



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

MEETING AGENDA

**Tuesday, February 27, 2024
 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
 525 Golden Gate Ave., 3rd Floor Tuolumne Conference Room**

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Meeting URL

<https://sfwater.zoom.us/j/89366080258?pwd=aWloSFJ5Qnp4a1F1RDBlWGZwSTloUT09>

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Meeting ID / Passcode

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Mission: The Water Subcommittee reviews water supply system reliability, water conservation, recycling, regional cooperation efforts, and other relevant plans and policies. ([Admin Code 5.140-142](#))

Members:

Jennifer Clary (Chair) (D11)	Suki Kott (D2)	Amy Nagengast (D8)
Nicole Sandkulla (M-Reg'l Water Customers)	Eliahu Perszyk (M-Large Water User)	Douglas Jacuzzi (D4)

D = District Supervisor appointed, M = Mayor Appointed, B = Board President appointed

Staff Liaisons: Lexus Moncrease and Sharon Liu-Bettencourt
 Staff Email for Public Comment: cac@sfwater.org

London N. Breed
 Mayor

Tim Paulson
 President

Anthony Rivera
 Vice President

Newsha K. Ajami
 Commissioner

Sophie Maxwell
 Commissioner

Kate H. Stacy
 Commissioner

Dennis J. Herrera
 General Manager

ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Members present at roll call: (5) Clary, Kott, Perszyk, Nagengast, and Jacuzzi

Members Absent: (1) Sandkulla

2. Approval of the [October 24, 2023](#), Minutes

Motion was made (Jacuzzi) and seconded (Perszyk) to approve the October 24, 2023 Minutes.



AYES: (5) Clary, Kott, Perszyk, Nagengast, and Jacuzzi

NOES: (0)

ABSENT: (1) Sandkulla

Public Comment: none

3. Report from the Chair

- Chair welcomes committee members, staff, and the public

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:

- **Peter Dreke** commented that at today's SFPUC meeting the commissioners voted 3 to 2 to reinstate remote public comments.

5. Presentation and Discussion: [Affordability](#), Erin Corvinova, Financial Planning Director, SFPUC Financial Services

Presentation

SFPUC Affordability Policy

Need for Affordable Metrics and Target

Old Affordability Metric and Target

Key Considerations in Developing Policy

Affordability Evaluation Process

Income: Alternatives to the Median

Income: Consider Racial Equity

Income: Recommend Two Metrics

Water/Sewer Target: Recommendation

Water & Sewer Typical and Low-Income Household Affordability Metric & Target

Water & Sewer Typical Low-Income Discounted Affordability Metric & Target

Hetch Hetchy Power Typical and Low-Income Discounted Affordability Metrics

CleanPowerSF Affordability Metrics

Questions & Discussions

Discussion:

- **Staff Corvinova** presented that at the end of 2023 The PUC had over 6,000 single family water sewer accounts and over 2,000 Hetch Hetchy Power accounts that were carrying delinquent balances.

Member Nagengast asked what that amount is in percentage.

Staff Corvinova responded it's a small percentage of accounts and that there are 180,000 water sewer accounts and around 110,000 are single-family residential. She further responded that there is a larger percentage of Hetch Hetchy Power accounts though because the

customer base is small, and a lot of their residential customers are in low income housing and explicitly low income.

- **Member Clary** asked if those customers had access to the CARES program.

Staff Corvinova responded that CARES is under CleanPowerSF but that Hetch Hetchy Powers has its own discount program and many of these customers are already enrolled.

- **Staff Corvinova** presented on the process of developing, operating, and capital budgets as well as the 10 Year Financial Plan. She commented that they plug the numbers into their rate models and figure out what rate increases, percentage increases per year is necessary to cover expenses and comply with their financial policy. She said they then figure out what percentage of the Water Sewer bill is of 2 combined household incomes with the new rate increase and see if that percentage is over or under the target. Staff Corvinova continues that if the rate goes over target, they must provide justification to the Commission on increasing the rate to an amount over target as well as provide ways they will try and bring the rate down, and usually, it's something 10, 15 years out that exceeds the affordability target, so, this serves as an early warning system that rates are going to become less affordable unless something is done. This is meant to be an iterative process that is reported to the public.

Member Nagengast asked if this is just policy to set rates and she wanted to clarify that this does not look at the people who are part of the affordability program or other pieces of implementation or operative operationalizing.

Staff Corvinova responded yes with the caveat that they do look at the average bill for a customer enrolled in the discount program., but this does not include how many people the discount program reaches, what the collection process is and whose power and water is getting shut off.

- **Member Clary** asked where the affordability metric come in during the evaluation process.

Staff Corvinova directed Member Clary to slide and showed the calculations compared to the targets. She responded if they're over target, they come up with a strategy to deal with it.

- **Staff Corvinova** presented that for the 40th percentile income they do not want the combined water and sewer bill to exceed 3% of their income. The number is 7% for a low-income household and 5\$ for households in the discount programs.
- **Member Nagengast** asked if that's based off annual income.

Staff Corvinova responded that is correct, they look at annual income and annual bill.

- **Member Kott** asked if we could go back to slide deck 10 as she had a question and said it looks like the amount you pay for wastewater is

roughly equal to the amount of water used however, as we go into the future wastewater becomes a bigger part of the bill. Member Kott commented she wanted to know why that's the case.

Staff Corvinova responded that it's not because we assume people will be using more wastewater in the future but because out cost for treating a gallon of wastewater is going up astronomically, and its based on metered water usage and how much goes into irrigation versus wastewater.

- **Member Nagengast** wanted to confirm that we have not done a capital program for wastewater yet but that we have done a capital program for water and the water capital program was shared with other agencies.
- **Member Perszyk** commented it looks like stormwater charges are going up as well.

Staff Corvinova responded that stormwater charges are separated.

Member Perszyk reiterated that stormwater charges are set to increase significantly in the next 5-10 years.

Staff Corvinova responded that part of the graph is the increase in stormwater charges. She said it was already part of what you were paying for, they're just now separating it out. She continued by saying the two big drivers of the pay increase is 1) a couple of really expensive projects in relation to algae blooms in the bay and the need for nutrient reductions in order to prevent algae blooms and 2) another big project to deal with the outfalls that we discharge our sewage through. Staff Corvinova commented that these are both billion-dollar projects and the charges are shared over San Francisco, it comes out to around \$5 billion over 850,000 people.

- **Member Perszyk** commented that while he appreciates the effort to manage rates for low-income households, it still feels like a lot of money for these households. He asked if there are options for demand charges in water like there is in power, so, if your household uses above a certain threshold, it becomes more expensive.

Staff Corvinova responded there is already a tiered water rate, however California has extremely strict laws regarding justifying the difference between rates and we have already been sued and lost lawsuits regarding the tiered water rates, and a result, tier 1 and tier 2 water rates are similar in price.

- **Member Clary** commented that San Francisco doesn't have a big bump in summer usage.

Staff Corvinova responded that's one of the reasons we can't justify higher tiered rates, and that we don't need to build our systems to handle a huge spike in the summer. She continues that we don't have a ton of irrigation and we have smaller households compared to the rest of the states.

- **Member Jacuzzi** asked why lower income households pay a higher portion of their income compared to 40th percentile households.

Staff Corvinova responded that it's because their incomes are so low, we can't afford to have them pay only 3% of their incomes and we wish we could have a sliding scale where you paid a lower percentage based on income, but we can't afford an income-based rate like that. She continues that the 7% and 5% numbers looked at a bunch of studies done by industry groups and was compared to cost of living, relative income and income inequality, and we decided that 7% in the rest of the country was equivalent to 5% in San Francisco, so there is no right answer to what's adorable, It's a policy call.

- **Member Nagengast** asked if the team talked to customers who are low-income or on the discount program or if they could talk to those customers. She hopes we can talk to customers, engage, outreach and figure out what it's like for these customers.

Staff Corvinova responded they had done surveys based on their billing program and how the discount programs work. However, everyone always says their bill is too high and they would like to pay as little as possible and it's really challenging to design a metric based on that feedback.

- **Member Nagengast** asked if there is was a way to design a survey that took more opinions into consideration and she feels that the current systems feel too analytical and is missing the human touch of the people who live in San Francisco. She asked if there a way to tie this better into the people who live here. Member Nagengast further commented that she understands it's a gut call, but she wishes it took more people into account.
- **Member Kott** asked what assumptions they make about participation in the assistance program during budgeting.

Staff Corvinova responded that they identified a series of funding sources for their assistance program and they even revised the discount and raised the percentage based on the funding, however they don't have as much enrollment as they had hoped for, so they haven't used all the money yet. She continued that neither of the graphs incorporate what percentage of people are enrolled.

- **Member Clary** asked how many renters are paying through pass through and if that means a large percentage of our bill is debt.

Staff Corvinova responded that pass through only applies to rent control tenants and anyone who has signed a new lease is paying the full water bill, however the rent board does not collect data on how many people uses pass through. She continues, we have used the census to try and get an idea of the numbers by asking questions like "Do you pay you water bill", "How much is it", "Do you pay it to your landlord, the utility company or not at all?" We've also hired consultants to do analysis on direct customers versus non direct customers and this presentation is based off direct customers.

Public Comment:

- **Peter Drekmeier** commented that Erin and Lauren Bush did a great job on the budget. He said that they inherited a lot of deferred maintenances from the past 50 years. He said he cc'd the committee members in his comments to the commission but wanted to address a few points here. The operating budget is expected to increase 18% in the next 2 years. The SFPUC is currently has \$8.5 billion in debt. To put in perspective, the water system improvement program is said to cost \$4.8 billion. The 10-year capital plan has increased by \$3 billion since last year, sitting at \$11.8 billion. Last year the combined water and sewer bills were projected to be \$305 a month and now looking up 20 years, there's a 43% increase to \$436 a month. By 2034, the debt service will increase to be 54% of the water budget and 58% of the wastewater budget. Most of the income will be going to debt. He also believes we will exceed the affordability limit sooner than projected because he does not think the demand and sales projections are accurate. Last year water sales were almost tied with the all-time low and the California department of finance projects California, including San Francisco, will grow a lot more slowly. The water enterprise that creates the urban water management plan has had projections that are over the actuals by around 25%. The SFPUC made a lot of mistakes in the past by investing in alternative water supplies. If we were to build all the alternative water supplies, we would double the budget and the debt of the SFPUC. He believes it's critical to come up with real projections on how much water is needed so we don't overinvest.

6. **Presentation and Discussion:** [Tuolumne River Voluntary Agreement: Current Progress and Predicted Success](#), Eli Perszyk, Water CAC Member, Amy Nagengast, Water CAC Member

Presentation

Tuolumne River Voluntary Agreement: Current Progress and Predicted Success

SFPUC: Current Actions

TRVA Flow Measures

TRVA Flow Measures: Inundated Rearing Habitats

TRVA Non Flow Measures: Gravel Augmentation and Cleaning

TRVA Non Flow Measures: Lower Tuolumne Habitat Restoration

TRVA Non Flow Measures: Predation Control

Other Proposed Measures for Improving Unimpaired Flows: Alternative Water Supply (SFPUC)

Other Measures for Improving Unimpaired Flows: Los Vaqueros Storage

Other Measures for Improving Unimpaired Flows: Expansion of Calaveras Reservoir (SFPUC)

2045 Needs- Alternative Water Supply Potential

Other Proposed Measures for Improving Unimpaired Flows:

Groundwater Water Banks

Work Cited

Discussion

- **Member Perszyk** presented on the salmon life cycle. He talked about how salmon need sufficient instream water flows and temperatures and how the current approach makes it so that there are slow flow areas with higher water temperatures. He continues that in these areas, babies mix with adults which doesn't happen in natural habitats.

- **Member Kott** asked what happens in a pulse flow.

Member Perszyk responded and explained that when you get a big water flow down the river, you get deeper water, colder temperatures and this creates a more natural habitat. He further explains that in a natural habitat, big water flows create marshes that are perfect for baby salmon.

- **Member Nagengast** commented that the presentation talks about different flow measures, like base flows, which is like the yearly minimum, and also Pulse flows which are short duration flows with lots of water.
- **Member Kott** asked if this made it harder for the water already in the basin.

Member Perszyk responded that this is what happens in nature during a big storm.

- **Member Nagengast** commented that spill management is when all of the water storage is full, and everything is overtopping and this means there will be a lot of water for a long time. She continues that these three types of flow are a good way to think about flow management.
- **Member Perszyk** presented on how we're modifying river floors by adding gravel and cleaning sediment because salmon make their nests out of gravel. He said there's inconclusive data as to if this works or not. He asks is this effective or is this just so we can say we're doing something to help the salmon.

Member Nagengast commented that this means they must put money into cleaning the gravel as well.

Member Perszyk responded that if we left the gravel there, it would become sediment without water flow.

- **Member Kott** asked if this worked in other rivers.

Member Perszyk responded that it hasn't really worked anywhere and if there's no waterflow, adding gravel just creates more sediment.

- **Member Perszyk** commented that the intent in this presentation is to comprehensively cover flow solutions, what issues affect the salmon and steel head populations, what are the flow and non-flow measures and what are some projects that could potentially result in increased stream flows. He asks how can the SFPUC further increase stream flows in the Tuolumne River.

Member Nagengast commented that there is a dire problem with the rainbow trout and the physical environment in the Tuolumne River. She believes there's absolute consensus that we need to do more to help the physical environment in the Tuolumne Rivers and the challenge here is the balance between guaranteed water to the irrigation districts

versus making sure the fish has enough water. Member Nagengast asks what is the impact to making physical changes in the river and what is the flow required to help, what is the demand projection for how much flow we can release down the river, we don't want to run out of water, how demand is there is San Francisco, how do we meet the constituent demands for water, how can we predict for the future when hatcheries have occurred, predation occurs, and climate change happens.

- **Member Clary** asked Member Nagengast and Member Perszyk if they had insight on what this committee should do to follow-up.

Member Perszyk responded that there is no analysis of how much more in-stream flow the storage projects could have an impact on and the SFPUC isn't taking on additional analysis of what we could do to increase in stream flows either with alternative water supply projects, storage or through groundwater banking., and Urban water supply is fixed, we can't really switch our crops, so SFPUC could do more analysis.

- **Member Clary** commented that we can ask for increases in stream flows as a consideration for future projects.
- **Member Kott** asked if we could ask for cost benefit analysis of the projects.
- **Member Perszyk** commented that the alternative water supply projects are very expensive. He also states that he doesn't think SFPUC budging on the concept of reducing water storage years. He thinks we should focus on alternative water supplies, storage, and ground water banking.
- **Member Nagengast** commented that we should ask for the various demand projections of these projects and how those changes with demand and efficiency increases over the next 10 years or so.

Member Clary commented that conservation is not part of the scenario, it is the scenario and that is why we use what we use now.

Member Nagengast commented that efficiency is also important.

Member Clary responded that she sees conservation and efficiency as the same thing.

Member Nagengast responded that she feels like efficiency and conservation is different and believes conservation is a behavior changes while efficiency is an equipment change.

Member Clary responded she'll change her language, but efficiency is what's driving right now, and conservation drives in a drought.

Member Nagengast commented that it comes down to how efficient we can be in the next 10 years.

Member Clary commented we can ask more specific questions in our next review.

Member Nagengast commented that we also don't know what the population growth might look like in a couple of years and then we need to add in conservation in wet years versus in dry years.

- **Member Clary** commented that the drought scenario is irrelevant because current state statute requires a 5-year drought plan as part of your urban water management plan and it doesn't matter if you're in the middle of a drought, you still need the plan. She said it's difficult to plan for fish right now because we've technically been in a two-decade drought. We have a wet year every 6 or 7 years when we really need 3 wet years in a row. Member Clary continues that if we don't know how to make our alternative water supply useful during a drought, we should not be investing in it. She states she is not a fan of more storage as San Francisco is one of the most storage dependent water agencies in the state. Which alternative is most efficient and how do we assign this water to flows?

Member Perszyk commented that should ask for this analysis from the SFPUC.

- **Member Jacuzzi** asked about the 2045 graph and said it doesn't include any local groundwater banking.

Member Perszyk responded he didn't make the chart, it's SFPUC chart.

- **Member Clary** commented there's two groundwater supplies in SFPUC, the in city one which doesn't count towards this number and the regional one which has already been implemented.

Member Perszyk responded that we should ask SFPUC as well as asking about stormwater and green infrastructure projects and grants. He continued we should ask for a cost benefit analysis for increase in in-stream flows to the Tuolumne River.

Member Clary commented that San Francisco is tied to two separate agriculture districts and in situations like this agriculture districts tend to delay. She continues that the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act is going to force the retirement of about a million acres of land in the San Joaquin Valley. Member Clary asks how is changing management in the valley going to change the in-stream flows.

- **Member Perszyk** commented that as a committee we only have oversight over the SFPUC.

Public Comment:

- **Peter Drekmeier** said that in 2008 the US Fish and Wildlife Services did a limiting factor analysis for the Tuolumne River. They found that temperature and rearing habitat for juvenile fish were the most prominent limiting factors. Gravel addition would only be important

after addressing the other limiting factors. There are rotary screws on two locations in the river that count the fish. They count that there's only 4% or 5% survival rate for the baby fish. In wet years, the survival rate jumped to 32%. How do we balance the needs between human and ecological needs. We didn't release water into the river even when there was water, we hoarded water behind dams instead. He feels the SFPUC should produce 25 Mgds of alternative water supplies.

- **Emma Brown** said the groundwater recharge slide was interesting, it was proposed by someone from the California Sports Fishing Protection Alliance. She said she was leaning towards alternative water supplies but she's not so sure now.

7. Staff Report

Public Comment: None

8. Future Agenda Items and Resolutions

Standing Subjects

- Groundwater
- Water Quality

Specific Subjects

- Green Infrastructure - *Tentatively WW Topic*
- Integrating Tribal Leaders into SFPUC Land Management Decisions
- State Board Water Rights
- Water Enterprise Environmental Stewardship Policy Implementation Report
- Debate about Bay Delta – Member Sandkulla suggested everyone watch the February 5, 2021, Commission workshop about the Voluntary Agreement
- COVID and Long-term Affordability Program
- Implementation of the Bay Delta Plan Flow Requirement
- Hetch Hetchy Water and Power Division Update
- State Policy and Programs on Affordability or Low-Income Rate Assistance (LIRA)
- Bay Delta Plan and voluntary settlement agreement
- Legislative Update
- State of the Regional Water System Report – Bi-annual report
- Drought resilience: 3-year water supply update
- Water Equity and Homelessness
- State of Local Water Report
- Retail Conservation Report
- Harry Tracy Water Treatment Plant tour

Adopted Resolutions for Follow Up

- Resolution in Support of a Resilient Water Supply [adopted August 17, 2021](#)
- Resolution in Support of the Southern Skyline Boulevard Ridge Trail Extension Project [adopted April 20, 2021](#)
- Resolution in Support of Interim Emergency Rate Assistance Program and Revised Community Assistance Program [adopted July 21, 2020](#)
- Resolution in Support of Improved Communications Related to the San Francisco Groundwater Supply Project [adopted August 21, 2018](#)
- Resolution in Supporting Stewardship and Public Access in the Redeveloped Lake Merced West Property [adopted in March 15, 2016](#)

- Resolution on Impacts of Drought on System Maintenance and Improvements [adopted January 19, 2016](#)

Public Comment: None

- 9. Announcements/Comments** Please visit www.sfpuc.org/cac for final confirmation of the next scheduled meeting, agenda, and materials.

Public Comment: None

10. Adjournment

Motion was made (Clary) and seconded (Nagengast) to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:00 pm.

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

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