

**EUGENE WATER & ELECTRIC BOARD
WORK SESSION
August 15, 2023
5:30 P.M.**

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

Others Present: Frank Lawson, General Manager; Rodney Price, Assistant General Manager; Kelly Hoell, Climate Policy Analyst & Advisor

Call to Order

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

2023 Organizational Goal #2 - Diversity Equity & Inclusion (DEI) [0:1:10]

1. Agenda Check

President Carlson asked for any adjustments to the agenda. There were none.

2. SD23 Draft Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Policy Review & Discussion [0:1:30]

Frank Lawson and Rod Price gave a PowerPoint presentation and asked the Board for feedback on the proposed DEI policy they created with Kelly Hoell, EWEB's Diversity Team, Executive Team, and consultants.

Mr. Lawson presented a slide that gave information on the history and structure of the policy, which began in 2021. Another slide focused on why the Board directed him to create a DEI policy for EWEB. The next slide explained the policy's primary directives of addressing:

- Access to Products and Services
- Workforce
- Community Engagement, and
- Board of Commissioners

The Board discussed a list of questions to give staff their input.

1. Does the beginning language capture why DEI is important to EWEB (to you as a Commissioner)?
2. Might the policy help you have a dialog with the Community as to why DEI is important?
3. Are Commissioners comfortable with the definitions provided?
...changes?...additions?
4. Does the policy cover the areas intended by Commissioners?

E.G. - Directing the organization in areas of products & services, workforce/culture, community engagement...

5. Are there specific statements in the policy of personal meaning (that resonate with Commissioners) or uncomfot (conflicting perspectives)?
6. The implementation focuses on accountability, transparency, and frequency of intentional initiatives/goals...are there areas of specific progress you feel are important to monitor?

The consensus was that the Board supported the policy with some revisions.

Commissioner Schlossberg asked how EWEB would implement the adopted policy. Mr. Lawson said the policies would provide guidance with a frequency of accountability, and staff would evaluate it at least annually. Mr. Lawson said his performance evaluation should be partially based on policy adherence.

President Carlson supported verifying the policy was actionable.

Commissioner Brown showed concern for how the benchmark for success for diversity in the workforce would be implemented.

Vice President Barofsky approved the staff's direction on the policy but questioned the implementation process. Mr. Lawson said if the policy was driving the wrong behavior, he and the Board could discuss that.

Commissioner McRae said the policy captured the purpose of DEI.

In reference to Question 2, Commissioner Schlossberg said the policy would help her talk to the community about why DEI was important.

President Carlson said a DEI policy was a helpful frame for interacting with constituents.

The Board discussed the definitions in the policy. President Carlson wanted a clearer definition of the difference between equality and equity. Mr. Lawson said he could work with staff to do that. President Carlson asked if they should look at different scenarios to see if the definitions work with that.

Mr. Price said the policy could ask how EWEB could bridge the gap in services.

Commissioner McRae approved of the definitions in the policy.

In reference to Question 4, Commissioner Schlossberg recommended addressing access to products and services. For example, some customers had trouble using computers to change their information in EWEB's system. Commissioner Brown gave another example of making sure there was bilingual staff available for walk-in customers. Mr. Lawson said they could add "information and support" to the list in the policy.

Mr. Lawson wanted to include suppliers in Community Engagement.

Commissioner Schlossberg agreed with both President Carlson and Mr. Lawson. Mr. Lawson said they could change Community Engagement to Engagement.

President Carlson recommended to add the word “collaborate” to the definitions. Commissioner McRae agreed.

Vice President Barofsky agreed with the definitions as written.

Commissioner Schlossberg leaned toward not using the word “collaborate”, but she did not feel strongly.

Commissioner McRae said the policy was written in a positive tone. He wanted language that identified and addressed bias. He questioned the term “non-discriminatory prices” that was on the second page. To his understanding, he thought EWEB discriminated between types of service prices. He wanted EWEB to clarify. Mr. Lawson said he and staff would look at that piece.

Commissioner McRae said it was important to mirror and reinforce language between the DEI policy and other board policies.

President Carlson appreciated the framework and wanted a mindful approach, and she suggested several examples of inspiring language.

Mr. Lawson was open to suggestions on word choice. President Carlson said other terms would be beneficial. Vice President Barofsky asked if those terms would be used in the implementation phase instead of the policy.

Commissioner McRae recommended including descriptive language in the DEI policy.

Commissioner McRae wanted to see the next steps to help him understand how the policy would work. He wanted a third party to review EWEB’s other policies and practices, along with the DEI policy.

Mr. Lawson said an outside consultant analyzed EWEB’s internal Workforce policies through a diversity lens. He said they would do the same with the broader board policies. Commissioner McRae agreed that was important.

Mr. Lawson said he and Mr. Price tried to look at the triple bottom line and would execute the direction of the Board.

Commissioner Schlossberg hoped an outside group would audit the DEI policy implementation of DEI.

Vice President Barofsky asked if there were conflicts between the DEI policy and other EWEB policies and suggested there be tools or a lens to help determine fair outcomes in those situations. For example, when considering the cost of Spanish translation or a contract that promotes diversity, and the effect of those decisions on affordability. Mr. Lawson responded that staff must weigh through topics that create conflict. He said in January 2024, they would look at their board policies at large.

Mr. Lawson said he would give the Board a revision through the correspondence process or at a regular meeting in October.

3. Adjourn [1:15:29]

President Carlson adjourned the Work Session at 6:47 p.m.

Recorded by Laura Campbell, LCOG

Assistant Secretary

President