



**PLANNING & URBAN DESIGN**

## **SEATTLE PUBLIC UTILITIES CUSTOMER REVIEW PANEL SUMMARY**

December Quarterly Meeting  
December 12, 2022

### **SUMMARY**

#### **CUSTOMER REVIEW PANEL MEMBER ATTENDANCE:**

Suzie Burke, Noel Miller, Miki Sodos, Gretchen Glaub, Robin Schwartz, Amanda Richer, Ebony Frazier, Bobby Coleman, Maria McDaniel,

#### ***Welcome & SPU Updates***

Welcome from Andrew Lee, General Manager, SPU – Andrew welcomed members and thanked them for their participation on the Customer Review Panel (CRP).

- Andrew reported on SPU's recent employee engagement survey; of 1,250 employees, 60% participated. Highlights include:
  - 80% of employees are happy working with their teams and supervisors
  - Employees are less happy with leadership and culture
  - Employees are experiencing high levels of stress and anxiety both personally and professionally
  - Employees have concerns about SPU's ability to address Race and Social Justice issues
- The results of the survey have pointed out a need to improve SPU's organizational culture.
- Andrew reported on the City's return to office. **Questions from CRP members:**
  - **What has been the impact of RTO?** This will be gauged over the course of the year
  - **What is the impact on employees with disabilities?** They are able to request accommodations which are granted if possible
- Andrew told the CRP about a \$5.5 million grant from the Department of Commerce being administered by SPU to pay down customer arrearages accumulated during the pandemic.

- SPU has reached out 4,500 eligible customers so far; deadline to response was December 12, 2022
- **Questions from CRP members:**
  - **How much time did customers have to respond to outreach?**
  - Andrew responded that SPU is requested an extension of time in order to reach more eligible customers
- SPU has hired a permanent Drainage and Wastewater Director; there are no longer any vacant executive level positions open at SPU

### **Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

### **Committee Business**

September minutes

- No comments on September minutes
- Noel Miller moved to approve and Miki Sodos seconded.

CRP Compensation

- Compensation is becoming a best practice; please see slide in materials for details
- Chair noted that CRP Charter will need to be changed in order to add stipends for members

Tea & Talk Recap

- It was widely agreed that CRP's participation in the Tea & Talk was widely beneficial. Employees appreciated the interaction as did members. We'd like to continue this practice.

### **Council/Mayor Updates**

- Brian Goodnight, Council Central Staff:
  - 2023 budget is adopted
  - Council received the Ship Canal update (CRP received later in the meeting)
  - January 17<sup>th</sup> is the next committee meeting the Utilities Committee

- Akshay Iyengar, City Budget Office: Nothing additional to add

*Comment from Amanda Richer: offered her thanks and to lift up the SPU employees who are donating badly needed items to her organization.*

### ***Strategic Business Plan Performance Reporting – 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Highlights***

*See attached panel presentation*

Natasha Papsoueva noted that quarterly targets are being met.

### ***Strategic Business Plan Elements and Preview of Update***

*See attached panel presentation*

Dani Purnell previewed what the panel can expect in 2023 and early 2024 regarding the update of the SBP. Most importantly, she stressed that we are here to provide the CRP with the materials they need. Members can expect:

- Foundational briefings December – May 2023
- New proposals and outreach May – October 2023
- Drafting of the letter to council November 2023 – January 2024
- Adoption of the updated plan March – June 2024

SPU and the BDS Planning Consultants are planning a variety of opportunities to present needed information to members. People learn in different ways and are available at different times and we are striving to be mindful of that. More information and a detailed schedule will follow.

### ***Foundational Briefing: SPU Finances, Rates, and Bills***

*See attached panel presentation*

*Maria Coe gave an excellent presentation explaining SPU's finances, rates, rate cycles, and bills. While it was a complex subject, it conveyed relevant information for CRP members to help with the upcoming decisions regarding the SBP update.*

### ***Ship Canal Water Quality Project Update***

*See attached panel presentation*

*Keith Ward presented an update on the Ship Canal combined sewer overflow project. This project is the largest in SPU history and is part of consent decree to reduce sewage overflows. Keith was reported to the CRP, following his report to council, that the project is delayed and over budget. No action is needed by the CRP but as this does affect SPU, leadership wanted the CRP to hear about it directly from staff.*

### **CRP Discussion and Reflection**

Andres Mantilla from BDS Consulting led a discussion with the CRP members. Some of the highlights are listed below.

- Members received a great deal of information; the schedule will be more intense in 2023 as we work through the SBP update. Some of the opportunities for learning will include
  - Study sessions for a deeper dive into specific issues (e.g., metrics, financial policies)
  - One on one meetings between meetings with BDS consultants
  - Evening meetings if helpful – we will send a survey with some options for members to react to
  - We know that community impact programs (e.g., Utility Discount Program) are very important to members and we will strive to balance our focus on those with the need for CRP members to make decisions about other investment areas as well
  - This is an update and does not affect the guiding principles of the SBP
- What do CRP members need to be successful in this process? In providing information, SPU and BDS will consider the following
  - Why should CRP care?
  - Why is this relevant to them?
  - What is SPU asking them to do with this information?
- Update will cover the current 18 initiatives and investments included in the SBP
  - What should be added? What should go away? What should SPU be doing more or less of?
  - What about aging infrastructure? Asset management?
  - What does successful outreach and engagement look like to the panel members?

- CRP member responses
  - How do we get the best bang for the buck for both businesses and residential customers?
  - Can we see a profit and loss statement?
  - Prioritization based on equity is important to members included how SPU deals with bonds, debt service, etc (this refers to the SPU Finances, Rates and Bills presentation)
  - Multi-facted approach to outreach is important; target audiences with a variety of approaches depending on their circumstances; must engage with cultural competency; how will we know the results of this engagement?
  - Receiving information from SPU: consolidating information into one document or maybe a folder? Provide links, follow-up, neighborhood specific information.
  - Metrics: less on metrics and more on outcomes; service flyer mention SBP update; commercial as well as residential
  - Schedule: 15 minute one on one meetings with BDS between quarterly meetings; survey will go out for options; likely adding 5-7 additional meetings in 2023 for update

Meeting adjourned at 5:25