



APPROVED 3/13/24

MINUTES
City of Tacoma
Public Utility Board Study Session
February 28, 2024
3:00 p.m.

Chair Watson called the Public Utility Board study session to order at 3:00 p.m. in the third-floor conference room (LT1) of the Public Utilities Administration Building.

Present: Carlos Watson, Elly Claus-McGahan, Anita Gallagher, John O’Loughlin

Excused: William Bridges

Introduction and Overview

LaTasha Wortham, Deputy Director, introduced her team members and provided background of the new Customer Experience and External Affairs (CXEA) team. CXEA combines Customer Service, Public Affairs, Communications, and Market Development groups to center TPU customers. This group’s north star: Our customers and communities experience compassion and equity in action so they are understood, valued, and empowered.

Guiding Principle Thirteen (GP13, Customer Service) Update

Shana Williams, Assistant Customer Services (CS) Manager, provided an overview of CS challenges in 2023 such as maintaining adequate staffing, antiquated core customer service systems, and customer outreach for the Bill Credit Assistance Plan (BCAP). Ms. Williams then summarized accomplishments which include reduction of customer debt, automated outbound messaging, increased enrollment in customer programs, increased first call resolution, and increased customer satisfaction scores. Disbursement of customer assistance dollars and call metrics for 2023 were detailed.

Residential Customer Satisfaction Survey

Holly Lucht, Market Research and Development Analyst provided an overview of the survey methodology. Ms. Lucht detailed overall rankings in overall satisfaction; trustworthiness; controlling costs; fixing customer problems; being knowledgeable; affordability; customer assistance, and environmental responsiveness. For Power, the following rankings were detailed in satisfaction with service; value, reasonableness of rates; and service reliability. Water rankings for the following were then detailed: satisfaction; value, reasonableness of rates; and reliability. Economic and financial sentiments were then reviewed. These included feedback on the impact of the current

economy, concern of paying utility bills, ability to pay bills, and past due account trending. Ms. Lucht concluded by providing an overview of energy industry benchmarking and national benchmark rankings.

Website Rankings

Treena Colby, Market Research and Development Analyst, and Emily Privett, Digital Experience Analyst, presented the information. The E-Source website benchmarking study is conducted every two years; they assessed 93 North American electric and gas utility websites. The reviews were focused on four usability components: appearance, findability; functionality; and content. TPU's website was ranked as 39 in 2021 and has improved by 19 places with a rank of 20 in 2023. The rankings for overall appearance, energy efficiency content, power outage content, power outage functionality, billing and payment options, payment functionality, and account preferences were detailed. Recommendations include the inclusion of contact channels, expanding notification options, adding more energy usage details and comparison tools, and increasing online bill viewing functionality. The presentation was concluded with an overview of digital communications strategies and the plan for 2024. This year's plan includes choosing your own due date, high usage alerts, additional payment options, water high flow threshold, usage graph navigation improvements, and helping Environmental Services into MyAccount.

Customer Experience and External Affairs Division Transition

LaTasha Wortham provided final thoughts on the transition of CXEA. Work on job titles, groups, classifications, and compensation is still underway. The plan for 2024 is to complete the re-organization and hire to complete the team. Budget work, change management, training, and program development is also in the 2024 work plan.

General Board Comments/Discussion and Director's Reports

Director and Board Members provided reports on some meetings that took place since the last Board study session, which include a meeting with the Council Committee Chairs, Audit Advisory Board, and Joint Study Session. Board Member Gallagher provided an update on the Charter Review Committee meetings.

Adjournment

The study session was adjourned at 5:34 p.m.

Approved:



Carlos Watson, Chair



William Bridges