



LAKE WHATCOM WATER & SEWER DISTRICT

1220 Lakeway Drive
Bellingham, WA, 98229

(360) 734-9224
Fax 738-8250

MEMORANDUM

Date: August 5, 2020
From: Lake Whatcom Water & Sewer District
RE: Meeting Procedures During the Covid-19 Emergency

Lake Whatcom Water & Sewer District continues to operate under adjusted procedures in order to provide continuous service to our customers. That said, we are taking precautions in an effort to protect the health and safety of our staff, commissioners, and customers. Our lobby is currently closed to the public, and we are practicing social distancing guidelines as suggested by Governor Inslee and the CDC.

For the foreseeable future, Commissioners will be attending regular meetings by phone. Per Governor Inslee's [Proclamation No. 20-28.3](#) amending his Stay Home, Stay Health proclamation, the District will provide access to interested public via phone/internet utilizing the GoToMeeting platform.

If you would like to attend the August 12 regular meeting, details can be found below. In this evolving climate, we are committed to doing everything possible to provide opportunity for public comment as well as promote health and safety. As such, the District requests that if possible, public submit comments in written form by noon the day before a scheduled meeting for inclusion in the meeting discussion.

We appreciate your understanding and patience during these uncertain times. If you have any questions, please contact Administrative Assistant Rachael Hope at rachael.hope@lwwsd.org or 360-734-9224.

8.12.20 EUMA Work Session & Regular Board Meeting

Wed, Aug 12, 2020

5:30 PM - 6:30 PM (PDT) – Effective Utility Management Self-Assessment Work Session

6:30 PM (PDT) – Regular Board Meeting

Please join my meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone.

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WORK SESSION OF THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

AGENDA

August 12, 2020

5:30 p.m. – Work Session

1. CALL TO ORDER
2. SPECIFIC ITEMS OF WORK
 - A. Effective Utility Management Self-Assessment
3. ADJOURNMENT



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MEMORANDUM

To: District Board and Staff

Date: May 7, 2020

From: Justin Clary, General Manager

RE: Effective Utility Management Assessment

The Effective Utility Management (EUM) assessment process has been developed by industry professionals to help water and wastewater utilities make informed decisions and practical, systematic changes to enhance level-of-service and achieve excellence in utility performance. The process provides a practical approach to assessing, managing, and measuring a utility's performance through identification of opportunities and challenges that allows for developing an action plan for areas requiring additional focus. Ten *attributes* are identified within the EUM assessment process that comprise a comprehensive framework related to operations, infrastructure, customer satisfaction, community sustainability, natural resource stewardship, and financial performance of a water and/or wastewater utility. The ten attributes are:

- Product Quality
- Customer Satisfaction
- Employee & Leadership Development
- Operational Optimization
- Financial Viability
- Infrastructure Strategy & Performance
- Enterprise Resiliency
- Community Sustainability
- Water Resource Sustainability
- Stakeholder Understanding & Support

It is my intent to engage board, management, and all staff in the completion of the assessment process so that we may gain a comprehensive understanding of how the District's performance of each of the ten attributes are viewed relative to each other by each group (board, management, and staff), and as-a-whole. This will allow for identifying any significant differences in perception of District performance specific to each attribute between the groups, so that we may all gain a better understanding of others' perspectives. Ultimately, the assessment process should allow for the identification and prioritization of specific attributes to focus the District's resources on improving (i.e., strategic level-of-service enhancement).

Ten Attributes of Effective Utility Management

Following identifies and defines the ten attributes that will be assessed specific to the District's performance. Please note that the following definitions were taken directly from the EUM

guidance document; therefore, some of the references do not specifically apply to the District's operations (e.g., wastewater treatment), but have been retained to provide context.

- **Product Quality.** Produces “fit for purpose” water and other recovered resources (e.g., energy, nutrients, biosolids) that meet or exceed full compliance with regulatory and reliability requirements and consistent with customer, public health, ecological, and economic needs. Products include treated drinking water, treated wastewater effluent, recycled water, stormwater discharges, and recovered resources.
- **Customer Satisfaction.** Provides reliable, responsive, and affordable services in line with explicit, customer-derived service levels. Utilizes a mix of evolving communication technologies to understand and respond to customer needs and expectations, including receiving timely customer feedback and communicating during emergencies. Provides tailored customer service and outreach to traditional residential, commercial, and industrial customers, and understands and exercises as appropriate the opportunities presented by emergent customer groups.
- **Employee Leadership and Development.** Recruits, develops, and retains a workforce that is competent, motivated, adaptive, and safety-focused. Establishes a participatory, collaborative organization dedicated to continual learning, improvement, and innovation. Ensures employee institutional knowledge is retained, transferred, and improved upon over time. Emphasizes and invests in opportunities for professional and leadership development, taking into account the differing needs and expectations of a multi-generational workforce and for resource recovery operations. Establishes an integrated and well-coordinated senior leadership team.
- **Operational Optimization.** Ensures ongoing, timely, cost-effective, reliable, and sustainable performance improvements in all facets of its operations in service to public health and environmental protection. Makes effective use of data from automated and smart systems, and learns from performance monitoring. Minimizes resource use, loss, and impacts from day-to-day operations, and reduces all forms of waste. Maintains awareness of information and operational technology developments to anticipate and support timely adoption of improvements.
- **Financial Viability.** Understands and plans for the full life-cycle cost of utility operations and value of water resources. Establishes and maintains an effective balance between long-term debt, asset values, operations and maintenance expenditures, and operating revenues. Establishes predictable rates—consistent with community expectations and acceptability—adequate to recover costs, provides for reserves, maintains support from bond rating agencies, plans and invests for future needs, taking into account affordability and the needs of disadvantaged households. Implements sound strategies for collecting customer payments. Understands the opportunities available to diversify revenues and raise capital through adoption of new business models, including revenues from resource recovery.
- **Infrastructure Strategy and Performance.** Understands the condition of and costs associated with critical infrastructure assets. Plans infrastructure investments consistent

with community needs, anticipated growth, system reliability goals, and relevant community priorities, building in a robust set of adaptation strategies (e.g., for changing weather patterns, customer base). Maintains and enhances the condition of all assets over the long-term at the lowest possible life-cycle cost and acceptable risk consistent with customer, community, and regulator-supported service levels. Assures asset repair, rehabilitation, and replacement efforts are coordinated within the community to minimize disruptions and other negative consequences.

- Enterprise Resiliency. Ensures utility leadership and staff work together internally, and coordinates with external partners, to anticipate, respond to, and avoid problems. Proactively identifies, assesses, establishes tolerance levels for, and effectively manages a full range of business risks (include interdependencies with other services and utilities, legal, regulatory, financial, environmental, safety, physical and cybersecurity, knowledge loss, talent, and natural disaster-related) consistent with industry trends and system reliability goals. Plans for and actively manages around business continuity.
- Community Sustainability. Takes an active leadership role in promoting and organizing community sustainability improvements through collaboration with local partners (e.g., transportation departments, economic development organizations, watershed and source water protection groups). Manages operations, infrastructure, and investments to support the economic, environmental, and social health of its community. Integrates water resource management with other critical community infrastructure, social and economic development planning to support community-wide resilience, support for disadvantaged households, community sustainability, and livability.
- Water Resource Sustainability. Ensures the availability and sustainable management of water for its community and watershed, including water resource recovery. Understands its roles in the complete water cycle, understands fit for purpose water reuse options, and integrates utility objectives and activities with other watershed managers and partners. Understands and plans for the potential for water resource variability (e.g., changing weather patterns, including extreme events, such as drought or flooding), and utilizes as appropriate a full range of watershed investment and engagement strategies (e.g., integrated planning). Engages in long-term integrated water resource management, and ensures that current and future customer, community, and ecological water-related needs are met.
- Stakeholder Understanding and Support. Engenders understanding and support from stakeholders (anyone who can affect or be affected by the District), including customers, oversight bodies, community and watershed interests, and regulatory bodies for service levels, rate structures, operating budgets, capital improvement programs, and risk management decisions. Actively promotes an appreciation of the true value of water and water services, and water's role in the social, economic, public and environmental health of the community. Actively engages in partnerships, involves stakeholders in decisions that will affect them, understands what it takes to operate as a "good neighbor," and positions the District as a critical asset (anchor institution) in the community.

Next Steps

Once each group has gained an understanding of the ten attributes, I will facilitate independent meetings of each group to define each group's assessment of the District's current level of achievement specific to each attribute, and to determine each group's perspective on the rank of importance of each attribute relative to each other. The assessment results will then be evaluated by the Board to identify specific attributes that it wishes for additional focus/resources to be placed upon. Based upon Board direction, staff will then proceed with the next step in the EUM process—development of a strategic business plan that incorporates enhancement of the selected attribute(s) relative to overall District operations.