

**EUGENE WATER & ELECTRIC BOARD  
WORK SESSION**  
**May 18, 2021**  
**6:00 P.M.**

**Commissioners Present:** Mindy Schlossberg, President; John Brown, Vice President; John Barofsky, Sonya Carlson, Matt McRae, Commissioners

**Others Present:** Frank Lawson, General Manager; Larry Longworth, Electric Dispatch Supervisor; Tyler Nice, Electric Operations Manager; Rod Price, Assistant General Manager; Shane Tennison, Electric Vegetation Supervisor

President Schlossberg called the Work Session to order at 6:00 p.m.

**Agenda Check**

There were no changes or additions to the agenda.

**Wildfire Mitigation Planning**

Mr. Price and Mr. Nice offered the Board a report and PowerPoint presentation on Wildfire Mitigation Planning.

Commissioner Barofsky wondered if it was the National Weather Service (NWS) who issued red-flag warnings for high winds, etc.

Mr. Nice said yes, it was the NWS.

Commissioner Barofsky asked if the EWEB's O&M 10-Year Plan was a continuous cycle, meaning that it took about 10 years to completely inspect all the systems of the utility.

Mr. Nice responded yes, that currently the utility was addressing roughly 10% per year of total systems, for a 10-year cycle. He added that on the trees it is a quicker turnaround.

Commissioner Barofsky wondered if it was easier for EWEB to de-energize the transmission line from Carmen-Smith, while leaving the power on to Vida.

Mr. Lawson said the transmission line goes up to Blue River and feeds that town through Lane Electric Cooperative, and then it continues to Cougar and splits off to Carmen. He said there is potential to sectionalize and disconnect part of the transmission line without disconnecting the rest of it.

President Schlossberg wondered what the timeline was for the Wildfire Mitigation Plan.

Mr. Price said EWEB staff was aiming for having a draft in front of the Board by the end of the year.

President Schlossberg asked if there was a public communication plan in place for the upcoming dry season.

Mr. Price said they have been meeting regularly to work on messages to send out in case of a red flag event as well as for general knowledge.

Mr. Lawson added there were already many resources on the subject on EWEB's webpage, with links to other resources containing fire mitigation, such as the Forest Service and the County.

President Schlossberg suggested the utility do something like the past Pledge to Prepare EWEB released for disaster preparedness, but with a focus on wildfire mitigation.

Commissioner Carlson wondered, if the area was under a red-flag warning, who representing EWEB made decisions concerning, and responded to the situation.

Mr. Price said the Operations arm of EWEB responds first by working through their standing orders.

Mr. Lawson added there was a pre-defined process EWEB Operations would go through in the event of a PSPS (Public Safety Power Shutoff). This is due to the importance of community outreach, communications, and coordinating with other agencies.

Mr. Price asserted that EWEB did not have a system in place to proactively shut off power, saying that instead, the utility shuts off power reactively. We need to work with 911, Emergency Managers, and local Emergency Broadcast Systems to communicate to the public when a shutoff is likely or imminent.

Commissioner Carlson asked if generators were restricted from being used during a red-flag warning.

Mr. Price again stated the importance of working with local emergency managers and personnel (like fire departments) to figure out exact local rules and restrictions during red-flag warnings.

Commissioner Carlson agreed with President Schlossberg's suggestion that EWEB do something like its past Pledge to Prepare the utility released for disaster preparedness, but with a focus on wildfire mitigation. She wondered if there was another level of mitigation, such as sprinkler systems (in case of a transformer exploding), or some kind of fire retardant that would foam up in case of a fire.

Mr. Price said there are less flammable oils that can be purchased for use in transformers.

Mr. Nice said the ester oils, (whose trade term is FR3), that EWEB has been using do indeed have a higher flashpoint than more conventional transformer oils.

Commissioner McRae asked if there was a difference in the circuit disconnect mechanisms between transmission lines and distribution lines. If that were the case, he wondered if there was a way to address the lines at higher risk of starting a fire.

Mr. Price said in transmission and distribution there are circuit breakers which are mechanical devices, and in distribution systems there are fuses. Many utilities had been changing out fuses on their distribution systems for less explosive ones, and there were also mitigation efforts involving automated protection devices installed by utilities at their substations, giving utility personnel the ability to control remotely.

Commissioner McRae said that while he felt wildfire mitigation was important system-wide, he emphasized a need for extra-vigilant mitigation efforts in the South Hills region of EWEB's service area.

He wondered if there was anything the utility could do to help people who rely on electronic medical assistive devices to not lose power during red-flag events, such as battery sets.

Mr. Price said that was a really good point, and it was something EWEB could do, but there would have to be a lot of conversation leading up to such a decision.

Mr. Lawson offered that many electronic medical devices had built-in batteries, and were geared for short outages, but added the communication piece was key, so the owners of said devices would have time to charge them fully.

Vice President Brown asked if there was legislation—either existing or pending—that would protect EWEB from liability should they have to shut off power.

Mr. Price said this type of legislation was still in its infancy in Oregon, but EWEB State Legislative Liaison Jason Heuser was very tuned into this particular type of legislation, and there would be opportunities for EWEB to take advantage of such legislation in the near future.

Vice President Brown wondered if there was a backup plan in place for filling the south hills reservoir in the event of a power outage. He said this would be especially important if there were a fire nearby which would draw the reservoir down.

Mr. Price said the water system has backup generators.

Mr. Lawson said that from a legal standpoint, EWEB was fairly immune in the case of natural power disruptions; he again stressed the importance of communication, in the event EWEB had to shut power off.

### **Strategic Plan**

Mr. Lawson offered the Board a Strategic Plan (SP) review and PowerPoint presentation.

Commissioner McRae asserted the EWEB Board should hold more Work Sessions on this topic, as well as the Fire Mitigation topic. He added EWEB had an opportunity and perhaps an obligation to address community-wide greenhouse gas emissions.

Commissioner Carlson said she was interested to see what the Workforce part of the SP would look like as far as equity, diversity, and inclusion were concerned. She agreed with Commissioner McRae's sentiments about climate change and added she would like to see climate change more closely addressed in EWEB's various community projects.

President Schlossberg said she was glad to see Workforce included in the SP; she agreed with Commissioner Carlson about the importance of equity, diversity, and inclusion within the Workforce framework. President Schlossberg also agreed with Commissioner McRae concerning EWEB's role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions at the community level.

Commissioner Barofsky was pleased with the SP, but suggested a deeper dive, at least on his part, into the SP before committing. He added he wanted to be as sure as possible about the SP's direction before saying Yes or No.

Vice President Brown suggested coordinating with Lane Community College (LCC), who was readying a \$35 million facility to train local people in the types of skilled trades EWEB could use in its workforce. He also urged EWEB to become a regional water supplier, in line with housing affordability.

President Schlossberg, citing Commissioner Barofsky's comments about needing more information before committing to the SP, expressed concern that, instead of moving forward with the SP, the EWEB Board would continue to get stuck in situations where Commissioners feel like they do not know enough about the SP to make a meaningful decision on it. She then encouraged Commissioners to voice what they need in order to have a deep enough dive into the Plan.

Mr. Lawson posited more work time and/or more one-on-ones with Commissioners—especially those new to the Board—would be helpful in educating the Commissioners, resulting in a quicker, more informed decision on the Commissioners' part.

Vice President Brown said he appreciated President Schlossberg's comments toward Commissioner Barofsky and encouraged all Board members to communicate with each

other in this regard, and to share information with each other in the interest of the Board learning as a whole.

Vice President Brown adjourned the meeting at 7:38 p.m.

*Recorded by Rodney Cimburke*

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Assistant Secretary

President