

# Customer Review Panel

Q2: Monday, May 10, 2021

3:00 pm – 5:30 pm

WebEx mtg

## ATTENDEES

CRP Panel Members and Facilitator			
Bobby Coleman	X	Puja Shaw	X
Laura Lippman	X	Rodney Schauf	X
Karen Reed, Facilitator	X	Suzie Burke	X
Maria McDaniel	X	Thy Pham	
Noel Miller	X		

  

Staff and Guests			
Mami Hara	X	Kate Morrison	X
Akshay Iyengar	X	Kathleen Baca	
Alex Chen	X	Keri Burchard-Juarez	X
Andrew Lee	X	Natasha Papsoueva	X
Ben Marre	X	Paula Laschober	X
Brian Goodnight	X	ShaQuina Davis	
Dani Purnell	X	Thuch Mam	X
Dee Reed	X	Toby Thaler	X
Jeff Fowler	X	Todd Snider	X
Idris Beauregard	X	Cesar Garcia,	X
Kahreen Tebeau	X	Brianna Kiarie,	X
Karl Stickel	X	Maryam Mason	X

**Underlined text** indicates action items. ***Bold italicized text*** indicates follow-up items.

### 1. Welcome

Mami opened the meeting by welcoming attendee shared the following announcements

- This will be Laura Lippman's last meeting and Mami thanked her for her extensive and rich service on the Panel.
- The Transportation and Utilities Committee unanimously approved the 2021-2026 Strategic Business Plan on May 5, 2021, and the plan is going through Council Committee today.
- Kate Morrison has official joined SPU and will be the SPU lead for CRP meetings.

Noel announced that SPU's 2021-2026 Strategic Business Plan was just unanimously approved, 5-0, by Council.

## 2. Public Comments

No public comments were received for this meeting.

## 3. Committee Business

### a) Meeting Summary

There was a correction to the meetings summary, add Suzie Burkes to the attendees list. **The meeting summary was approved.**

### b) SBP Adoption Process Update

**The 2021-2026 Strategic Business Plan was unanimously approved by the Transportation and Utilities Council and City Council.**

### c) CRP Recruitment Update

We received 15 diverse applications for 6 Panel vacancies. The interview panel will have representatives from the Council Member Pedersen's office, the Mayor's office, and the Customer Review Panel (Bobby Coleman). The interview process will begin next week.

## 4. Council and Mayor's Office Update

### Mayor's Office

The Mayor's Office and Central Budget Office are preparing to receive city departments budget proposals by June 2. This year's budget process will focus on a continuation budget with no major changes expected. B

Seattle received federal money as part of the CARES Act and funding for Clean City. Financial forecast is that CBO is optimistic but cautious about future revenues.

### Council

The Strategic Business Plan was presented at three meetings, two were to the Transportation and Utilities Committee and the third was today at the Council. The Plan unanimously passed the Committee and is being heard at Council today.

## 5. Performance Reporting – Q1 2021

### a) Essential Metrics (Natasha Papsoueva)

Natasha presented a new quarterly reporting format providing highlights in four focus areas:

- i. Delivering Equitable Essential Services
- ii. Stewarding Environment and Public Health Investment
- iii. Empowering Our Customers, Community and Employees
- iv. Strengthening Our Business Practices

#### i. Delivering Equitable Essential Services Focus Area

Overall, our Q1 performance was strong by meeting 14 of 16 performance metrics and continues to trend progressively in Q2.

*Best In Class:* All Q1 metrics targets were met - System Leaks Reduction, Utility Discount Program, Residential Garbage and Recycling, Clean City Collection and Sewer Overflow

*Reliable and Rewarding Experiences:* In Q1, we met 3 of 4 targets - Water and DWW Service Response Time, Customer Call Response Time and Customer Satisfaction. Metric for Missed Waste Pickup was slightly off target due to inclement weather in February which impacted services.

*Expectations, Requirement and Commitment*

In Q1, the following metrics met their targets.

- Garbage, Recycle and Organics
- Customer Effort
- Women and Minority-owned Business Enterprise Purchasing and Consulting
- Drinking Water Quality
- National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System

The following metric was off target in Q1.

- Combine Sewer Overflow Outfalls was slightly off target due to inclement weather in February.

**Question:** What is the “Customer Effort” metrics under *Expectations, Requirement and Commitment*?

**Answer:** Customer Effort is the score that we capture when we ask customers whether it was easy to handle issues. Customers are asked to rate on a scale of 1 – 5 with 1 – strongly disagree that SPU made it easy to handle their issues and 5 – strongly agree that SPU made it easy to handle issues. In Q1, Customer Effort received an 80% rating by respondents that SPU made it easy to handle issues.

**Question:** Why is the Utility Discount Program metric negative?

**Answer:** The number represents an overall net gain. This number includes the number of new households enrolled in the program minus the number of households that were released from the program because they were no longer eligible which resulted in a net loss of 696 households for Q1. Last year, SPU enrolled 30,000+ households in the program using the Fast-Track enrollment process.

ii. *Stewarding Environment and Public Health Focus Area*

- Investment Projects are reported quarterly. Performance goals for both were met in Q1
  - Ship Canal Water Quality Projects
  - Green Stormwater Infrastructure
- Initiatives are reported annually

iii. *Empowering Our Customers, Community, and Employees Focus Area*

All four investments met the Q1 performance targets.

- Side Sewers Assistance Pilot and Implementation
- SPU Support Services for the Unsheltered
- Drainage and Wastewater Recreational Vehicle (RV) Mobile Pump Out Program
- Workforce Facilities Investments

iv. Strengthening Our Business Practice Focus Area

All three investments met the Q1 performance targets. Panel members are encouraged to read the detail description of these investments in the report.

- Water System Seismic Resilience
- DWW Asset Management and Opportunity Work
- Water Asset Management and Opportunity Work

c) [Capital Improvement Projects \(Keri Burchard-Juarez\)](#)

SPU spent \$26M in Q1 with the biggest expenditure going to constructions at approximately \$20M. There are many big projects in constructions right now including the Ship Canal Water Quality Project.

Keri provided a list of construction projects that are coming up for bid. The list is included in the meeting material.

**Question:** Is the 2021 capital project target expenditure 85% of \$240,951,000?

**Answer:** Yes, that is the target spending for 2021. Please note that Q1 spending is always low because invoices processed in early January are for work performed in December, so they are counted towards the previous year's spending. Capital project spending always increases in future quarters.

Keri presented the 2021-2022 capital improvement projects on Water, Drainage and Wastewater, and Shared Services and Solid Waste. The presentations are included in the meeting material.

*Q1 2021 Project Delivery and Engineering Branch Capital Improvement Project Spending*

- Pearl Street drainage and wastewater improvement project for midway will be completed by year-end.

**Question:** Where is Pearl Street?

**Answer:** Pearl Street is located in the South part of Seattle, East of I-5 near Georgetown.

*2021-2022 Capital Project Schedule – Water*

Keri provided the "2021-2022 Capital Project Schedule – Water" which is a master schedule of some of our major water projects indicating the design, construction, and closeout phases for each project.

**Keri agreed to Noel's suggestion to separate water projects by regional projects and city projects for future reporting.** Keri noted that the Reservoir Covering-Lake Forest Park, the Tolt Dam Warning System, and the Tolt Valve 15 Leak Repair projects are regional projects.

*2021-2022 Capital Project Schedule – Drainage and Wastewater*

Keri provided a list of the "2021-2022 Capital Project Schedule – Drainage and Wastewater."

- A lot of projects listed are in progress
- Several of the projects are mandated by our consent decree
- 5 projects are part of the Ship Canal Water Quality Project
- Similar to Water LOB's water main rehabilitation projects, Drainage and Wastewater sewer lining projects are for existing infrastructure

**Bobby suggested and the Panel agreed to stop using acronyms and to instead spell out all acronyms in future materials.**

*2021-2022 Capital Project Schedule – Shared Services and Solid Waste*

Keri provided a list of the “2021-2022 Capital Project Schedule – Shared Services and Solid Waste.”

- There were some new Seattle Department of Transportation acronyms introduced in the report; HHC which stands for Heavy Haul Corridor means it has a lot of heavy semi-truck traffic, MMC which stands for Multi Modal Corridor means cars, trucks and bikes, and AAC which stands for Asphalt Arterial Corridor which means asphalt and concrete. **These new acronyms should be added to the acronym dictionary in the Panel binder.**
- Most shared projects listed are primarily Seattle Department of Transportation projects including “Waterfront Seattle DWW Work.”
- Project Deliver and Engineering Brach has been engaging in a naming convention exercise to make the project names more transparent and easier to understand. Overtime, the project names will begin to shift and become more comprehensive.
- One way to know if these projects are off-track is look at “YTD Q\_ 2021 PDEB CIP Spending.” In future quarters, the “Percentage Achieved” should be closer to 30-40%. If the “Percentage Achieved” is not close to that range, then the projects are off-track.
- The Panel appreciates the new reporting format.

d) Financial (Karl Stickel)

Karl presented the 2021 Q1 Water Fund result. The table is broken down into two sections, expenditures and revenues and subcategories.

- Expenditures and Revenues (*Left hand side in blue*)
  - Annual Plan to Spend which is what we budgeted
  - Annual Spend to Date which is what is happening this quarter and any variance.
- Variance (*Right hand side in green*) is the difference between Expenditures and Revenue and what we spent through March.

*Water Fund 2021 Q1 Financial Results*

- Operation expenditure was a bit less than expected due to lower tax payment, delays in contract costs, vacancies and the pandemic resulting in an \$5M underspending
- Capital expenditure was also slightly underspent by \$2M, but spending will increase in future quarters.
- Water revenue is slightly up
  - Water Retail Customer Revenue, which includes both residential and commercial, was down \$1M.
  - Residential revenue increased in Q1 as people were home more, but commercial revenue decreased due in large to vacancies in commercial buildings because of the pandemic.
  - Generally, consumption has been 1.4% below forecast, and 9.4% below the 2020 levels.
  - Wholesale Revenues and Other Revenues, which included tap fees, each generated \$1M in Q1 due to a strong construction sector.

### *Drainage and Wastewater Fund 2021 Q1 Financial Results*

- Drainage and Wastewater saw similar underspending in expenditures and capital for similar reasons in Q1.
- Capital project are slowly ramping up as in Water, but the underspending was due to delays across multiple programs including transportation, ship canal water quality projects, green storm water infrastructure projects, etc. The spending for these capital projects will increase as we approach Summer.
- Revenue decreased slightly in both residential and commercial with commercial trending about 4% below forecast and residential trending at 3% below forecast.
- Drainage and Wastewater and other revenues are currently on target, but wastewater revenue is down \$4M.
- Revenue projections include a \$1.5M/year pass-through billing for King County stormwater program cost that we will be reflected in future reporting.

**Question:** Why did wastewater decreased in Q1 when the number of residents hasn't decreased?

**Answer:** There are a few reasons; first, wastewater revenue is tied to the pass-through billing for King County stormwater program cost that has not yet been reflected in Q1 reporting. This revenue, approximately \$1.5M, should be reflected in future reporting. Second, the decrease in revenue is also tied to a decrease in consumption of water by businesses such as restaurants and hotels from tourism, and third, people who work in Seattle also live outside of the city.

**Question (from chat):** Is per capita water use down, as well?

**Answer:** The short answer is no. There has been no decrease in per capita water use compared to the previous years' trends. If you want more details: if you look at the per capita water use across all of SPU, we've seen a 2-3% decrease in 2020 compared to prior years. However, the decrease looks to be more due to the wet start to summer than anything else (late start to irrigation season). Of note though, in 2020, people at home used more water per person, but people at work (in businesses, restaurants) used less water per person.

### *Solid Waste Fund 2021 Q1 Financial Results*

- Operating expenditures is underspent by \$10M primarily due to SW contract savings we negotiated from lower contract costs that we are now starting to realize.
- Capital expenditure is overspent by \$8M due to the Midway landfill cost from 2020 that carried over into 2021.
- Solid waste commercial revenues were down due to the pandemic, but residential revenues increased as people stayed home.
- Overall, SPU is in good financial position and our funding are financially strong.

**Question:** How is operational expenditure underspent quarterly if the contract is not negotiated every quarterly?

**Answer:** The big contract we negotiated will save \$5M, but there are smaller professional contracts that we are engaged in have produced a Q1 savings.

## 6. Strategic Business Plan Focus: Empowering Customers, Community and Employees

- **Remove Barriers to Access:** *Support and uplift residents and businesses by ensuring equitable services, information and educational materials to help everyone steward shared precious resources.*
- **Partner with Community to Maximize Benefits:** *Improve investment strategies in ways that help SPU contribute to economic opportunity, enhance livability and build sustainability.*
- **Investing in Our Employees:** *Cultivate a compassionate and dynamic work culture that prioritizes racial equity and attracts, inspires, and invest in existing future employees.*

### a) Facilities Master Plan (Andrew Lee)

Andrew provided a facilities timeline for SPU facilities project

- Facilities Master Plan - Committed to completion by 2023
  - Q1 update - We are current on target

Andrew presented a map and list of all the facilities that are included in the Facilities Master Plan. SPU has hired a facilities planner, Easton Brannon, to lead the work. Easton previously worked at Makers which is an architectural company that primarily did facilities planning for municipalities and districts. Easton will begin work on the Facility Master Plan charter that should be completed later this year.

SPU is looking at long term needs of workforce facilities post-pandemic. New workspace concepts such as touchdown stations to facilitate a hybrid model are incorporated into the Facilities Master Plan.

**Question:** How does city-wide facilities planning integrate with broader regional planning around housing, etc.? Is there any consideration expanded/mixed use of sites?

**Answer:** This will be a new element of the Facilities Master Plan. The previous Master Plan focused primarily on operational efficiency and meeting operational needs of the utility. This new Master Plan will also include a more proactive analysis of how our facilities can also help to meet community interests/needs. That may include housing, jobs/business development, recreational areas, and other needs. We are really excited about adding this new element to our master planning effort.

- Cedar Fall Phase 2
  - Planning and design committed to completion by 2023
  - Construction committed to completion in 2025
  - Q1 update - We're tracking closely but not perfectly. The area houses the Watershed HQ building and several other buildings including a heavy equipment garages, group storage, metal shops, fuel island and other facilities. All these facilities require renovations or complete replacements especially after the severe snowstorm we had a few years back that cause extensive damages to the facilities. SPU has been working on alternative site layout and are making very good progress. We hope to have an options analysis and recommended alternatives by Q3 2021 and we are on track to meet this target.

**Question:** Is the site shared with any other departments and is SPU responsible for all the facilities?

**Answer:** Yes, there is a Seattle City Lights facilities on this property and yes, we are responsible for all the facilities, but we work very closely with City Lights on electrical support needs.

- North Operations Center
  - Planning and design committed to completion by 2023
  - Construction committed to completion in 2026
  - Q1 update - We are tracking very closely, but maybe a bit delayed as we move to align this project with the Facilities Master Plan. The North Operations Center, both land and facilities, is SPU owned, but it is part of a bigger grouping of facilities that also include Haller Lake which is owned by the City's Finance and Administrative Services and currently houses our Drainage and Wastewater facility. The key issue for these facilities is the seismic deficiencies. We have the option to provide a seismic upgrade to the facilities or replace the entire buildings. A seismic upgrade requires extensive remodeling of the buildings which is a big investment. Recognizing the complexity of the project and the need to develop an options analysis for all the north end facilities; SPU's drainage and wastewater facilities on Haller Lake and all facilities at the North Operations Center, SPU incorporated the improvement projects into the Facilities Master Plan to allow planning and decisions to be made in its context. Although the planning and design phase for the North Operations Center was scheduled for completion by 2023, its inclusion in the Facilities Master Plan means the design work will instead begin in late 2023/early 2024.

**Question:** Are you including electric charging stations in these remodels?

**Answer:** Yes, we have a general electrification strategy to include charging stations in new facilities, but there's already electric charging stations at the current site.

- South Operations Center
  - Planning and design committed to completion by 2023
  - Construction committed to completion in 2024
  - Q1 update - We are on target.  
The South Operation Center has three separate projects; interior improvements, hygiene facility and a dewatering station. The interior improvement project was completed December 2020 and included paint, carpeting, and bathrooms. The hygiene station project will include new locker rooms, showers, and more toilets capacity. Design work on the hygiene project will begin in late 2021. The last project is the dewatering facility which will include more storage area, wash racks, etc. We are expected to complete the options analysis in Q2 and design work to begin in Q3 2021. Maintenance staff have been involved in all three project improvements.
- Seattle Municipal Tower Reconfiguration
  - Planning and design committed to completion by 2021
  - Construction Phase 1 - committed to completion by 2022
  - Construction Phase 2 - committed to completion by 2024
  - Q1 Update – Deliberately delaying the project.  
In December 2020, SPU completed the Workspace Reimagined plan which detailed space occupancy consolidation at the Municipal Tower by 50%, from 10 to 5 floors. The



consolidation plan was approved by the Mayor's office in Q1 2021. The plan included expedited remodeling based on the assumption that City staff would return to the office in late 2021-2022, but the Mayor's office decided not to break facility leases in order to place staff in the Municipal Tower. As a result, the urgency to fast-track the remodel was removed because there were not tenants to fill the vacancies and SPU was still responsible for the rent on all 10 floors. SPU is now taking a more gradual approach to implementation so the previous timeline will be slowed down. Between now and September, SPU will be preparing employees to return to the office as Governor's stay at home order expires. SPU expects most employees will return in a hybrid fashion, a mix of work-from-home and in the Municipal Tower. SPU plans to keep the 48<sup>th</sup> floor vacant to test what a future workspace would look and feel like at the Municipal Tower. This will include touchdown stations, new meeting spaces, etc. The future workspace redesign on the 48<sup>th</sup> floor of the Municipal Tower will run from September – December as staff return to the office and settle into a new normal. In January 2022, SPU will review and update the Workspace Reimagined Plan, begin the design process in late 2022, and begin renovation in 2023.

b) Workforce Development – Apprenticeship Program (Todd Snider)

The 2020 apprenticeship program is the first for SPU in 6 years and is the most diverse cohort of apprentices that SPU has employed. The program was completely redesigned to include best practices from partners in the building construction trades with a focus on field work that put frontline workers first. The apprenticeship program includes paid on the job training and unpaid supplemental instructions. Apprentices are required to attend a minimum of 208 hours of unpaid related classroom instructions during the 2-year program. SPU partnered with Seattle Colleges to bring in the best vocational curriculum writer and convened frontline staff subject matter experts. The committee outlined and created a curriculum that was logically sound by incorporating different learning styles and an assessment process, RSJI approaches in the lesson plan examples, and applicable to community college credit. SPU frontline staff are teaching the classes themselves. The full curriculum is still in development with a completion target by year end.

As critical as the classroom component is, the majority of the learning comes from hands on field work. The 2-year program requires 4,000 hours of paid structured on the job training under the tutelage of the experienced Journey-level worker and the apprentices are rotated to work with different field crews every 3 months. To assess critical learning, SPU developed Skills Blocks which is a quantifiable process to assess the apprentice's ability to successfully complete specific tasks safely and effectively to the satisfaction of their Journey-level worker and crew chief. The Skills Blocks has been so effective that Seattle City Lights is reviewing the Block to incorporate into their program.

The 2-year program apprenticeship was launched in late October 2020 during a pandemic which included an intensive three months in-person group training with no COVID transmission. The apprentices are trained and mentored by Journey-level Water Pipe Workers to learn how to construct, install, and repair SPU's watermains, sewers, valves and fire hydrants. The program is a registered apprenticeship program so at the end of the 2-year program, graduates become a registered Journey-level Water Pipe Workers and they will receive a registration card from WA

certifying their highly skilled trade. The registered record is a public record so any future employers can verify its authenticity.

**Question:** Is the 4,000 hours on the job training paid time?

**Answer:** Yes, the 4,000 on the job training is paid.

**Question:** What is average age of the cohort?

**Answer:** I believe the average is 29 years of old, but it maybe a little younger since one of apprentice is 19-year-old.

**Question:** Once the program is completed, is there a job for them at SPU or is there plan to partner with other organizations for job placement?

**Answer:** SPU does not have firm plan yet, but SPU is look at the program as an investment in the future and will be looking to create a succession plan for water pipeworkers that's connected to the program.

c) *COVID Relief Programs (Debra "Dee" Reed)*

Dee, Division Director for the Utility Account Services and Contact Center, gave an overview of the Utility Discount Program, Emergency Assistance Program, and our Community Donation Fund for COVID relief.

Some strategies that SPU employed for COVID relieve are

- No late fees or shut-offs since March 2020.
- Create a flexible payment for customers who needs it.
- Increased outreach to communities so they understand the benefits and support that SPU offers. SPU also created materials in seven different languages as part of the outreach effort to inform residents of SPU services and how we can help.

*Utility Discount Program*

The program is a collaborative effort between Seattle Public Utilities, Seattle Human Services and Seattle City Lights. Seattle Human Services is responsible for administering the program.

- Based on SPU's algorithm, about 90,000 customers are eligible for the program and we currently have 42,000 enrolled in the program.
- Household enrolled in the program are on a 2-year cycle before recertification for eligibility while seniors are on a 3-year cycle.

*Emergency Assistance Program*

This program is for customers with immediate need for assistance with their water, sewer and solid waste bill. Customers can apply a grant to their account in order to prevent service disruption. This grant is available to eligible customers twice a year. To make this program easier for customers and provide pandemic relieve, SPU made the following changes in 2020:

- Changed the qualifying medium income from 70% to 80% so more customers would qualify.
- Customers do not need to be delinquent with their account to qualify.
- Automatically applied the pledge to customers who were eligible and delinquent without requiring the customer to call in or ask.

- Eligibility for the second pledge, a qualifying child under 18 years old, was removed if they qualified for the first pledge, allowing more customers access to the financial support from the second pledge. In total, eligible customers could receive up to \$950 in support from both pledges for the year to help with their water, sewer and garbage bills.

**Question:** Are customers who benefited from the automatic pledge previously screened for qualification?

**Answer:** Yes, these customers are already pre-screened for qualifications, and we go through the normal process for verification before automatically applying the pledge to their account. Once pledges are applied to their account, we send them a letter notifying them of the auto pledge that was applied to their account.

#### *Community Donation Fund*

This is a new program and is being completed in phases. The first phase is to be able to accept donations, in check form only for now. SPU is working to get the word out about the program. We hope to increase donation access in future phases to include a one-time donation through customers' utility bills in the second phase and donations by credit or debit card in the third phase of the program. To be eligible for the \$200 maximum Utility Discount Fund, customers must exhaust their Emergency Assistance Program pledges. This year, the focus will be to promote the program in order to build the donations for the program so we may continue to help our low-income customers.

If you wish to donate to the Community Donation Fund please make your check payable to "SPU Community Donation Fund," and mail to address below. Once a check is received, SPU will send a donation receipt to the address listed on the check

Seattle Public Utilities Community Donation Fund  
PO Box 94647  
Seattle, WA 98124-4647

Maria McDaniel shared her appreciation for the emergency assistance program because there are so many people who do not have the technology to request for the assistance or the ability to go to a facility to complete the form. Maria knows people who are benefiting from the program.

Bobby Coleman shared that Seattle Housing Authority has done a mass enrollment in the program. They hear nothing but positive things from the program. The one issue is the recertification process. Bobby also suggested that SPU partner with other organizations increase funding and support to more customers.

**Response:** As part of the Community Fund Program, SPU is looking at partnership opportunities.

#### 7. [Partnership Perspective and Dialogue \(Kahreen Tebeau\)](#)

A few months back, the US Water Alliance invited SPU to participate in a new a national pilot program to work with public water utilities to better understand the program of water shutoffs, who it really impact, and some of the best practices, tools and policies that we can use to prevent water shutoffs, especially for low income households. Seattle was 1 of 10 cities across the country that

participate in this 18-month pilot. The requirement for this program is that SPU must partner with 1 or 2 community-based organizations in Seattle who would also become official pilot participants to really better understand the water shutoff problem and the potential solutions from a community centered perspective. SPU invited Neighborhood House and Lake City Collectives to partner in the pilot.

#### Lake City Collective (Cesar Garcia is the Executive Director)

Lake City Collectives is a small organization with just 8 core members and no employees. Their members represent different multicultural community groups. They are a minority-lead organizations that help support their communities, particularly during the pandemic. They aid with grant process, used their limited finances to help people with their bills, and assist people with applying for the Utility Discount Program.

#### Neighborhood House (Brianna Kiarie)

Neighborhood House is a multiservice agency that provides early childhood education, aging and disability services including housing, youth programs and community health programs among other things. They serve all King County, but is primarily in Seattle(central, south and west Seattle). Neighborhood House has been working with partners on the eviction prevention and rental assistance program across the county.

Kahreen shared a bit more about the pilot (see presentation). There are six different policy levels or tools that are currently being explored as they prepare for the end of the shutoff moratorium with the statewide level scheduled to end in July. Each of the six levels are approaches the utility can tweak or adjust to shape how and when they approach shut-offs and what makes sense for their communities. These include:

- Looking at the timing of resuming shut-offs
- Looking at the delinquent amount that someone owes that would make them eligible for a shut-off
- Examine the term for a payment plan such as a down payment
- Examine the repayment period
- Examine if payment plan prevents shutoffs meaning if you have a payment plan, does it mean you're no longer at risk of a shut-off?
- Examine shut-off fees
- Exploring different payment requirements for reconnection
- Explore assistance available to households that are unable to pay their utility bill

The pilot is still in its early stages with a year still left so more information is still to come. The group will return at the end of the pilot to provide their findings.

**Question:** Karen Reed - What is the general awareness of the assistance program that SPU offers?

**Answer:** Cesar Garcia – People may be aware that the program exists, but they may not be aware that they're eligible because they believe these programs are only available to low-income residents. The other issue is the language barrier and the quality of the translated material.

**Answer:** Brianna – They have provided a translation video about different resources that are available to them. Would appreciate having flyers in different languages. The other challenge is the heavy reliance on internet and computer for the application process.

**Question:** There has been an effort the past year to create a simplified enrollment process. What is the success of that effort?

**Answer:** Yes. For the Utility Discount Program, SPU created a Fast-Track enrollment process. It's an online form where customers attest to their household for the next 30 days without having to provide documentations upfront. This was created to people with sudden change in their circumstances. The Fast-Track process has helped to increase enrollment substantially, more than we've ever seen in the program. The other piece SPU recently learned was that while people may be aware of the program, there were fear about applying for the program because customers were afraid that their information would be shared with the federal government or that it might hurt their immigration status.

**Question:** Can water rates be restructured?

**Answered:** The plan is to take a look next year at some different alternative rates mechanisms.

**Question:** To Cesar and Brianna, are there perceptions or misunderstandings about the utility that would be helpful to SPU?

**Answer:** One reason why Cesar decided to join the pilot is understand more about SPU. The more opportunities we have to engage with SPU, the more we know and transmit that knowledge to the community. Briana is excited about the opportunity to reassess the utility fee structures and its impact on low-income households.

#### 8. [Future Strategic Business Plan Focus Area Planning – Interest Areas](#)

SPU will take up one focus area per meeting. Our next meeting will focus on environment and health. Panels were asked if there were any topic of interest they'd like to add to the agenda for the next meeting.

- Duwamish Clean Up Coalition in the South Park District
- Food Rescue
- Waste Prevention Strategic Plan
- SPU Waste-Free Community Grants
- Green Stormwater Infrastructure
- Tour of SCWQP at some point

**The meeting adjourned at 5:21 pm**