

Metro

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Metro

Minutes

Tuesday, January 9, 2024

10:30 AM

Metro Regional Center, Council Chamber,
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XzCHY_Epwac,
<https://zoom.us/j/615079992> Webinar ID: 615 079 992 or
888-475-4499 (toll free)

Council work session

10:30 Call to Order and Roll Call

Deputy Council President Hwang called the Work Session to order at 10:30 a.m.

Present: 6 - Councilor Gerritt Rosenthal, Councilor Mary Nolan, Juan Carlos Gonzalez, Christine Lewis, Duncan Hwang, and Ashton Simpson

Excused: 1 - Lynn Peterson

10:35 Work Session Topics:

10:35 Federal Legislative Affairs Update

Attachments: [Staff Report](#)
[Attachment 1](#)
[Attachment 2](#)

Deputy Council President Hwang introduced Betsy Emery present on the topic.

Staff pulled up the Federal Legislative Affairs Update PowerPoint to present to Council.

Presentation Summary:

The presenter shared the 2023 highlights for federal legislation. Betsy Emery discussed the congressional dynamics, including that there are major policy divides within and between parties. She shared what to expect for 2024, and the Metro Council federal agenda process. Emery stated that the Council will consider adoption at the 1/15 Council meeting. Emery shared the priority areas for the legislative agenda, which includes advancing equity and support, particularly for Tribal interests, affordable housing and homelessness, clean water and healthy ecosystems, economic prosperity, safe and reliable transportation, and waste management and reduction. Emery asked the Metro Council if there are any additional legislative topics the Council would like the staff to explore, and if there are

legislative positions that the Council would like staff to prioritize in 2024.

Council Discussion

Councilor Gonzalez thanked Betsy Emery for her presentation, and asked how the Council will be able to stay up to date on the Federal legislative affairs, particularly for transportation.

Betsy Emery noted that there has been a lot of discussion on the Federal level for transportation funding and stated that this is a great time to share the Council on that.

Councilor Lewis stated that she would like it to be underscored that they are part of a very broad coalition, and they are playing the part, either with multiple government entities working together, or as the only government at the table. Councilor Lewis noted that the agenda does not necessarily reflect how they are in coalition with others to invest in community needs.

Councilor Rosenthal stated that book bans should be something they are concerned about, as well as the safety of LGBTQIA people. He stated that he would like the priorities to be more specific and would like to know their points of access.

Emery responded that making sure they are at the table, as well as having those value statements, gives them the leeway to engage in those important conversations. She added that creating opportunities to engage in the conversation for the long haul is very important for their federal affairs work.

Councilor Rosenthal noted that he has concerns about

certain aspects of bills that he would like to be well-versed in. He mentioned the farm bill, stating that he wants to make sure that they have adequate health and safety measures. Councilor Rosenthal requested more information in the future about the specifics of bills as they relate to their overarching priority goals.

Councilor Simpson stated that the framework for jobs was very important in providing opportunities for people to get into the workforce. He added that he would like more discussion on traffic fatalities, noting that they had 70 fatalities this year and that this is an issue that happens nationally. Councilor Simpson remarked that if they want multi-modal access, they also need to address the traffic fatalities.

Councilor Lewis stated that she does not think that they should deviate from their current practice of being principle-driven rather than legislative title-driven. She added that the legislative principle-driven strategy is the best way to bring their values through congress.

Deputy Council President Hwang mentioned addiction and mental health services, noting the importance of that. He also noted that this is a great agenda moving forward and underscored the importance of reduction and social safety nets to help folks with employment and defend what they already have in place.

There being no further discussion, Deputy Council President Hwang moved onto the next agenda item.

11:05 Oregon Zoo Bond Renewal: Investment Framework

Attachments: [Staff Report](#)

Deputy Council President Hwang introduced Heidi Rahn

(she/her), Zoo Director, Metro Brian Kennedy (he/him), Chief Financial Officer Andy Shaw (he/him), Director of Government Affairs & Policy Development to present on the topic.

Staff pulled up the Oregon Zoo Bond Renewal: Investment Framework PowerPoint to present to Council.

Presentation Summary:

Presenters shared the mission of the Oregon Zoo, which is to connect the community to the wonder of wildlife to create a better future for all. They highlighted the good news of new baby animals being born, new tigers and black bears, and the large turnout for the Oregon Zoo Lights. They discussed the 2008 Bond, where nearly 40% of the Oregon Zoo was updated, they focused on animal well-being and sustainability, and that all projects were completed on time and on budget. They shared their timeline for the Oregon Zoo campus plan and bond renewal, and discussed phase II, which will prioritize investment. They shared a framework for investment and discussed the recommended May 2024 Zoo Bond Renewal Measure. Presenters discussed the next steps and asked if the Council had any feedback as they are finalizing materials for a referral decision.

Council Discussion

Councilor Lewis remarked that she is extremely supportive of renewing the bond at a lower rate and noted that they still have so much to do. Councilor Lewis asked when they will see the refinement of the build-out, noting that she is interested in being less prescriptive than in the 2008 plan because they need to be more open and nimbler in this plan, but she noted that they need to discuss how they will face reconstruction.

Heidi Rahn responded that the refinement will be created four months after it passes. She added that they need to get the city permit for land use proposals, but they are trying to create flexibility while not knowing long term what species they will need to help the most. Rahn added that they will come back to Council after the city permit which will help them with the refinement.

Councilor Lewis asked if it will be done by May 21st and if they will have more detail by the fall. She mentioned that there is great importance in tribal partnerships, and asked when they will have meetings with the Tribal partnerships.

Rahn responded that they will get that done in the fall.

Andy Shaw added that they will be giving the Tribal community a tour of the Zoo soon.

Councilor Lewis responded that Metro has a way of doing things that is sometimes new to the Zoo and stated that she wants to make the impact at the right time.

Councilor Rosenthal suggested that “construction career pathways” maybe should be changed to “conservation career pathways” and noted that they should emphasize conservation as much as they can. Councilor Rosenthal asked if, when the final plan comes out, they will have both specific plans and broader ones that will be adaptable to change.

Rahn responded that yes, the specific needs will be addressed, but they also need flexibility to address what other governments and tribal groups are looking for.

Councilor Rosenthal mentioned the otter conservation,

asking if there will be a specific plan for otter restoration that will show Metro's role in that.

Rahn responded that yes, and they can come back to them on that. Rahn added that there is a Care and Conduct event as well where they will discuss this.

Councilor Gonzalez stated that he has confidence in this work plan. He mentioned the slightly lower levee that they currently have, noting that they may be reducing the burden of cost slightly. He mentioned construction career pathways, noting that they have a lot of projects ongoing right now, and stated that the benefit and value of campus improvements is crucial. Councilor Gonzalez asked if the monetary environment that they are in, in terms of interest rates, interact with the bonds.

Brian Kennedy responded that it does have an impact, and that in a relatively high interest rate environment, they built their bond based a very conservative set of assumptions. He added that they are confident that they will be able to make it work and that they may have more money to work with due to the cushion they built into the bond.

Deputy Council President Hwang asked what kind of cushion they are building in to respond to inflation to make sure they can deliver on their goals.

Kennedy responded that when they sized the bond, they knew they could not accomplish everything, and that they had to recognize where the Zoo should prioritize their very important projects. He added that higher interest rates are a challenge, but they can also be used for interest earnings as well.

Rahn added that they have done their planning up front, and as part of the campus plan project, they hired a construction cost estimating firm who used cost escalation that the industry uses, so they can apply the cost escalation rates they found to later dates.

Councilor Simpson mentioned contingency rates and noted that he has full support of this referral and the Zoo improvements because it is so important to families. Councilor Simpson also thanked Rahn for coming to the East County Mixer and it was great to know that the Zoo cares about the East County.

Rahn responded that she loved going to the East County and they had a lot of enthusiasm. She added that this plan has a very strong contingency, and they have people who will be giving their expertise at every step of the way.

Deputy Council President Hwang asked what they are doing in terms of community engagement.

Rahn responded that they will follow up on that.

There being no further discussion, Deputy Council President Hwang moved onto the next agenda item.

12:00 WPES: Regional Waste Plan Progress Report

Attachments: [Staff Report](#)
[Attachment 1](#)

Deputy Council President Hwang introduced Marta McGuire (she/her), WPES Director Luis Sandoval (he/him), Principal Planner, Metro Rachel Chu (she/her), Senior Solid Waste Planner, Metro to present on the topic.

Staff pulled up the WPES: Regional Waste Plan Progress

Report PowerPoint to present to Council.

Presentation Discussion:

Presenters shared the upcoming engagements and key decisions regarding Waste Prevention and Environmental Services (WPES). They also discussed the Regional Waste Plan Progress Report, which presenters discussed the framework for measuring progress and the waste reduction and environmental impact outcome results from 2022. They discussed the outcomes and recovery goals, and their emphasis on shared prosperity, a healthy environment, and an excellent, accessible, and resilient garbage and recycling system. Presenters shared a decision roadmap, as well as the key decisions of the systems facilities plan, the FY24-25 budget, and key policy items. They discussed their priorities and outcomes, and how they will be measuring environmental impact. They highlighted the median hourly wage of Metro solid waste workers, noting that white workers, on average, make more money than people of color in these jobs. Presenters discussed next steps and asked the Council what results resonated with them, what results the Council would like to share with others and requested feedback.

Council Discussion

Councilor Nolan mentioned the waste reduction emissions, noting that there has been a cost by hauling companies for curbside pickup. They asked what WPES is doing about what happens to user cost if they are successful in reducing the total amount of waste that gets put out on the curb.

Luis Sandoval responded that no, they do not have that level of detail for that analysis. He added that usually when people put less garbage out, they can pay less if they reduce the size of their can. He noted that for multi-family homes,

that is not the case as much as it is for single-family homes.

Councilor Nolan responded that this is something that they want them to look at. Councilor Nolan stated that if all customers got to reduce their waste into a smaller plan, the fixed costs for haulers does not go down immediately, and it will make the system raise their rates. Councilor Nolan added that they are very curious about how that will be planned for.

Councilor Simpson mentioned the pay disparities reported for people of color, asking what they are doing to help with that.

COO Marissa Madrigal responded that they are getting people into pay scales with steps for growth. She added that there is a lot of activity going into Metro to address pay equity and she would expect things to sync up after time. She also noted that workers of color have fewer tenure than white people in the same role, which changes the pay.

Councilor Rosenthal asked about access to these waste facilities, stating that they may need a goal for equitable costs for waste disposal. He noted the decisions in May with community enhancement grants, asking what it will tell them. He also mentioned how the people on the front line are not making a living wage, and asked if there is anything the Council can do to help with pay.

Marta McGuire responded that there have been actions made for self-haul services, including the systems plan that identifies how the region wants to address the gaps including self-haul service locations. She noted that they are in the process of having those conversations right now. Regarding the community enhancement program, McGuire

responded that they will be coming to Council in the spring to look at that program. She added that in 2019, they looked then to see how they can strengthen the goals and they now have a proposed evaluation plan. McGuire added that the wage issues are a larger Metro issue.

COO Madrigal stated that they made a commitment to increase the wages for people working in Metro so they can afford to live in the region and added that they are not there yet. She noted that they are trying to balance their overall finances while moving that bottom wage up.

Councilor Rosenthal added that they have made progress in wages and that there is still a lot of work to do.

McGuire added that as Metro works to close that gap for wages, within those contracts, they have wage adjustments to keep those wages consistent.

Councilor Lewis stated that she was excited about the bulky waste work that has been done. She added that she would like to see more detail on the services for waste, and that she wants to see how they will measure expanding out the project from the pilot stage. Councilor Lewis asked what they will see for bulky waste project. She also asked about emissions with bringing materials to correct disposal areas, noting that consumers often have hard-to-recycle items and must emit fossil fuels and personal time to drive to recycle hard products.

Marta McGuire noted that they will come back to Council with the results of the pilot in the spring for when it is completed.

Rachel Chu added that they have not analyzed the emissions

aspect for bulky waste, but it is something they are looking into, and they will have more answers in the future.

Councilor Lewis added that they need to get ahead of that so they can ensure depots will be able to focus on specific materials.

McGuire added that the recovery rate was a way that they measured the plan, and they have been increasing investment into the reuse indicator, which is something that is newly being measured. She noted that they have a lot of work to do, and they need this data to inform policy decisions moving forward.

Councilor Gonzalez stated that there has been a lot of progress to celebrate for their 10-year plan and noted that he appreciates the stories in the report because it allows them to see the human impact of their plan. He asked about the recovery rate, mentioning that they are going in the wrong direction, and asked for the presenters to share their thoughts on that. Councilor Gonzalez additionally asked why some areas of the plan are less developed than others.

McGuire responded that it is one measure, and it does not capture the entire picture on how the materials impact the environment and people.

Sandoval added that it has declined in the last 10 years or so, and it is a mystery as to why the total amount of materials recovered has declined. He stated that some people think it is because of Operation Green Fence in China, which was implemented in 2013 to prevent the flow of contaminants into their country, which has tightened recycling markets. He noted that recycling is collected whether recycling is collected or not by China, and that

companies have found other markets for recyclables, which is why it is a bit of a mystery. He stated that the recovery rate for 2022 does not reflect the upcoming upgrades to the recycling stations, and those are expected to turn the recovery around. Sandoval also added that sometimes the recovery rate declines because some material is not disposed of due to disaster, yard, and fire debris which sometimes has an impact on the denominator.

Councilor Gonzalez stated that while it may be out of their control, they should still be tracking that progress.

McGuire added that they have two elements for their plan, one being actions related to state reduction requirements, and the second being the Council reduction requirements. She remarked that they are working with what they can do with the resources they have, and they are not seeing enough progress in some areas. McGuire added that they will circle back on this.

Councilor Nolan stated that they agree with Councilor Simpson's comments about the inequities in wages for white employees in comparison to employees of color. Councilor Nolan added that they cannot continue to take a long time to fix this issue and that they need to move their efforts to adjust that wage gap. Councilor Nolan noted that when COO Madrigal mentioned tenure, because they did not historically have participation of people of color in their organization initially, they will never catch up because their white colleagues will continue to have better pay. Councilor Nolan added that they are concerned about the discussion about providing services, noting that some customers pay higher rent than other people in other districts, and they all pay for garbage. Councilor Nolan stated that if they are looking at equity in garbage fees and services, they want to

work to account for not just what everyone pays, but what the total cost of living is.

Deputy Council President Hwang noted that he is excited about the progress that is being made.

There being no further discussion, Deputy Council President Hwang moved onto the next agenda item.

12:50 Chief Operating Officer Communication

COO Marissa Madrigal provided an update on the following events or items:

- Start Consulting is working with the Historical Memorialization Committee to shape the community engagement process. They are conducting storytelling events to give historical insight regarding the Indigenous and Japanese community's relationship with the Expo Center.
- The sports economy is supposed to grow tremendously by 2028.
- A team went to the Spokane podium and stadium, and they discussed economic generators and designing for a variety of functions. She noted that the single biggest asset that Spokane has is its building, and that while they have one building, Metro has five, so the sports tourism that they can build in the Metro Region is possible and important.

Councilor Lewis commented that the podium in Spokane has been interesting, especially because their second biggest funder is the school department, which illustrates that they can use public sectors to help them.

12:55 Councilor Communication

Councilors provided updates on the following meetings and events:

- Councilor Lewis discussed the Supportive Housing

Services Oversight Committee meeting, noting that they need to move fast to add people to the committee. She added that they are working hard on their annual report, and they should make sure to read it. She also noted that they looked at 2023 recommendations and Metro's progress, and they need more measures of success going forward.

- Councilor Gonzalez shared that Our One Act met last night, and they have not finished their work plan, but themes have been emerging that include a strong investment and methods to elevate the voices of rural communities. Councilor Gonzalez noted that transportation funding appears to be a theme this year. They have another meeting in two weeks and hope to finish the work plan.

1:00 Adjourn

There being no further business, Deputy Council President Hwang adjourned the Metro Work Session at 12:42

Respectfully submitted,



Georgia Langer, Legislative Assistant