March 1 Board Meeting when the next iteration of RFP materials is submitted to the Board. With respect to the Board's interest in adhering to an effectual RFP timeline, it will be important to balance our public engagement strategies with productively moving forward with the RFP solicitation. With this in mind, if the Board directs staff to proceed with the survey, data collection could occur in parallel with the RFP solicitation.

Additionally, staff are eager to support Board members with their own qualitative customer research as they engage with individual customers and neighborhood and community forums. Key Messages are being developed to assist the Board with educating the public and inviting their feedback.

Throughout the RFP process we intend to employ our strategies to provide transparency to the extent possible while maintaining confidentiality of information that is sensitive to the competitive process. After the award is made, all proposals will be made publicly available in their entirety, except for any information that is exempt from disclosure according to ORS 192.345, or other applicable law.

Recommendation

Management's recommendation is contained in the attached communications framework. At the February 1, 2022 meeting, Commissioners will have an opportunity to comment during "Correspondence & Future Agendas".

Requested Board Action

No action is requested. Board feedback is invited.

Attachments

1. Communications Framework

Communications plan: The future of EWEB riverfront buildings

Goals

1. Market the riverfront property to prospective buyers and developers.
2. Foster customer trust and confidence in the solicitation and selection process and assure customers that selling the property best serves EWEB customers and the community at large.

Audiences

- Potential buyers
- Customers and the local community

Key messages

- EWEB's Board of Commissioners is seeking serious proposals that can be feasibly accomplished and that will bring value to the Eugene community. This competitive RFP process is designed to be equitable and open to diverse proposals from anyone. Proposals will be protected during the process and will be evaluated based on their social and financial merit.
- EWEB is honored to chaperone a process that will contribute to the Eugene community's vision for a new and vibrant waterfront. We take seriously this responsibility, and will ensure we are both being wise stewards of EWEB's financial resources, and that the sale aligns with the [EWEB Riverfront Master Plan](#).
- For the past several years, EWEB has been working toward consolidating staff and operations to our Roosevelt Boulevard location. Maintaining and operating the riverfront buildings no longer serves the best interests of our customers.
- Since the closure of our customer service lobby in 2020, we've been working toward enhancing other ways that customers do business with us. This is an area we strive to improve, and we are exploring ways to assist our customers in person.

Strategies & Deliverables

An EWEB microsite will serve as a centralized source of information and updates. In addition, we will distribute content and updates via a variety of EWEB channels, potentially including bill inserts, social media, and an email list. Primary deliverables include:

- Media release (and newsroom story) announcing the sale and opening of the RFP – February
 - This will be the first step in generating broad awareness of the sale, both for potential proposers and for interested community members who want to weigh in.
- Talking points for commissioners as they speak with constituents
 - These will help any commissioners who would like to be able to discuss the sale during neighborhood meetings or other events.
- Customer survey (pending board direction)
 - We are exploring potential options for a random sample survey. A consultant would help define the questions and scope, as well as help execute the survey itself.
- RFP issuance on Oregon Buys – April
- Public hearing – April
- Ads in: Daily Journal of Commerce, Eugene Register Guard, Eugene Weekly – April
- Legal ad (required) – April
- FOR SALE banner
- Media release (and newsroom story) announcing the buyer