



Meeting Minutes - Draft

Utility Advisory Committee

City Hall
601 4th Avenue E
Olympia, WA 98501

Contact: Jesse Barham
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Thursday, June 1, 2023

5:30 PM

City Hall, Room 207

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Bloom called the meeting to order and read the Tribal Acknowledgment.

1.A ROLL CALL

Present: 7 - Chair Dennis Bloom, Vice Chair Kristin Lamson, Committee member Sherry Chilcutt, Committee member Dani Clark, Committee member Arland Schneider, Committee member Virginia Towne and Committee member Eleanor (Pat) Vernon

Absent: 2 - Committee member JP Anderson and Committee member Donald Krug

1.B. STAFF PRESENT

Water Resources Director/Staff Liaison Jesse Barham
Drinking Water Utility Director Mike Vessey
Waste ReSources Director Gary Franks
Senior Program Specialist Susan McCleary
Assistant City Manager Rich Hoey
Affordable Housing Program Manager Jacinda Steltjes
Housing Program Manager Darian Lightfoot
Administrative Specialist Lindsay Walker

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[23-0488](#) Approval of May 4, 2023 UAC Meeting Minutes

The minutes were approved.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT - None

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM UAC AND STAFF

Chair Bloom acknowledged National Public Works Week (May 22 - 26). He appreciated

the City's social media posts recognizing City staff.

Mr. Vessey informed the UAC about ESHB 1329. The new state law limits water shut-offs and requires service reconnection to residential customers during a heat advisory issued by the National Weather Service. The law goes into effect July 23, 2023. The City is working on a policy to implement the new law.

Mr. Barham provided the following updates:

Staff is proposing to extend the UAC meetings to begin at 4:30 to hold a work session to discuss the Comprehensive Plan update. The UAC would do this for the meetings in August - December. Staff will determine a schedule of topics for each work session.

Staff will email the UAC a survey and scheduling poll regarding a utility site tour in July and August. Staff will send a news release announcing it as a special meeting and with a potential quorum. UAC also expressed interest in a tour of the recycling processing center.

World Oceans Day is Saturday, June 10 at Heritage Park from 11:00 - 2:00, with the program/speakers beginning at noon.

6. BUSINESS ITEMS

[23-0388](#) Olympia Equity Index and Service Equity Analysis Briefing

Ms. McCleary provided the briefing. Committee members made the following suggestions:

- Consider adding walkability to healthcare facilities as an additional walkability indicator.

Ms. McCleary noted the City will release the Equity Index to the public after the City's Social Justice and Equity Commission receives a briefing and provides guidance on how to best present the index in June 2023. After some discussion, the UAC thanked staff for the briefing.

The information was provided.

[23-0477](#) Consideration of a Partial Exemption of General Facilities Charges for Development Creating New Units of Affordable Housing

Ms. Steltjes provided the briefing. UAC received a briefing on partially exempting GFCs for development that creates affordable housing for low income populations in May 2022. At that time, UAC requested staff come back with recommendations on how to implement such a program. Staff recommends exempting GFCs in the following fashion:

Housing types

Multi-family and single-family rental

Qualifications

Development creates new units of affordable housing by household size, as determined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. All units created must be affordable to be eligible for partially exempted GFCs.

Percentage

Exempt GFCs by 50%; consistent with LOTT's Affordable Housing Support pilot program.

UAC members provided the following suggestions:

- Update the table used in the accompanying PowerPoint showing past and potential projects that would have been/are eligible for the GFC exemption to show the number of units per site that were/will be created using the GFC discount.
- As a part of the UAC's quarterly utility financial briefing, include an update on this program. This would include upcoming projects, financial data, adjustments to the program and the number of units that would be anticipated to be created.

Staff recommends Option 3, increasing GFC rates on all new and applicable development by 2%, to offset the revenue loss that occurs because of the 50% partial exemption for development of new affordable housing units. This increase is in addition to any increases proposed through the City's annual review of GFCs.

Staff confirmed with City of Olympia Legal Department that this option is legal. Municipal Research and Services Center has also confirmed the legality of this option.

Vice Chair Lamson moved, seconded by Committee member Towne, to forward a recommendation to City Council to approve Option 3, to partially exempt general facility charges by 50% for qualifying projects to create new units of affordable housing. The motion carried unanimously.

[23-0489](#) Rates and Affordability Metrics

Staff provided the briefing, including information on the City's utility assistance programs, Lifeline Rates and Helping Neighbors. The briefing was intended to help UAC members understand the many factors that are considered during the annual review of utility rates. The UAC requested the following information and provided feedback:

- Number of customers on payment plans
- Number of water shut offs occur every month due to non-payment
- Whether the City charges interest on overdue balances
- Whether the City charge a reconnection fee
- If yes, are fees waivable?
- Consider a tiered (sliding scale) approach for the Lifeline rate program where a

customer could get a lower percentage discount, such as 25% discount on utility rates.

Staff will follow up with the UAC to provide this information.

The UAC asked some clarifying questions and further discussed the business item. The UAC thanked staff for the briefing. Staff will continue to provide the UAC periodic briefings on the City's utility assistance programs.

The information was provided.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Bloom adjourned the meeting at 7:44 p.m.