Oregon Public Utility Commission 101! For Advocates

• (Especially for: 1) organizations that haven’t had a seat at energy decision-making tables in the past, and 2) organizations that haven’t engaged much at the PUC in the past.)

• Goals: (Start to) demystify the PUC and its processes and help us all get a seat there!
Agenda and Ground Rules for this Conversation

GROUND RULES
- This training is primarily for 1) organizations that haven’t had a seat at energy decision-making tables in the past, and 2) organizations that haven’t engaged much at the PUC in the past.
- Step up (into speaking/questioning); step up (into listening).
- Observe/name power dynamics and respect everyone’s time.
- Avoid acronyms and jargon.
- Any question is a good one.
- Recorded!

AGENDA
- What is the PUC?
- What does the PUC do?
- Public information and input (esp. for non-wonks)
- Key Topics
- Closing
- Break!
Who are you and why are you here?

- Name, pronouns, organization/community, favorite summer dessert
- Why are you here?

![Image of a pink milkshake with whipped cream and a mint leaf on top.](image-url)
Who is the PUC?

Organizational Chart

Commissioner
Letha Tawney

Commission Chair
Megan Decker

Commissioner
Mark Thompson

Executive Director
Michael Grant

Executive Office
Robin Freeman, Director of Policy
Kandi Young, Public Information Officer
Kristi Collins, Commission Assistant

Utility Program Director
Bryan Conway
Utility Program

Utility Program Deputy Director
Michael Dougherty (Interim)

Energy Resources & Planning
JP Batmale, Administrator

Energy Rates, Finance & Audit
John Cramer, Administrator

Utility Safety, Reliability & Security
Lori Koho, Administrator

Telecommunications & Water
VACANT

Chief Operating Officer
Michael Dougherty
Policy & Administration

Oregon Board of Maritime Pilots

Information Systems
Qing Liu, Chief Information Officer

Consumer Services
Phil Boyle, Manager

Residential Service Protection Fund
Jon Gray, Manager

Business Services
Inee Anderson, Chief Financial Officer

Human Resources
Anne Lambert, Director

Administrative Hearings

Chief Administrative Law Judge
Nolan Moser
Administrative Hearings
What does the PUC do?

- Regulate private utilities AKA IOUs (monopolies).
  - Let’s name the electric and gas (majority of their work): Avista, Cascade, NW Natural, PGE, Pacific Power (part of PacifiCorp), Idaho Power

- “To ensure Oregon utility customers have access to safe, reliable, and high-quality utility services at just and reasonable rates.”
  - How are these concepts defined and by whom?

- Informs public/legislature

- Make recommendations to legislature
Discuss!
Quasi-legislative and Quasi-judicial

• Four decision-making processes (see Internal Operating Guidelines)

1. Open Meetings
• For what: minor revisions, asking for public input on whether they should open another case
• Agenda for regular public meetings held every other Tuesday at 9:30 AM:
  • General public comment: on “anything” not on agenda
  • Consent agenda: probably non-controversial
  • Rulemaking agenda
  • Regular agenda: “require individual discussion”:
2. **Rulemakings** (quasi-L): change or establish rules applicable to agency

- Decision not based on "evidentiary record"
- Informal discussions with Commissioners OK (before deadline)
- Commissioners can only talk to each other about the issue in the context of a public meeting = public meeting law
Quasi-L and Quasi-J Processes Cont'd.

3. **Contested Cases** (quasi-J): address formal complaints/petition (usually issued by lawyer, at utility or otherwise)

- Must "petition to intervene" to get on the record
- May only use “evidentiary” official record to make decisions
- Commissioners may talk to each other in private; may decline requests to meet
- If you're not/don't have an attorney, you can't present legal argument
Quasi-L and Quasi-J Processes Contd.

4. Hybrid Proceedings

- Mix of other proceedings (technically considered open meetings)
- Example: Integrated Resource Plans (IRPs)
Discuss!
Public Information and Input: What's a Docket?

- "A record of all of the filings and proceedings related to a particular matter."

- Every docket has a set of numbers and letters attached to it

- A docket can be/contain any kind of proceeding or multiple proceedings
Docket/Proceeding Type Examples

- Community solar (UM 1930)
- Distribution system planning (UM 2005)
Discuss!
Public Information and Input: Information

- **Get Info**
  - Receiving info about a docket (different from being a party): email [puc.hearings@state.or.us](mailto:puc.hearings@state.or.us)
    - Docket-specific
    - Industry-specific (water, electric, gas, telecomm)
  - “Party” (formal participant) to a docket
    - In contested/protected case: File a petition to intervene (best with an organization); ask for form from puc.hearings
    - Right to file testimony, briefs (lawyer) and cross-examine (lawyer)
  - Recordings/minutes: [https://www.oregon.gov/puc/news-events/Pages/default.aspx](https://www.oregon.gov/puc/news-events/Pages/default.aspx)
Information Pt. 2

- Docket website (internet search)
- **EDockets search** (see main PUC page)
  - Text search: must ask for help from [puc.hearings@state.or.us](mailto:puc.hearings@state.or.us), and it doesn't work well
  - Some dockets are inactive and closed (see search)
Discuss!
How to offer comments (formally or informally)

- Spoken Comments
  - General public comment at open meeting (every other Tuesday morning at 9:30 AM): just speak up!
  - the first 10-15 minutes is for anything not on the agenda.
- Informal workshops and investigations: just speak up!
Offering Comments Pt. 2

• More formal:
  • Things on the schedule at a public meeting (consent, rulemaking, and regular agenda): 24-hr notice preferred
  • If needed: wait for ALJ/Commissioner-in-charge to ask who wants to comment
    • Must provide your name, organization to make an official comment as part of a rulemaking
  • Contested case
Offering Comments Pt. 3

- **Written (filing)**
  - Formal: For rulemaking/contested (intervene!) case, file by a certain date/time and certain format
  - See guidelines on website

- **Informal email to staff** (they love hearing from real people!)

![Filing Center](image-url)
Participation Tips

- **Etiquette**
  - Ask to speak about a certain agenda item.
  - Use titles: "Judge ____, Chair Decker, Commissioner Tawney"
  - You can speak “out of turn” if needed.
    - They’re new to totally virtual participation, too.
  - If it’s not a public meeting, you have to register first.

- **General tips**
  - Mute audio or phone until it’s your turn to speak.
  - Speak clearly, slowly, into your microphone.
  - Begin every comment with name, organization (or zip code/city).

- **Accessing recordings:**
  https://www.oregon.gov/puc/news-events/Pages/default.aspx
Discuss!
Topics

- Rate cases, rate adjustments, accounting, mergers/acquisitions
- PURPA/Qualifying facilities (rulemaking)
- Community solar
- General capacity
- Safety (wildfires/Consumer-Owned Utilities)
- ...a bunch of other things too

Executive Order Implementation
Discuss/Thank you!

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