



APPROVED 9/28/22

MINUTES  
City of Tacoma  
Public Utility Board Study Session  
August 24, 2022  
3:00 p.m.

Chair Cooley called the Public Utility Board study session to order at 3:00 p.m. at the auditorium of the Public Utilities Administration Building.

**Present:** Christine Cooley, John O'Loughlin, William Bridges, Holland Cohen, Carlos Watson

**TPU Summer Internships Report**

Megan Cammarano, Power Engineer, and summer internship program coordinator, provided an overview of the TPU summer internship program and made introductions. Interns in attendance were Alex Xiong, Eddie Arenas, Ellie Elefson, Alex Geronimmo, Jayce Booker, Lucy Camblin, Marco Gunawan, and Sajid Khan. Alex Xiong demonstrated an interactive water model he built. The interns provided an overview of what they worked on this summer and highlights of summer accomplishments. The Board and Director made positive remarks about the program and accomplishments.

**Customer Service Preliminary Budget**

Francine Artis, Interim Customer Services (CS) Manager, outlined CS goals that focus on recovery and preparing for the future. These include: Continue utility account recovery efforts; Develop post-pandemic and recovery programs that help meet the needs of the community; Integrate AMI technology into CS operations and staffing; Assist customers with transition and adoption of AMI and related benefits; Document business processes for upcoming SAP customer interaction center replacement; and Improve staff retention, skill development and core strength. Ms. Artis provided an overview of the state of CS relative to revenue recovery, managing extended 24-month payment agreements, resumption of disconnects, increased customer contacts, enhanced efforts to assist income-constrained customers, advanced metering, and transition to a new CS manager. Challenges discussed were past-due utility accounts, employee recruitment and retention, and technology expectations. Budget drivers include increased wages/benefits; increased staffing, part-time, temporary, and project positions are no longer a draw in the job market; and increasing customer contacts. Ms. Artis concluded by sharing a matrix of expenses.

### **Tacoma Rail Preliminary Budget**

Dale King, Rail Superintendent, made introductory remarks. Dan McCabe, Rail CIO/CFO, outlined budget drivers and assumptions. Railcar volumes in 2022 are considered an anomaly. Intermodal volumes increased is due to larger ships and the additional south intermodal yard traffic. Commercial volumes increased in 2022. Personnel costs increased as did assessments and insurance. Budget risks and mitigation were then outlined. Risks include line haul volumes, class and comp study uncertainty, assessments, fuel expenses, and mandates. Mitigation measures include the rail volume investment fun, deferring projects and/or seek additional grant funding/financing, and fuel surcharge. Mr. McCabe detailed graphical representations of expected rate impacts, budget comparisons, budget expenditures, staffing levels, and debt service. Mr. McCabe concluded by outlining the next steps, which include presentations to the GPFC, joint meeting of the Council and Board, publishing the tariff and providing notifications on December 1 for a planned tariff effective date of January 1, 2023.

### **Strategic Directive Eight (SD8, Telecom) Affordability Access**

Sharon Brophy, Josh Newman, and Clark Mather provided the information for this update. As background, the Indefeasible Right of Use (IRU) includes a policy goal relative to equitable and affordable access, with measurement four specifying free internet access to at least 30 locations that provide service to low-income members of the community with published availability. Factors considered include broadband equity/lower opportunity areas as identified in the equity index; public sites; community safety; site security; near 24-hour access; existing service/system availability; proximity to public transportation; proximity to parks or community centers; proximity to education and service facilities; transitional housing facilities that provide single/family assistance to parents with school-age children; and homeless care facilities. Next steps in this process is coordination with Rainier Connect on system feasibility and community engagement. The next update to the Board will be provided as part of the Strategic Directive Eight update in 2023.

### **Adjournment**

The study session was adjourned at 5:09 p.m. until the September 28, 2022 for a study session beginning at 3:00 p.m.

Approved:



Christine Cooley, Chair



John O'Loughlin, Secretary