

**Final Minutes**  
**Seattle Water Supply System Operating Board**  
**May 11, 2023**  
**01-3PM**

**WebEx Video Conference Meeting**

**Board Members**

Patrick Sorenson, Chair  
 Alex Chen  
 Bob Danson, Alt.  
 Paula Laschober  
 Andrew Lee  
 Ron Little, 7<sup>th</sup> Member  
 Diane Pottinger

**Utility Representatives**

Mike Amburgey  
 Boyd Benson  
 Jeremy Delmar  
 Pete Eberle  
 Abdoul Gafour  
 Jason Kintner  
 Michael Martin  
 Suzi O'Byrne  
 Terry Olson  
 Jorgan Peadon  
 Jane Vandenberg

**SPU Attendees**

Hilary Allison  
 Regina Carpenter  
 Julie Crittenden  
 Kathy Curry  
 John Edgerly  
 Terri Gregg  
 Paul Hanna  
 Lynn Kirby  
 Amy LaBarge  
 Ky Lewis  
 Eugene Mantchev  
 Martha Neuman  
 Kelly O'Rourke  
 Maura Patterson  
 Ingrid Wertz

**Other Attendees**

Jamie Crookston  
 Charlotte Haines  
 Patty Hale  
 Pam Maloney  
 Kathleen Quong-Vermiere  
 Ron Ricker  
 Robert Russell  
 Ron Straka  
 Logan Wallace  
 Max Woody

**1. Welcome, Introductions & Announcements**

The Operating Board (OB) Chair, Patrick Sorenson, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Kathy Curry, Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) Wholesale Water Contracts Manager, completed a roll call of OB Members and confirmed there was a quorum to begin the meeting. Kathy Curry acknowledged that Patrick Sorenson, the Operating Board Chair, is retiring and that this is his last meeting. Jeremy Delmar has been elected as the Operating Board Member for Large Member Category; he was formerly the Alternate for the Large Member Category. Jason Kintner is the new alternate Board Member for the Large Member Category.

**2. Agenda/Minutes**

- a) The **April 6, 2023** minutes were **approved 6-0**.
- b) The **May 11, 2023** agenda was **approved 6-0**.

**3. Old Business**

**3a) 2024-2029 Capital Improvement Plan**

Maura Patterson, SPU Drinking Water Planning and Policy Advisor, answered questions and shared additional information on the Capital Improvement Plan for the Operating Board's annual review process. Following the presentation, the Operating Board members voted to indicate that the 2024-2029 Regional CIP review process was complete for this year.

**4. New Business**

**4a) Mercer Island Slough Pipeline Disconnect**

Alex Chen, Deputy Director of SPU's Water Line of Business and Shared Services Branch, shared information on recent work to disconnect a pipeline segment that extends across the Mercer Slough. A question was raised about communication with the public during the disconnect. Jason Kintner relayed

that Mercer Island provided information through a variety of channels. He also reported that the community responded well (e.g., reduced water usage when asked) and was positive about the transparency of communications.

A question was raised around the crews that complete annual valve exercising and meter testing, and how SPU coordinates with wholesale customers during valve exercises. Alex Chen shared that SPU is re-evaluating its valve exercising program, which is completed by transmission pipe crews as O&M, and how it communicates with wholesale customers during the valve exercises. A different set of crews test the wholesale meters.

Another question was raised about hydrant inspections and pressure spikes that can occur and what SPU experiences. Alex Chen responded that hydrant inspections are a work in progress, noting that some purveyors conduct the inspections themselves and some have their local fire department conduct the inspections to raise their familiarity with the hydrants. In Seattle, the Fire Department inspects the hydrants, and SPU completes any required repairs. Seattle does receive complaints when some hydrants are tested, and water quality is impacted (e.g. increased turbidity or customer experience changes in pressure). SPU has developed a video on the proper way to inspect a hydrant that SPU can share with the Operating Board upon request.

Finally, there was a discussion regarding overall emergency response/incident command, as a good learning opportunity for Operating Board members. Alex Chen said that SPU would share what our incident command system looks like at the August 3<sup>rd</sup> Operating Board meeting and invited others to share their plans/experiences. He also shared that an SPU-only emergency goes through our Departmental Operations Center. When an emergency goes citywide, it shifts to our City Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Jason Kintner shared that Mercer Island's EOC helps triage communication with customers. He also recommended that everyone review their EOC manuals.

#### **4b) 2023 Wholesale Customer Annual Survey**

Kelly O'Rourke, Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) Water Conservation Manager shared the results from the 2023 Annual Survey. There was a question about including the length of distribution pipe to the survey and an evaluation of geographic distribution to help explain the variation in rates and bills to customers. Kelly responded that it is likely better to add information about that context to the report and presentation, rather than attempt to obtain pipe length information from each utility.

#### **4c) Spring Water Supply Update**

John Edgerly, Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) Water Resources Hydrologist, provided a water supply update sharing details about how the winter weather we have had is shaping our water supply for 2023.

#### **4d) Rate Study**

Alex Chen and Regina Carpenter shared a summary of information on SPU's plan to continue to defer completing a rate study and answered questions. A discussion ensued about how to stabilize rates without accumulating such a large true-up balance (such as more frequent rate studies), or other ways to predict costs more accurately so we do not over collect. Some suggestions included a more refined CIP budget or better usage data. Regina Carpenter shared that more frequent rate studies may not offer better accuracy, noting that in the past there have been years when costs were very close to what was predicted, and the True Up balances were driven by unanticipated shifts in water usage. More recently, the largest driver of the True Up balance is the continued strong pace of Facilities Charges. There was also some discussion about where the \$45M True Up balance lives; is it a separate pool of cash within

the Seattle Water Utility. Other members expressed concern about not having fund reserves if the true-up balance is eliminated. Regina Carpenter explained that the true-up balance is not in a segregated account, and the Water Fund has other operational funds/reserves outside of the true-up balance as required.

**5. Executive Summaries & Other Business**

- **Water Consumption from Watersheds vs. Rate Studies** – Alex Chen went over the graphs on Attachment 5a relaying that water sales are on track.
- **Water Supply Update** – Alex did not cover, given John Edgerly’s detailed presentation.

**6. Future Meetings**

Kathy Curry provided reminders for the following upcoming Operating Board meetings:


- June 1 – Remote online regular monthly meeting (1 to 3 pm)
- July 6 – Remote online regular monthly meeting (1-3pm)
- August 3 – Remote online regular monthly meeting (1 to 3 pm)

**7. Good of the Order** – none raised.

- Alex Chen mentioned the puncture into the 36” Cedar Supply Line by a contractor due to a locate error. He will bring more back to the Operating Board next month.
- Alex Chen also raised the decision by the Department of Labor & Inspections to allow laborers to continue to work on ductile pipes using the laborer rate and not the interior plumber rate.

**Board meeting was adjourned at 2:58 p.m.**

**Approved by:**

  
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**Chair, Jeremy Delmar**  
**Seattle Water Supply System Operating Board**

6/7/23  
**Date**