



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

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Tuesday, July 16, 2024  
 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.**

**525 Golden Gate Ave., 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Tuolumne Conference Room**

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**Meeting URL**

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827 6149 3171 / 689039

**Mission:** The purpose of the SFPUC CAC is to provide recommendations to the SFPUC General Manager, the SFPUC Commission, and the Board of Supervisors regarding the agency's long-term strategic, financial, and capital improvement plans ([Admin. Code Article XV, Sections 5.140 - 5.142](#))

**Members:**

**Moisés García, Chair (D9)**

Caroline Law (D1)

Suki Kott (D2)

Sally Chen (D3)

Douglas Jacuzzi (D4)

Emily Algire (D5)

Barklee Sanders (D6)

Elizabeth Steele Teshara (D7)

Amy Nagengast (D8)

VACANT (D10)

Jennifer Clary (D11)

Maika Pinkston (M-Environmental Org.)

Nicole Sandkulla (M-Regional Water Customers)

Jodi Soboll (M-Engineering/Financial)

Eliahu Perszyk (M-Large Water User)

Andrea Baker (B-Small Business)

Michelle Pierce (B-Environ. Justice)

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

Staff Liaisons: Lexus Moncrease

Staff Email for Public Comment: [cac@sfwater.org](mailto:cac@sfwater.org)

**ORDER OF BUSINESS**

**1. Call to Order and Roll Call**

Members present at roll call: García, Kott, Jacuzzi, Algire, Sanders, Nagengast, Clary, Pinkston, Soboll, and Perszyk.

Members absent: Law, Chen, Steele Teshara, Sandkulla, Baker, and Pierce

**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

**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 [May 21, 2024, Minutes](#)

Motion was made (Clary) and seconded (Perszyk) to approve the May 21, 2024, minutes. Approved without objection.

Public Comment: None

## 3. Report from the Chair

- No report
- Ohlone Tribal Land Acknowledgement

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.

Public Comment: None

## 5. Presentation and Discussion: [SFPUC Wastewater 101](#), Joel Prather, Wastewater Enterprise Assistant General Manager

### *Presentation:*

Wastewater Enterprise

San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

Wastewater Enterprise Organizational Chart

San Francisco Watersheds

Wastewater Infrastructure

Combined Sewer System & Function During Storms

Transport Storage Boxes/Structures

[Treatment Process Flow Video](#)

Wastewater Capital Plan (FY25-34): Key Projects Underway

Lower Alemany Area Stormwater Improvements

Folsom Area Stormwater Improvements

Southeast Plant Biosolids Digester Project

Wastewater Capital Plan (FY25-34): Major New Projects

Southeast Plant Mainstream Nutrient Reduction

Southeast Bay Outfall & SEP Booster Station Replacement

### *Discussion:*

- **Member Clary** asked what the reasons are for the high numbers of vacancies.

**AGM Prather** replied that there are many hurdles and contributing factors, including the civil service rules, the time it takes to onboard, and initiating lists. He added that another part is not having qualified staff who want to work in our industry. He gave an example about there being a big need for instrumentation technicians, but that a lot of those prospective candidates are going to work in tech or even refineries. The SFPUC is trying to be competitive but in addition to salary, commutes to work are another challenge to recruitment. The agency is seeing a lot of retirements as well. But in partnership with Local 39 (Stationary Engineers), an apprenticeship

program is re-starting, and SFPUC is also working with Local 6 (Electricians) and Local 39 to develop temporary trainee job classes and rewrite job classes to remove barriers. SFPUC is partnering with Los Medanos Community College, which has a robust two-year program for instrumentation technicians, to then develop a journey-level class.

**Member Clary** asked if AGM Prather had explored pilot programs or recruitment of prospective candidates in key specialties related to controls.

**AGM Prather** responded they are exploring many ideas, and that working with unions is very important.

- **Member Pinkston** commented that SFPUC should consider working with A. Phillip Randolph Institute (APRI) in Bayview and CityBuild, who work with young people who may be interested once exposed.
- **Member Clary** asked if the 9910 intern program that used to focus on 94124 residents was still active.

**AGM Prather** replied that he wasn't aware of that classification, but he would look into it.

- **Member Perszyk** shared that UCSF is starting a hydrological study for their Mount Sutro parcel which could lead to stormwater management projects. He asked who the best person at SFPUC might be to discuss any downstream impacts.

**AGM Prather** said that Watershed Stewardship team, led by Sarah Minick, would be the best contact.

- **Member Kott** asked about the size of the transport storage boxes.

**AGM Prather** replied that the one displayed on the slide (Westside, under Great Highway) is one of the larger boxes, but all combined the boxes can hold about 200 gallons of stormwater.

- **Member Clary** asked about the size of an average storm, in terms of gallons of stormwater.

**AGM Prather** responded that SFPUC's system can handle an average storm but that it depends on microclimates and where in the city a storm hits.

**Member Clary** asked about atmospheric rivers and impact on the system.

**AGM Prather** said that it depends on the size of the storm. The SFPUC has gotten better at predicting the size of the storm with a refined radar system. Also, because storms are coming from across the ocean, it's harder to predict via radar, so they do the best they can. With atmospheric rivers, the biggest challenge is the intense quick duration (an inch in a couple of hours), and our system is not built to handle that. He continued that very few systems are and that's why we're seeing so much more flooding.

- **Chair Garcia** asked if the link to the video AGM Prather showed could be shared.

**AGM Prather** said that the video isn't publicly available but that he could send it so that it could be shared for the meeting minutes.

- **Member Clary** inquired about contaminants in the system.

**AGM Prather** responded that we are lucky in San Francisco that we are not downstream from a large industrial facility that we have to then treat for. That said, PFAS is an emerging concern in water and wastewater as well, we can detect in our biosolids. He added that Forever California bought up a lot of our land, and did not want our biosolids there, so we actually had to pay \$2 million more to truck our biosolids further away.

**Member Soboll** asked if we are testing regularly for PFAS.

**AGM Prather** replied that testing is not regular, but they are taking some samples. Once the Biosolids Digester Facility Project (BDFP) is completed, it will be a higher quality Class A product because it will be cooked at higher temperatures which kills more microorganisms. There is also a lot of scientific research about how to remove PFAS or microplastics.

**Member Clary** asked where the facility was that AGM Prather referenced.

**AGM Prather** that the class A biosolids will be produced at the Southeast Treatment Plant once BDFP is complete, that is one of the main drivers, in addition to replacing equipment and reducing odor in the neighborhood.

- **Member Soboll** asked whether any resources are being put towards separating out the PFAS.

**Member Clary** responded that realistically, PFAS can't be removed and rather we need to stop the use of them altogether.

**AGM Prather** confirmed that PFAS can't be removed but there are technologies being developed to address, and that at a high enough temperature you can incinerate them.

**Member Clary** spoke about a general PFAS ban that her organization is working on.

**AGM Prather** agreed that controlling the source would be the ultimate fix but that that may be unrealistic anytime soon, although they are watching the regulatory landscape.

- **Member Kott** asked, in reference to the additional \$2 million to truck biosolids further away, whether that will be an ongoing cost and whether it was factored into the sale of the property.

**AGM Prather** clarified that SFPUC does not own the property, rather the agency had a contract with farmers that would purchase SFPUC's biosolids but when California Forever bought out the farmers, that ended the farming being done there. SFPUC is working with the same contractor but the biosolids are now sent to other locations. SFPUC is looking for a long-term solution because otherwise it's sent to a landfill with other trash, but we think there is a beneficial use. There are not many class A biosolids facilities in the Bay Area so we will be one of the first; there isn't yet a high

demand but SFPUC is hoping to change that, and is looking at Seattle/Tacoma where they sell fertilizer right from the plant.

- **Member Pinkston** commented that she has noticed in the neighborhood surrounding Southeast, that the odor has not been as bad. But she shared that she is concerned about the long-term concerns and impacts related to changes at Southeast on the community.

**AGM Prather** noted that one of the goals of BDFP is to not have an odor reach beyond the fence line. Through odor control mechanisms like vacuums and new bug technologies, the odor should not go beyond the fence line, SFPUC is making a significant investment in this.

**Member Clary** added that just replacing the original digestors from the 1940s will probably help a lot.

**AGM Prather** responded affirmatively and explained that the digesters are being moved to the other side of the facility away from the neighborhood.

**Member Pinkston** noted the distinction between the smell and air quality that might negatively impact local communities.

**Member Clary** mentioned that she thought SFPUC was doing fence line monitoring, and that Member Pierce had been involved in monitoring efforts.

**AGM Prather** responded that what leaves the facility is trash, flows that go through the pipe, and then biosolids that are trucked out. We don't have the space like in Sacramento to have drying beds.

**Member Pinkston** asked if there was a way for the plant to be relocated somewhere else.

**AGM Prather** said unfortunately that isn't possible.

- **Member Nagengast** commented that the Folsom Area Stormwater Improvements were what was forced on SFPUC, after doing a ton of community engagement, presented two options, and submitted the green option that was pipes instead of grey pipe, but then the Water Board rejected it because they said it would take too long.

**AGM Prather** confirmed that's what he understands from having come into this role last year.

- **Member Clary** asked about cost, resourcing, and the ability to withstand a five-year storm.

**AGM Prather** responded that the intent is to get the flow off the street and into the pipes, but that's not to say that SFPUC can't or won't do other green infrastructure. The agency will, to take advantage of the natural watershed moving forward, though it might not be a part of this capital project. But the intent is still to get the water out of the system and not only off the street. In the new budget, SFPUC is doubling the size of its green infrastructure maintenance crew, and just signed an MOU with the school district to put more green infrastructure on school playgrounds, as well as grants for residential green infrastructure. But on this project, the SFPUC is

dealing with engineering decisions from centuries ago as well as the decision that was made on this solution.

- **Member Soboll** asked if SFPUC doesn't have enough staff ready or trained for this, whether the agency is able to bring on contractors to help.

**AGM Prather** replied affirmatively and shared that by the end of the calendar year they have a decision point to ensure they have the capacity needed.

- **Member Clary** asked what it will take to tear down the old plant.

**AGM Prather** replied that it will take approximately two weeks. He mentioned that there will be a temporary nutrient removal process housed there, but that once the plant is obsolete, the SFPUC has plans to build out administration buildings so that we can reduce our leasing of other properties for office space and have a nice campus in Bayview. But it won't take much to demolish.

- **Member Pinkston** asked about the use of robotics and automation.

**AGM Prather** confirmed that there is automation being incorporated, but because of the size of the plant, layers of decision making and the differences in storms, unlike smaller plants, it would be hard to automate much more than they are. What is happening now is not exactly robots but a lot of automation and decision trees. They are finding that even with automation, when something goes wrong more instrumentation techs are needed to maintain that equipment—so it isn't necessarily less people, but the functions are shifting.

**Member Clary** inquired whether more automation is then vulnerable to hacking and attacks.

**AGM Prather** responded that the SFPUC has a robust cyber security system, and its Wastewater systems are controlled on site (rather than via the internet).

- **Member Perszyk** inquired about the distinction between baseline requirements vs the goal of getting to potable water quality.

**AGM Prather** replied that it's dependent on technology and right now, there are discussions between Wastewater and Water staff about what it would take for the additional step, to send water to a treatment facility and turn it into direct potable reuse. He can't make any commitments now because there are time and money considerations, but this is a possibility. Water Enterprise would also need to plan for this because Wastewater could not do direct potable reuse at Southeast Plant, but this is the direction they are headed in.

**Member Clary** mentioned the South Bay having to do nutrient removal for quite a while, and they've been able to do indirect potable. It's been known that this was coming for a while, and she expressed frustration with the Water Board moving so slowly.

**AGM Prather** mentioned that there were agencies at the Water Board meeting speaking about being early implementers and having nutrient

removal contracts in place, and they are worried about not being able to meet targets. He said that in defense of waiting, the SFPUC now knows the targets from the Water Board and can incorporate into planning efforts.

- **Member Garcia** asked to clarify the target nutrient reduction numbers from the Water Board.

**AGM Prather** responded that it's about 50% reduction across the Bay—all discharges together cannot exceed 27,600 kg per day. The SFPUC predicts seeing about 50% reduction in its flows with BDFP, etc. but will be fleshing out that plan in the next two years.

- **Member Clary** asked about how they plan for growth given this picture.

**AGM Prather** replied, as an example, that they are planning for two tanks but talking about leaving room for a third tank if needed, based on population growth. But nutrient loading tied to population growth is nuanced, in looking at a house that has bathrooms, washing machines, dishwashers, showers, etc. in comparison to an office building which just has restrooms all day long, or a restaurant or a bar that just has restrooms all night long.

**Member Soboll** asked about whether empty buildings downtown help to decrease those numbers.

**AGM Prather** confirmed yes, but if those are converted to housing, that will have an impact, just like COVID had an impact and we are starting to return to pre-COVID levels.

**Member Garcia** asked to confirm that there is an expected 10% reduction from the current facilities.

**AGM Prather** confirmed and explained that there are tanks being converted to a specific type of nutrient removal, side stream process, which is expected to reduce the load by 10%. The main stream process will treat the entire flow (as opposed to just biosolids), but the side stream process will be left on once BDFP comes online, though that 10% may be reduced. With the acknowledgement that SFPUC is one of the biggest contributors to nutrients in the Bay, the agency needs to put something in place between now and ten years from now. East Bay MUD has a similar pilot program in place; all agencies are all trying to do the best they can towards a broadly shared goal to protect the Bay and the Ocean.

**Member Garcia** commented about the impact to ratepayers and being close to the affordability policy.

**AGM Prather** noted that yes, funding is a concern but SFPUC's legislative teams are working hard to find ways to minimize impact on ratepayers. It's not only an SF problem, so there needs to be a regional solution. But they are happy that they now have direction from the Water Board.

- **Member Clary** asked about sea level rise and outfalls, and what plans exist.

**AGM Prather** responded that those discussions align with planning happening with Port and Army Corp of Engineers, because any plans on the waterfront will have an impact. Solutions are still under review but yes

there will be a problem with king tides and saltwater getting into the system, having a negative impact.

- **Member Jacuzzi** asked how much flow goes into Islais Creek.

**AGM Prather** said that at maximum flow it would be 140 gallons, all fully treated.

**Member Clary** asked about what happens to the flow above 140 gallons.

**AGM Prather** responded that the flow is either in the storage boxes or in the outfall, or on the street once those are full.

**Member Jacuzzi** asked if there is regular testing that happens in Islais Creek.

**AGM Prather** clarified that this only happens about three times a year, when there are big storms that max out the system. When that happens, the SFPUC does test every outfall in the City. There is not daily flow into Islais Creek.

**Member Clary** mentioned that both Islais Creek and Mission Creek are on the 303D list, meaning that they have impaired water with heavy metals.

**AGM Prather** noted that these contaminants are being studied right now by SFPUC.

Public Comment: None

## 6. Staff Report

- None

Public Comment: None

## 7. SFPUC Communications

- [SFPUC Wildfire Mitigation Plan 2024](#)
- [Quarterly Audit and Performance Report, FY 2023-24, Q3](#)
- Water Enterprise
  - [Water Supply Conditions Update \(June 3, 2024\)](#)
  - [Water Enterprise Capital Improvement Program Report, FY 2023-24, Q3](#)
  - [Hetch Hetchy Capital Improvement Program Report, FY 2023-24, Q3](#)
  - [Alternative Water Supply Annual Progress Report](#)
  - [Alternative Water Supply Planning Annual Progress Report](#)
  - [2009 Water Supply Agreement Quarterly Update](#)
  - [Onsite Water Reuse Program Update, FY 2022-23](#)
- Wastewater Enterprise
  - [Water Enterprise Capital Improvement Program Update, FY 2023-24, Q3](#)
- Power Enterprise
  - [CleanPowerSF Update, FY 2023-24, Q3](#)
  - [PG&E Interconnection Report, FY 2023-24, Q3](#)

Public Comment: None



## 8. Future Agenda Items and Resolutions

- [CAC Advance Calendar](#)

Public Comment: None

## 9. Announcements/Comments Please visit [www.sfpuc.org/cac](http://www.sfpuc.org/cac) for confirmation of the next scheduled meeting, agenda, and materials.

Public Comment: None

## 10. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:06pm.

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