

**Sweetened Beverage Tax Community Advisory Board (CAB)**  
**Meeting Notes**

<b>MEETING SUMMARY</b>	<p><b>Date:</b> June 16, 2023</p> <p><b>Time:</b> 9am – 11am</p> <p><b>Location:</b> Virtual</p>
<b>MEMBERS PRESENT:</b>	Barbara Rockey, Bilan Aden, Christina Wong, Dan Torres, Jen Moss, Kristin Sukys, Munira Mohamed, Rebecca Finkel, Tanika Thompson Bird
<b>MEMBERS ABSENT:</b>	Barbara Baquero, Jaimée Marsh
<b>GUESTS:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Office of Sustainability &amp; Environment: Bridget Igoe</li> <li>• City Budget Office: Greg Shiring</li> <li>• Human Services Department: Seán Walsh</li> <li>• Department of Education &amp; Early Learning: Tiffany Lee</li> <li>• SBT Evaluation Team: Nadine Chan (Public Health – Seattle &amp; King County), Jesse Jones-Smith (UW), Leaf Neff Warner (UW), Brian Saelens (Seattle Children’s) and additional colleagues from these research institutions.</li> </ul>

<b>DECISIONS MADE</b>	None.
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**Meeting Materials:**

**Welcome and Introductions**

T. Thompson Bird, CAB Co-Chair, opened the meeting.

CAB members and City staff introduced themselves and responded to a check-in question.

There was no public comment.

**Briefing on the Evaluation of the Seattle Sweetened Beverage Tax**

Nadine Chan (Public Health – Seattle & King County), Jesse Jones-Smith (UW), Leaf Neff Warner (UW), Brian Saelens (Seattle Children’s) and additional colleagues from these research institutions gave a presentation summarizing their efforts since 2017 to evaluate the impacts of the SBT on the prices of sugary drinks, store revenues, health outcomes, and health behaviors and beliefs. In this time, the SBT evaluation team produced 13 reports and five peer-reviewed publications.

Key findings across all the evaluation studies were presented to the CAB.

- [Click here](#) for the presentation slides.
- [Click here](#) to visit the CAB’s webpage where all evaluation reports are available.

Key notes from the post-presentation Q&A:

*Question: Were you expecting bigger changes in consumption rates compared to other cities that have a tax on sugary drinks? Did anything surprise you?*

Response: We were surprised that we didn't see a bigger incremental change in consumption. We also didn't expect to see a change (in this case a decrease) in consumption in the study comparison area where there is no tax on sugary drinks.

A [separate study done in Seattle](#) that looked at sales data (different from consumption data) shows purchases of sugary drinks declined by 22% after the SBT was implemented.

Mixed findings are typical in these evaluations of sugary drink taxes, and in the Seattle case there is a disconnect in the results from studies that measured changes in consumption versus changes in sales. Consumption is notoriously difficult to measure due to the potential for bias like social desirability and mis-remembering past consumption.

Additional conversation focused on the shifting social norms around sugary drinks and the findings from the [norms and attitudes study](#) (published January 2023). This study found (among other things) that most respondents in Seattle (84%) and the comparison areas (79%) agreed with using sugary beverage tax revenues to improve food access as well as to expand services and support for young children.

## **CAB Business**

The CAB's 2023 workplan includes the following topics which were identified as priorities at its [Feb 2023 planning retreat](#):

- Updates to the CAB's existing bylaws (including decision making process), vision, and values
- Stakeholder engagement

Given the time remaining in the meeting and the CAB's discussion momentum around the results from the SBT evaluation studies, the CAB opted to use the rest of the meeting to continue discussions around stakeholder engagement. Updates to foundational documents will be addressed at a future meeting.

Notes from CAB discussion around stakeholder engagement:

Future CAB engagement should include the following messages:

- Historic volatility of the SBT Fund and its inability to keep pace with program/demand services;
- Importance of the programs/services supported by the SBT Fund
- Importance of having a protected, dedicated revenue source for these programs (look at the situation when COVID happened – instant City resources from SBT were available to support food assistance).
- “The SBT is working”. Key results from the SBT evaluation indicate:
  - SBT resulted in 22% decline in sales
  - The vast majority of Seattlites agreed with using sugary beverage tax revenues to improve food access as well as to expand services and support for young children (norms and attitudes study)
  - SBT is being used in progressive ways

Potential avenues to share these types of messages:

- Community meetings
- Letters
- Community events (health fairs, back to school events, Big Day of Play)
- Op-Ed
  - Seattle U. Social Justice departments.
  - UW
  - South Seattle Emerald
  - Crosscut
  - Seattle Times
  - The Facts
  - HKCC...Auntie Elaine
  - *Think about co-authors:* Research representative + CAB + community partner

The CAB discussed the importance of multiple points of contact and the pros/cons of potential engagement with communities outside of Seattle, i.e.:

- SBT is only in Seattle and only benefits Seattle residents;
- There is lots of fluidity throughout the region (and displacement).

The CAB discussed its role in looking for vs. pushing for other revenue sources to support SBT funded programs/services. It may pursue these tactics that were discussed at the February retreat:

- Write letters/statements to City officials:
  - Revenue Stabilization Task Force
  - City Budget Office and Mayor
  - Finance & Housing Committee (Council).

- Write and circulate an Action Alert to:
  - All SBT-funded orgs
  - Other community advocates and leaders
  - Other mission-aligned City boards and commissions.
- Publish an op-ed (nexus with 5<sup>th</sup> year anniversary topic).

There was brief discussion about the “Starbucks loophole” in the SBT which exempts syrups used in milk-based drinks. The CAB wondered how much syrup volume and tax dollars were impacted by this exemption.

The CAB discussed whether there could be a role for public-private partnerships, as well as the CAB’s role for identifying, pursuing, or recommending those partnerships and private partners.

- Example message: *This is a regressive tax which supports an argument for pooled, diverse funding sources.* (Shouldn’t rely on regressive taxes only to pay for these programs/services.)
- Frame as social impact work.
- Identify local corporations looking to do social impact work with a focus on anti-hunger/food security/food access. Example message: *Instead of setting up your own strategic impact fund, be effective and efficient and funnel through City programs.*

The CAB wondered about its boundaries in pursuing public-private partnerships and discussed the following considerations:

- Be clear on the ask.
- Be clear on the parameters of who the CAB is willing to work with.
- Be aware of real and perceived conflicts of interest (what if foundations get funding).
- Double dipping/competition (if private entity is already funding an org).
- Pay attention of what’s in it for them.

Private Entities:

- Starbucks
- United Way
- Seattle Foundation
- Inatai Foundation (formerly Group Health Foundation)
- Major food retailers
  - Safeway Foundation
  - Kroger

**-END-**