

EUGENE WATER & ELECTRIC BOARD
REGULAR MEETING
March 4, 2025
5:30 p.m.

Commissioners Present: President, John Barofsky; Vice President, Mindy Schlossberg; and Commissioners Sonya Carlson, John Brown, and Tim Morris

Commissioners Absent: None

Others Present: Frank Lawson, EWEB General Manager; Deborah Hart, Assistant General Manager/Chief Financial Officer; Brian Booth, Chief Energy Resource Officer; Jennifer Connors, Public Affairs & Communications Manager; Mike Masters, Water Operations Manager; Susan Fricke, Water Resources and Quality Assurance Supervisor; Julie McGaughey, Chief Customer Officer; David Donahue, Environmental Specialist Sr.; Lisa Krentz, Generation Manager (online); Aaron Balmer, Financial Services Manager (online); and Jason Heuser, Public Policy & Government Affairs Program Manager (online)

REGULAR SESSION

Call to Order [00:00:00]

President John Barofsky called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Agenda Check [00:00:00]

There were no changes to the agenda.

Items from Board Members and General Manager [00:00:21]

Commissioner Brown spoke favorably of EWEB's swift response to an electric safety concern resulting from a recent vandalism to a local business.

Commissioner Carlson mentioned the upcoming Lane Council of Governments (LCOG) fundraiser for their senior Meals on Wheels program, happening on Friday, March 7, 2025. She brought attention to the risk to federal funding for regional senior and disability services. She relayed a concern she received from a constituent regarding EWEB's timing of issuing late fees.

Vice President Schlossberg reported presenting at the University of Oregon on the topic of Sustainability and the Public Good.

Commissioner Morris commented that he recently received a Home Energy Score at his residence and it was a positive experience.

President Barofsky gave kudos to EWEB staff for their quick follow up to constituent issues. He reported that General Manager Lawson's presentation to the Eugene Chamber of Commerce Local Government Affairs Council was well received.

Responding to Commissioner Carlson's comment, Mr. Lawson stated that the first form of follow-up regarding the timing of late fees would be to, via correspondence, describe the process and follow up with an agenda item, if needed.

Correspondence [00:08:05]

Mr. Lawson brought attention to one item of correspondence: State Legislative Update (Board Policy GP13 and Resolution 2420). He said more than 3,000 bills were introduced in the Oregon State Legislature. EWEB Board members are scheduled to visit legislators at the State Capitol on March 10, 2025 to discuss five bills.

Legislative Representative Jason Hueser explained that in addition to meeting with local legislators, they are also scheduled to meet with the Chair of the House and Senate Energy Committee(s) and the Director of the Oregon Department of Energy.

Public Input [00:14:02]

The following testimony was provided to the EWEB Commissioners: The Board neither endorses or opposes, or is responsible for the accuracy of content, of testimony including any links or references provided.

Verbal Testimony:

Misty Bowman, Ward 7, shared comments related to light pollution, including that Eugene has the worst light pollution in Oregon according to the DarkSky Oregon Sky Quality Meter Report. She urged EWEB to conduct a full review of streetlights and change, adjust, or remove lights that do not comply with DarkSky International's five principals of responsible outdoor lighting.

Eric Dziura, Ward 6, spoke positively about the Residential Customer Survey results, the amount of detail and transparency in the rate setting policy, and changes to Executive Session policies. He suggested considering a Board training policy.

Joe Moll, McKenzie River Trust, shared comments related to wetlands mitigation, specifically how important EWEB's investment is. Regarding watershed stewardship, he expressed support for EWEB's expansion to include the coast and middle forks of the Willamette River.

Chris Jones, Ward 3, spoke about fire safety, citing the January 2024 ice storm during which tree branches came into repeated contact with power lines. He urged EWEB to address the problem as it is affecting the safety of property and threatening the lives of residents.

Kim Donahey, Ward 3, shared concerns about fire safety, citing the January 2024 ice storm during which tree branches came into repeated contact with power lines above her home. She said two fires started as a result. While EWEB is currently in litigation over the contract that is limiting tree trimming, she said the legal battle has been going on for over a year. She urged EWEB to take emergency action.

Alan (Alfredo) Gormezano, Ward 1, expressed opposition to Smart Meters and support for efforts to reduce light pollution.

Commissioner Carlson said she welcomes reviewing the Oregon Sky Quality Meter Report. She said the issue of fire safety is concerning and committed to following up.

Mr. Lawson commented that regarding light pollution they will need to clarify roles with EWEB and the City of Eugene. He understands the sense of urgency regarding fire safety and said that EWEB also wants to resolve it.

BOARD ACTION ITEMS AND GENERAL BUSINESS ITEMS

Approval of Consent Calendar – A, Minutes and Routine Contracts [00:37:30]

MINUTES

1. a. February 4, 2025 Executive Session
- b. February 4, 2025 Regular Session

CONTRACTS

2. **Virginia Transformer Corp** – for a Load Bank Power Transformer. \$1,719,000 based on Formal Request for Proposals.

MOTION: Commissioner Schlossberg moved to adopt Consent Calendar A. **The motion passed unanimously, 5:0; President Barofsky, Vice President Schlossberg, Commissioner Carlson, Commissioner Brown, and Commissioner Morris all voting in favor.**

Approval of Consent Calendar – B, Nonroutine Contracts and Other Consent Items [00:37:55]

CONTRACTS

3. **Wildish Building Company** – For construction Services at Danebo Substation. \$676,000 based on Formal Invitation to Bid.
4. **EWEB/City of Eugene Joint Initiatives Agenda**

MOTION: Commissioner Brown moved to adopt Consent Calendar B. **The motion passed unanimously, 5:0; President Barofsky, Vice President Schlossberg, Commissioner Carlson, Commissioner Brown, and Commissioner Morris all voting in favor.**

Residential Customer Survey Results (December 2024) [00:38:26]

General Manager Lawson and Public Affairs & Communications Manager Jennifer Connors provided information about Residential Customer Survey Results via PowerPoint presentation.

Ms. Connors explained that the random sample digital survey was administered by GreatBlue Research, Inc. to 34,000 customers. There were 56 questions and 1,292 responses.

Mr. Lawson said key takeaways from the survey included, but are not limited to:

- Improved customer trust and satisfaction in recent years

- Increased awareness of EWEB’s emergency preparedness
- Affordability concerns remain a significant issue
- Area for improvement regarding outage prevention, response, and communication

Mr. Lawson added that customers value EWEB’s environmental and climate actions but expect reliability and affordability to remain the primary focus. He said the next steps include communicating high-level results, continuing data analysis, integrating insights into EWEB work, setting measurable objectives, and tracking progress.

Annual Board Policy Review (Recurring, Rescheduled from December) [01:02:40]

Mr. Lawson and Administrative Services Manager Anne Kah introduced the Annual Board Policy Review via PowerPoint presentation.

Mr. Lawson invited the Board to provide feedback about proposed revisions to Board policies. He said that an annual review of Board policies is standard practice. Of the 52 Board policies, nine include proposed revisions and an additional two are new (GP18 – Organizational Planning and Governance and Water System Development Charges (SDC) Methodology). Policy revisions are scheduled to be finalized in May 2025.

Commissioner Carlson requested more clarity around GP5 – Role of Board President and GP15 – New Commissioner Orientation.

Ms. Kah said she will provide the Board with a clean copy of Board policies in April 2025.

Review of Bylaws [01:16:15]

Mr. Lawson presented information about Review of Bylaws via PowerPoint presentation. He said there is a requirement that the bylaws be reviewed within the first three months of the swearing-in of an elected commissioner. There were two recommended updates: Article VII, Section 2 and Article IX, Section 2. The recommendations will be presented to the Board for approval in April 2025.

Prior Year-End Results – Operational and Strategic Goals Report [01:31:03]

Mr. Lawson introduced Prior Year-End Results – Operational and Strategic Goals Report via PowerPoint presentation. He referenced an 82-page report provided to the Board. He highlighted challenges at the start of 2024, namely an historic ice storm. He cited solid financial performance for water and an unfavorable quarter one for electric. He said that although the financial pressures for electric were significant, EWEB finished the year with a positive contribution to net margin.

Mr. Lawson presented the following charts: Average Electric and Water Utility Costs as Percent of Median Household Income (MHI), Average Monthly Water Bill, and Average Monthly Electricity Bill. He provided information about organizational goals related to electricity and water and highlighted success with EWEB Enterprise Solutions (EES). Mr. Lawson summarized that 90% of subgoals were achieved during 2024. He thanked the Board for their contributions.

Watershed Annual Report [02:00:19]

Water Operations Manager Mike Masters and Water Resources and Quality Assurance Supervisor Susan Fricke presented the Watershed Annual Report via PowerPoint presentation.

Mr. Masters highlighted the Drinking Water Source Protection Goals:

1. Work with partners to maintain source water quality
2. Prioritize benefits to water treatment and electric generation in the McKenzie Watershed
3. Promote public awareness and stewardship

Ms. Fricke provided the 2024 Monitoring Observations:

1. Harmful algae bloom activity minimal across watershed
2. Baseline conditions generally typical across most sites
3. Late spring and fall first flush sampling results were somewhat muted around burn areas, although large storms in early January and late December were not sampled

Ms. Fricke provided the following 2024 Targeted Sampling Results:

- E. coli results in 2024 at select urban stormwater sites were very high (September and October), with one result exceeding 100,000 MPN/100mL
- Unusually high DOC and TKN results in 2023 were not reproduced in 2024
- Microbial source tracking used to identify fecal bacteria sources through genetic biomarkers
 - Preliminary data suggests fecal bacteria sources include human, bird, and dog pathways
 - Additional monitoring planned for 2025 to confirm initial findings and target new sources

Ms. Fricke provided 2024 Highlights:

- Continuous monitoring network
 - USGS Quartz Creek Water Quality/Discharge Station
- Oregon Watershed Emergency Response System
 - Updates/testing coordinated by EWEB staff

Ms. Fricke provided 2024 Spill Response Highlights:

*EWEB worked with multiple spill response partners from across Oregon

- MWERS drop-in training for hardware review, knots and rigging set up
- Annual MWERS Spill Drill at Finn Rock
- City of Medford's 3-Day Rogue River Spill Response Training
- Oregon Spill Response Workshop hosted by EPA Region-10

Ms. Fricke detailed EWEB's partnership with Pure Water Partners including restoration work (980 native trees and shrubs planted, more natural regeneration occurring, and over 230 signed watershed stewardship agreements) and strategic planning.

Ms. Fricke mentioned floodplain restoration at Quartz Creek. The design plan is 90% complete and implementation is scheduled to begin in May 2025. She said the funding is still available but cited federal funding uncertainty. They will keep the Board posted.

Ms. Fricke briefly highlighted septic system assistance including septic maintenance incentives and septic system grants. Regarding watershed recovery funding, Ms. Fricke explained that EWEB received grant reimbursements to help with the expenses.

In closing, Ms. Fricke said that future plans include working on source water protection efforts for the second source.

Ms. Fricke and Mr. Masters invited questions from the Board.

Regarding the coast and middle forks, Commissioner Morris asked if the Board is going to receive a watershed report.

Ms. Fricke responded that staff are preparing a source water assessment report and have already begun preliminary monitoring.

Vice President Schlossberg asked about the reports revealing human fecal bacteria.

Ms. Fricke confirmed that the reports are showing high levels of human fecal bacteria. She said they are working with a new lab and will need to investigate further to determine what the contributing factor is.

Commissioner Brown asked if the Upper Willamette Soil and Water Conservation District will be taking the lead on financing and/or if participation will be expanded to other agencies.

Ms. Fricke responded that the Upper Willamette Soil and Water Conservation District recently took over a smaller project known as Filbert Monitoring and they are picking up a considerable amount of staffing time for planning for Pure Water Partners.

Commissioner Brown commented on the high reports of toxicity and urged being proactive with partners regarding watershed protection.

In response to Commissioner Brown's concern, Ms. Fricke referenced the Urban Waters Partnerships. She added that EWEB needs to do more investigative monitoring.

Commissioner Brown recommended forming a plan for the ongoing issue.

Ms. Fricke agreed.

President Barofsky expressed support for partnering with the Upper Willamette Soil and Water Conservation District.

Ms. Fricke said that Board-to-Board input would likely be effective.

In closing, President Barofsky brought attention to EWEB partners being affected by federal funding issues. He suggested a possible resolution stating that EWEB supports their partners and the vital work that they do.

Ms. Fricke validated President Barofsky's point.

Future Board Agendas [02:34:23]

Mr. Lawson mentioned adding city fee discussions to agendas in April and May.

Ms. Carlson requested regular reports about how tariffs could impact the supply chain. She cited a possible impact to US electricity powered by dams in Canada. She recommended potential advocacy on behalf of the EWEB Board.

Vice President Schlossberg responded that she would be hesitant to advocate. She added that putting forth a resolution would be ineffective.

Mr. Lawson added that EWEB is in a good position as a large percentage of EWEB funding does not come from a federal source but is supplemental and has a specific purpose. He mentioned that Bonneville is a federal agency. Mr. Lawson said that EWEB is trying to keep track of the real world, on the ground impacts to the organization. He said if there is a point and purpose for advocacy, staff will make that request of the Board.

Board Wrap Up [02:40:39]

There were no comments.

Adjourn [02:40:40]

President Barofsky adjourned the meeting at 8:12 p.m.

Recorded by Terah Van Dusen, LCOG

Assistant Secretary

President