



**San Francisco Public Utilities Commission
 Citizens' Advisory Committee
 Wastewater Subcommittee**

MEETING MINUTES

**Tuesday, March 11, 2025
 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
 525 Golden Gate Ave., 3rd Floor Tuolumne Conference Room**

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 VIRTUAL CONFERENCE SOFTWARE**

Meeting URL

<https://sfwater.zoom.us/j/88513286218?pwd=fsB3EmtD8RFVeNn3sf5lb2pbzwyNzB.1>

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Meeting ID / Passcode

885 1328 6218 / 452165

Mission: The Wastewater Subcommittee shall review sewage and stormwater collection, treatment, and disposal system replacement, recycling, and other relevant plans, programs, and policies ([Admin. Code Article XV, Sections 5.140 - 5.142](#)).

Members

Amy Nagengast, Chair (D8)	Maika Pinkston (M-Enviro. Org)	Andrea Baker (B-Small Business)
Douglas Jacuzzi (D4)	Elizabeth Steele Teshara (D7)	

D = District Supervisor appointed, M = Mayoral appointed, B = Board President appointed

Staff Liaisons: Lexus Moncrease and Lupita Garcia
 Staff Email for Public Comment: cac@sfwater.org

ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. Call to order and roll call at 5:42 pm

Members present at roll call (4): Nagengast, Jacuzzi, Steele Teshara, and Baker

Members absent (1): Pinkston

Staff Present: Joel Prather, Elaine Leeming, Idil Bereket

Members of the Public: None

Daniel L. Lurie
 Mayor

Kate H. Stacy
 President

Joshua Arce
 Vice President

Avni Jamdar
 Commissioner

Steve Leveroni
 Commissioner

Dennis J. Herrera
 General Manager

OUR MISSION: To provide our customers with high-quality, efficient, and reliable water, power and sewer services in a manner that values environmental and community interests and sustains the resources entrusted to our care.



2. Approve [November 12, 2024](#) Minutes

Motion was made (Baker) and seconded (Jacuzzi) to approve the November 12, 2024, minutes.

Minutes approved without objection.

Public Comment: None

3. Report from the Chair

- Welcome members, staff, and the public
- [San Francisco files final brief in SCOTUS case](#)
- [Public Memo re CCSF v. U.S.E.P.A.](#)
- [CCSF v. U.S.E.P.A. Oral Argument Audio](#)
- [U.S. and California take Enforcement action against S.F. for Clean Water Violations](#)

Public Comment: None

4. Public Comment: Members of the public may address the Committee on matters that are within the Committee's jurisdiction and are not on today's agenda (*2 minutes per speaker*)

Public Comment: None

5. Presentation and Discussion: [WWE Wet Weather Preparations and Response](#), Joel Prather, Assistant General Manager, SFPUC Wastewater Enterprise

Resources:

- <https://sfpuc.sharefile.com/public/share/web-sf44d10c4ce0e4b4797739a84bab5490f>
- [Resources to Get You Rain Ready](#)

Presentation:

- Wet Weather Preparation and Response
- Preparation before wet weather season
- Plan, Prepare & Protect
- Preparation – Forecast Monitoring Tools
- Preparation – Storm watch
- Storm watch Activation
- Storm watch Participating Groups
- Storm watch Activation and Response
- Storm watch Activation and Response
- Storm watch Activation and Response
- Storm watch Response Communication Illustration
- Storm watch Response Field Response Illustration
- Storm watch Resource Deployment
- Questions and Discussion

Discussion:

- **Chair Nagengast** asked if tomorrow's storm would be categorized as a 1.1 inch or more.

AGM Prather responded that when staff looked at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) the estimated rain totals were just under one inch but because thunderstorms are predicted late tomorrow night, the SFPUC may deploy if it under one inch and waited for the 1 o'clock update. When that update came, they increased the forecast to 1.24 inches over the next 24 hours with thunderstorms and at that point the decision was made to activate storm watch and deploy flood barriers.

Chair Nagengast asked if the other corners flood too or if something different must be done on each corner.

AGM Prather responded that the only thing that is done differently is supply sandbags. The corner on 17th and Folsom floods the worst because it used to be a lake and the houses there, their backyards are below street level. Some of the residents have taken advantage of the SFPUC's grant program while others have done things on their own. The unfortunate reality for some of these buildings is the owners don't live in them and rent them out. The SFPUC has the impression they do not want to put an effort to take advantage of the grant program to mitigate the issues.

Member Jacuzzi commented their ground floor is lower than the street level.

AGM Prather responded that this feeds into the importance of having an ordinance passed where if someone is going to build a new building in this area, they should not be allowed to put occupancy on the ground level. San Francisco is not the only city that feels this way as similar legislation was passed down in either Belmont or Burlingame and this was in anticipation of sea level rise around the 100-year flood zone. In New Orleans, after Hurricane Katrina, houses are 30 feet up in the air, so this is not new.

- **Member Steele Teshara** asked due to the recent events with NOAA, what happens to the tracking information and has a difference been seen with this storm.

AGM Prather responded currently, no differences are noted and there are other weather tracking services, and they are relying on NOAA infrastructure to get their information, and the weathercasters are making their own predictions based on the models. We are concerned with NOAA resources being depleted because this is how we base the deployment of our resources.

- **Member Jacuzzi** asked in a storm, what the expected amount of water is to be put into the Westside combined sewer system, the cistern, and the transfer blocks and requested for a video to be presented he recorded since he walks down to Lincoln about every time there is a significant rain, and this video shows the effluent going directly into the ocean across the beach. Most frequently, particularly in Lincoln, the water heads south for up to a quarter of a mile before it goes out into the ocean, and it leaves behind a large lagoon that can last up to 2

weeks in place there. After the storms, there are children and dogs playing right in the raw sewage. The coliform levels are frequently above the 20,000 mark which the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) allowable for water contact is less than 100 and this last for several days after and there needs to be much more aggressive green infrastructure.

AGM Prather responded the Westside system is setup to drain into the Great Highway transport and the storage box is a 2-chamber box where there is a dry and wet side. During normal storm operations the dry side is getting forward pumping to the wet side from the Westside pump station to the Oceanside treatment plant. During the dry operations, it's the eastern side of the box that is pumping. When it starts raining, the east side will fill up pumping up to 40 million gallons per day (MGD) where the Oceanside Plant will begin secondary bypass and have primary treatment and will bypass another 20 MGD. At this point, it will be pushing out 60 MGD through the southwest outfall sloop traveling 3.5 miles out into the ocean. Once this fills up, the overflows will transport into the western side that are pumping directly to the sloop. In total, there is 60 MGD getting primary and secondary treatment and 60 MGD that bypasses treatment for a total of 120 MGD being pushed out. Once this system fills up and if rain is still expected to come in, the system is designed to overflow on Lincoln and Vicente near the beach. The boxes are designed to be the equivalent of a primary treatment and that is what's called out in our permit. There is a mix of raw sewage, but especially on oceanside where they have the double chambered box, there is a double weld so most of the solids should be sinking out and the floatable should be behind those baffles. There are no contact posts out there and we do have staff out there.

Chair Nagengast asked if the signage is insufficient.

Member Jacuzzi responded that the signage hasn't been touched in decades and is graffitied over, and the signage does not fix the problem. It is a national seashore that is used by thousands and is soon to become a city park where we will be dumping raw sewage.

AGM Prather further responded that there should be signs when an overflow is occurring to not to come into contact with that overflow.

Member Nagengast asked if there is a sense of how much rainfall is needed for the system to be at capacity.

AGM Prather responded that generally it's around an inch in 24 hours. Our systems are designed to handle the max 5-year storm which is about 1.3 inches over 3 hours.

- **Member Baker** asked how long a drain takes to appear on the adopt-a-drain website as her team members would like to adopt a drain.

Staff Bereket responded that if she can get the exact location. The data is refreshed weekly but there are some instances where it does take longer or just doesn't appear and the team can work with engineers to resolve the issue.

- **Chair Nagengast** asked if the SFPUC have its own emergency operation center.

AGM Prather responded we have multiple, one at the Southeast Plant, one at Griffith Yard that they usually coordinate from here and we also have PUC emergency response staff that is Josh Gale's group under the General Manager's office. They are involved in these calls and are our arm into the city's emergency department management.

- **Member Baker** commented that her office is in the Bayview that frequently experiences lots of flooding and is interested in sharing the flood insurance information through her Community-Based Organization (CBO)'s newsletter and wanted to know what the best way to get the information.

Staff Bereket responded that there is a webpage with all the resources AGM Prather presented.

Public Comment: None

6. Presentation and Discussion: [Wastewater Enterprise: Hiring Challenges and Opportunities](#), Elaine T. Leeming, Manager, Business Strategy& Performance Division, SFPUC Wastewater Enterprise

Presentation

- Wastewater Enterprise
- Wastewater Enterprise Hiring Challenges and Opportunities
- Wastewater Enterprise Organizational Chart
- Wastewater Enterprise 556 FTE / 28% Vacancy (154 Vacant Positions)
- Wastewater Industry Hiring Challenges
- Water/Wastewater Industry Mission-Critical Occupants
- Water/Wastewater Industry Mission Critical Occupations City Job Classifications
- City "Mission Critical" Positions Minimum Qualifications (MQs)
- 7372 Stationary Engineer FTEs and Vacancies
- Recruitment Opportunities
- Apprenticeship Program Local 39, Stationary Engineers
- Proposed: Stationary Engineer Operator-in-Training (OIT)/Mechanic-in-Training (MIT) Program
- Operator-in-Training Information
- Developing Training and Recruitment Partnerships
- Questions?

Discussion

- **Chair Nagengast** asked if the vacancy numbers include staff who are filling in for vacancies as an acting role while simultaneously acting in their assigned role and if these numbers only reflect Permanent Civil Service (PCS) positions.

Staff Leeming responded if someone is acting in a role, that is still just one position, and the other area not included in this is staff working in temporary positions that are either as short as a 6-month period or

usually 2–3-year periods. If someone is acting in a position, that position will still be counted towards the vacancy.

- **Member Baker** asked what is considered an appropriate vacancy rate.

Staff Leeming responded she does not have a lot of history with this data and asked SFPUC Human Resource Services (HRS) for an idea of vacancy rates in other divisions. The goal is to get it closer between 15 – 20% because there will always be some transitions on staffing. Currently, the number is higher because of challenges to make the hires happen such as the pandemic.

- **Chair Nagengast** commented for full transparency, it would be helpful to add temporary positions in the data, differentiating between PCS and temporary considering temporary are easier to fill in.

AGM Prather responded that temporary positions are not easier to fill in since they still must go through the hiring process and temporary numbers are constantly fluctuating since these positions come and go.

- **Member Jacuzzi** asked how much of the budget for 556 staff is being consumed by temporary positions and what happens to the funds that did not get spent and can it be spent somewhere else.

AGM Prather responded Wastewater Enterprise is budgeted for 556 permanent positions and there is a piece of the salary budget that is dedicated to temporary funding. The funds not spent may be spent elsewhere but there are restrictions and if it does not get spent, it goes into the “rainy day” fund. Traditionally, there is always a surplus.

- **Member Baker** commented this is a great pie chart and asked what are the qualifications that make it difficult to fill the vacant positions and who sets the minimum qualification requirements and if creating training programs closer more effective and efficient.

Staff Leeming responded we are not the only ones having hiring challenges and it is a nationwide problem and it's due to the high skill level needed since the technology that was used before has been upgraded and there are new scientific skills. People either must be trained or come from a more educated workforce that don't always fall into these positions. There are training and educational programs in the Bay Area that exist in the outer regions but are not supplying enough for the needs of all Bay Area utility agencies. The Department of Human Resources (DHR) sets these and they are based on the job classifications that they maintain. To change a minimum qualification or make any updates to a job specification is a process through DHR and often a meet and confer with the Union representing this job classification, then a process before Civil Services. Sometimes a person might have a certain background and be able to train on the job, in these cases there is a push to get a review but it's not a simple process. The training programs don't get a person to the journey-level requirement, and this is part of the problem.

- **Chair Nagengast** commented that the airport has a high level of electricians.

AGM Prather responded the airport was able to work out a deal where they got an electrician classification to work above 600 volts and at the same time changed the qualification for the City-wide electrician to below 600 volts. As the previous Maintenance Manager, this affected SFPUC crews where they were grandfathered in and saw that the airport electricians were getting paid more to essentially do the same work. Local 6, the union, agreed and the SFPUC went to DHR to ask to use the same classification as the airport. DHR responded no because it is the title is specific to the airport. SFPUC before COVID, has been working to create 7385 Utility Electrician and was approved last year. Currently, with this there is a gap that needs to be addressed since as a 7345, you are not allowed to work on voltage above 600 and are working to grandfather staff in who has already been doing the work before this position was approved.

Member Jacuzzi asked what the salary level for a 7385 Utility Electrician will be and if they can live in San Francisco.

AGM Prather responded it will be comparable to the high voltage electrician position at the airport. There is a serious issue of the cost of living in San Francisco since a lot of staff live across the Bay Bridge and during the recruitment efforts are trying to obtain folks who have roots in San Francisco.

- **Member Jacuzzi** asked if changing the hiring criteria for positions means lowering the bar.

Staff Leeming responded that what we want to do is increase the applicant pool size and this does not equal lowering the bar. It opens the door for applicants with different backgrounds such as someone with an associate degree plus some experience because with the Stationary Engineer positions, the SFPUC is learning these are becoming more technical and some current staff cannot keep up with the technical requirements that are needed to progress through the agency.

AGM Prather further responded the SFPUC is trying to align its operations with the State-issued grade so rather than have a minimum qualification, demonstrate you have a grade 1 and can get a grade 2 within your probationary period. 7372 is another position where the airport and SFPUC in addition to the Union representing this position, need to come into alignment because the airport also uses this classification. Right now, people are applying for positions that the SFPUC thinks they are qualified, but DHR does not think because they do not meet a minimum qualification of working 4 years in a treatment facility.

- **Member Baker** asked where the SFPUC is promoting the proposed training programs and if they would receive livable wages.

AGM Prather responded currently it's not being promoted since these positions have not been approved. The SFPUC is currently working

with the unions and DHR to get the positions in front of the Civil Service Committee and currently, the wages for these positions have not been set but it would be comparable to somewhere between the apprenticeship and journeyman level which is about \$130 -\$132k per year right now.

Staff Leeming further responded that this has been in process for over 5 years and some of the challenges are that some unions are quicker to meet than others.

- **Member Jacuzzi** asked what a certified operator is.

Staff Leeming responded a certified operator would be passing the tests that are provided by the State Water Resources Control Board. There are grades 1 through 5 that are on the operations side and the SFPUC would ideally like operators at a grade 2.

AGM Prather further responded that the different levels indicate different responsibilities for example a grade 3 can supervise and run a plant and grade 5 can run a whole facility and sign off on permits. To go up grades, it requires a combination of time and education where the more education you have the less time requirement.

Public Comment: None

7. **Staff report**

- No Full CAC on Tuesday

Public Comment: None

8. **Future Agenda Items and Resolutions**

Adopted Resolutions for Follow Up

- Resolution in Support of SFPUC Class A Biosolids Local Distribution Program [adopted August 21, 2018](#)
- Resolution in Support of Cityworks Interns Recommendations [adopted on November 21, 2017](#)
- Resolution in Support of Equitable Green Infrastructure Implementation throughout the Southeast Sector of San Francisco and throughout the City [adopted on June 20, 2017](#)
- Resolution Urging SFPUC Commission to Initiate Planning and Environmental Review for Building a New Community Center at Third and Evans and to Direct Staff to Develop an Interim Greenhouse Environmental and Workforce Development Program [adopted on October 18, 2016](#)
- Resolution Supporting the SFPUC to Conduct Robust Community Engagement to Determine the Community's Preference for Remodeling Southeast Community Facility at 1800 Oakdale or Building a New Community Center at 1550 Evans [adopted on January 19, 2016](#)

Public Comment: None

9. **Announcements/Comments** Visit www.sfpuc.org/cac for final confirmation of the next meeting date.

Public Comment: None

10. Adjournment at 7:13 pm

For more information concerning the agendas, minutes, and meeting information, please visit www.sfwater.org/cac. For more information concerning the CAC, please contact by email at cac@sfwater.org or by calling (415) 517-8465.

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