

EUGENE WATER & ELECTRIC BOARD
WORK SESSION
February 15, 2022
5:30 P.M.

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

Others Present: Frank Lawson, General Manager; Rodney Price, Assistant General Manager

Vice President Carlson called the Work Session to order at 5:30 p.m.

Agenda Check

There were no changes or additions to the agenda.

EWEB/City of Eugene Joint Initiatives Agenda

Mr. Lawson offered the Board a brief report and PowerPoint presentation on a draft EWEB/City of Eugene joint initiatives agenda.

Commissioner McRae wondered if EWEB wanted to interact with the City of Eugene concerning the headquarters building.

Mr. Lawson said there was a City of Eugene liaison for the project team, but for the most part the ball was in EWEB's court, although he said he does keep the Eugene City Manager apprised of the goings-on.

Commissioner McRae said EWEB should update the City of Eugene on its Wildfire Mitigation Plan.

President Brown felt it important that the utility continued to suggest Eugene use some of the increased revenues they would be receiving from EWEB's recent rate increase to work toward their climate action goals. As an example, he said the City could install charging stations on public facilities.

Commissioner Barofsky agreed with Vice President Brown's sentiments concerning the City of Eugene, adding that some type of weatherization program would also be beneficial. Finally, Commissioner Barofsky said he would rather this not be made into a resolution, because he was looking for something a bit more free-flowing than a resolution would be.

Commissioner Schlossberg pointed out that EWEB has been talking about this idea of collaborating with the City on weatherization for some time now, and it was not a new idea to them. She said she was in favor of encouraging the City of Eugene to use some of its Contribution In Lieu of Taxes (CILT) money to finance City energy projects.

Vice President Carlson agreed with her colleagues. She added it might be a good idea to get together specific asks. She then inquired if the liaison to the headquarters project had a direct connection to City Council or if they were a member of Eugene City staff.

Mr. Lawson said that is a staff position.

Vice President Carlson said it would be a good idea to update the City of Eugene on fire mitigation and the Pledge to Prepare.

President Schlossberg suggested at the next meeting with City of Eugene, the EWEB representatives share what the Board is doing to formalize their joint initiatives agenda, and if there are tangible things the Board wants to accomplish with the City, EWEB may need to put forth a proposed plan.

President Brown agreed with Commissioner Schlossberg, citing that EWEB representatives only get to meet with City leadership four times a year. He said they should give the City of Eugene specifics about their work, instead of just ideas and concepts. Adding that he would like to see EWEB leadership and staff give the Board some tangible things that could be brought to the City with an action item behind it.

Mr. Lawson offered that EWEB would have to get in on the City of Eugene's budgeting cycle to secure resources for the aforementioned projects.

Commissioner Barofsky, being familiar with Eugene's budgeting process, posited the City could use the monies it would receive due to EWEB's rate increase, defraying it for two to three years, and have an ongoing funding source after those two to three years, that could be used for the aforementioned projects.

President Brown hoped EWEB would float the idea that Eugene could use the money right away toward climate goals.

Vice President Carlson wondered if EWEB could present updates on certain topics in a memo to the City of Eugene, in the interest of the time of the meeting.

Mr. Lawson offered it would be best to conduct the meetings with City leadership around the same time or slightly after EWEB staff's quarterly reporting.

Commissioner Barofsky said it would be optimal for EWEB leadership to have copies of the City's two motions related to decarbonization in-hand.

Goal #2(e): New Board Policy – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

Mr. Lawson offered the Board a report and PowerPoint presentation on Board Goal #2(e) - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Commissioner McRae said he thought it would be valuable for the Board to have a backgrounder on efforts already underway for Board Goal #2(e). He also suggested

EWEB hire consultants who are versed in this sort of thing to help the utility with this particular goal. He felt it is important to focus on both internal and external practices and how those practices affect the public.

President Brown agreed regarding an outside consultant, and the importance of being aware of how our actions will affect classes and groups of people.

Mr. Lawson asked the Board to clarify whether they wish to obtain external expertise at the Board level or at the management level.

Commissioner McRae offered that a consultant would provide value to both the Board and staff.

Commissioner Brown concurred.

Commissioner Schlossberg also agreed about bringing in some outside expertise to help develop a meaningful equity policy that will make a difference, and to give their perspective on things EWEB is doing well and opportunities to improve.

Commissioner Barofsky expressed his desire for a consultant to the Board, and suggested this work include outreach to communities that would be affected by the policy. He also stated that he would like to see metrics associated with the policy.

Vice President Carlson said she had participated in the writing of diversity, equity, and inclusion policy in the past. She suggested that a training at the Board level would be valuable. She was also in favor of getting an outside perspective on EWEB's impact on the community, having measurables, and a way to engage to determine the culture we want to build and identify the gaps.

Mr. Lawson acknowledged the process the Board described will take time, and that we can develop some things along the way. He said that management had embarked on some inquiries around conducting an organizational assessment which would provide insight. He summarized by stating the Board's desire for a policy that is publicly facing that will direct the General Manager how to operate the organization and guide the decisions that EWEB makes in a triple bottom line type of way. He stated that when we think about diversity, that includes all kinds of things including race, gender, age, management layers, income, social economics, and more.

Referencing the upcoming agendas, Commissioner Brown said that we will need to make sure this topic gets the time it deserves.

Mr. Lawson replied that we are not starting from zero, and that EWEB could leverage resources such as EWEB's Diversity Team as well as assessments that would inform the Board.

Commissioner Barofsky said it sounded like a good plan to take a hybrid approach—to rely on an outside consultant for what a good DEI policy looks like, while staff work to put said policy together.

Mr. Lawson said he agreed.

Vice President Carlson said she would like to see a bit more reporting from staff on what kind of DEI policy work was already out there. She said the Board would need to know the framework in which they would be working, so they can customize it to match the culture and values of the utility.

Mr. Lawson said staff could certainly put together a report, and it would include much more than just the Diversity Team, as equity was something to be paid attention to across the entire spectrum of EWEB departments.

Mr. Price said he liked what he was hearing, and the work being discussed has already gotten under way with the Diversity Team. He also agreed it was a good idea to bring in an outside consultant to give the utility a deeper perspective on equity issues.

Commissioner Barofsky said he would like some information on how EWEB is impacting DEI for the community.

Board Wrap-Up

Commissioner Schlossberg said she really enjoyed working with the other Board members and EWEB staff.

Vice President Carlson concurred.

Commissioner Barofsky asked who the Eugene City Council President and Vice President were.

Mr. Lawson said to his knowledge, the Council President was Claire Syrett, and the Council Vice President was Matt Keating.

Vice President Carlson adjourned the Work Session at 6:40 p.m.

Recorded by Rodney Cimburke

Assistant Secretary

President