

MINUTES

Tuesday, March 13, 2018

**East Bay Municipal Utility District
Board of Directors
375 Eleventh Street
Oakland, California**

Special Meeting

President Lesa R. McIntosh called to order the Special Meeting of the Board of Directors at 8:57 a.m. in the Training Resource Center. The Board met in workshop session to receive a presentation on the District's shut-off practices and statistics, assistance provided to customers to maintain water service and avoid shut-offs, potential options for modifying shut-off practices, increased water efficiency efforts, and new initiatives to support low-income customers.

ROLL CALL

Directors John A. Coleman, Doug Linney, Frank Mellon, William B. Patterson, Marguerite Young, and President Lesa R. McIntosh were present at roll call. Director Andy Katz arrived at 9:04 a.m.

Staff present included General Manager Alexander R. Coate, General Counsel Craig S. Spencer, Director of Customer and Community Services Sherri A. Hong, Special Assistant to the General Manager Alison A. Kastama, Assistant to the General Manager Janetta M. Johnson, and Secretary of the District Rischa S. Cole.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Addressing the Board were the following: 1) Colin Murphy, Service Workers Project for Affordable Utilities and Water (SWPAUW), commented on EBMUD rates and asked the Board to place a moratorium on water shut-offs for customers living at or below the federal poverty level; 2) Murad Williams, SWPAUW, commented on EBMUD payment plans and asked the Board to place a moratorium on water shut-offs for customers living at or below the federal poverty level; 3) Charlie Sallans, SWPAUW, commented on his experience assisting customers with avoiding shut-offs and asked the Board to place a moratorium on water shut-offs for customers living at or below the federal poverty level; 4) Paul Sanford, SWPAUW, commented on providing water service for the poor; 5) Lo Zamora, SWPAUW, commented on her experience helping a customer obtain water service and file an appeal for water theft penalty charges; 6) TJ Hardamon, SWPAUW, commented on the workshop staff report and moratoriums on water shut-offs; 7) Sharon Reinbott commented on ways to make water accessible to everybody; 8) Sue Coburn commented on her experience having her water shut-off and ways to provide access to water for the homeless; 9) William Coburn commented on creating programs to provide access to water for the homeless in Oakland; 10) Chris Gilbert, Sierra Club Bay Chapter Water Committee, commented on information he believed should be included in the workshop presentation;

11) Albert Kueffner, Alameda Interfaith Climate Action Network, commented the Board should consider partnering with churches to assist customers with maintaining water service; and

12) Connor Ruby, SWPAUW, commented on SWPAUW's previous attendance at Board meetings and asked the Board to seek state funding to assist low-income customers with maintaining water service.

DISCUSSION

- Filed with the Board were the following: 1) Presentation entitled "Long Term Financial Stability Workshop #2 – Shut-Offs, Water Efficiency, Program Enhancements," dated March 13, 2018; 2) Speaking notes from Colin Murphy, SWPAUW, regarding perceived affordability of your rates; 3) Speaking notes from Murad Williams, SWPAUW, regarding affordable payment plans; 4) Speaking notes from Wendell Stevens, SWPAUW, regarding affordable payment plans and fees; and 5) Speaking notes from TJ Hardamon, SWPAUW, regarding demand for an immediate moratorium on utility shut-offs for families living at or below the federal poverty level.

Manager of Customer and Community Services Sherri A. Hong thanked the speakers for their comments and announced that this workshop is the second in a series of planned workshops to discuss factors that impact affordability. Workshop #1 on November 28, 2017 discussed the District's rate structure, EBMUD billing practices, and billing for outside agencies (city and agency sewer collection service charges). She said this workshop will focus on District shut-off practices and statistics, shut-off prevention assistance and key performance indicators (KPIs), water use efficiency, current program enhancements and new initiatives to support low-income customers. She reviewed the current District process for notifying customers prior to shut-offs, delinquent account statistics for Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 and the various District programs for low-income customers. She noted the District's Customer Assistance Program (CAP) has seen growth in total and active participant enrollment since 2012 and that the District has increased its payment plan repayment period from 6 months to up to 12 months. Staff has met with the City of Oakland and will schedule meetings with other cities to discuss establishing a CAP for their sewer service charges which is an additional effort to assist customers who pay sewer service charges on their EBMUD water bills. She provided an update on water efficiency engagement initiatives, new partnerships established with community service agencies over the past year (Lava Mae, Senior Assistance Foundation East Bay, and California Emergency Technology Fund), and the District's new Water Lifeline Program in collaboration with St. Vincent De Paul of Alameda County. Next, Ms. Hong highlighted various reasons a customer may experience a shut-off, the District's shut-off rationale, and statistics showing how District programs helped reduce residential and low-income customer shut-offs between FY14-FY17. She discussed the current shut-off KPIs established to measure efforts to support customer assistance in maintaining water service and the feasibility of some alternatives staff explored in response to Board inquiries about changes to the District's shut-off practices. In conclusion, she advised staff will keep the Board apprised of discussions with cities on establishing a sewer service charge CAP and continue engaging in state affordability efforts. The planned workshop to discuss the state's Low-Income Rate Assistance Program is on hold pending release of the state's program report to the legislature. Once all Board workshops have concluded, Ms. Hong stated staff will establish a plan and schedule of modifications to be initiated, evaluate the impacts of the pilot programs put in place, and provide a report to the Board.


The Board thanked the speakers for their comments and Ms. Hong for the presentation. There was Board discussion regarding the information presented including the statistics on the CAP program, delinquent accounts, payment plans and shut-offs; staff efforts to engage cities on establishing a CAP for city sewer service charges; the terms of District contracts with cities for sewer service charge billing; retroactively applying CAP discounts; the District's current CAP for wastewater charges; partnering with St. Vincent De Paul in Contra Costa County to establish a Water Lifeline Program for that area; and the Board's desire to implement a KPI that quantitatively measures the District's progress in reducing its number of shut-offs. Board members also expressed their willingness to meet with city staff and elected officials to discuss establishing a CAP for city sewer service charges. The Board requested the following from staff:

- Provide more detail on payment plan statistics for CAP customers as outlined on presentation slide #9;
- Adjust the District's 48-hr Notice process to include notification by mail (with a notice in the envelope) and a phone call;
- Develop connections with social service agencies and provide training for staff to better support and engage with special needs customers (medical, financial or disadvantaged);
- Identify resources and provide referrals for single-family residential tenants who lose water service because their landlord has not paid the bill;
- Provide information on feasibility and cost to retroactively apply the District's CAP discount;
- Provide a cost estimate to increase the District's wastewater CAP discount from 35 percent to 50 percent; and
- Establish a KPI goal for affordability related shut-offs.

ADJOURNMENT

President McIntosh adjourned the Special Meeting at 11:20 a.m.

SUBMITTED BY:


Rischa S. Cole, Secretary of the District

APPROVED: March 27, 2018


Lesa R. McIntosh, President of the Board

