

UTILITY ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

March 13, 2025 at 5:15 PM

Water Utility Shop 2520 Barrett Ave./Zoom Webinar



<https://juneau.zoom.us/j/83013202186> or 1-253-215-8782 Meeting ID: 830 1320 2186

A. CALL TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order at 5:20 PM.

B. LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to acknowledge that the City and Borough of Juneau is on Tlingit land, and wish to honor the indigenous people of this land. For more than ten thousand years, Alaska Native people have been and continue to be integral to the well-being of our community. We are grateful to be in this place, a part of this community, and to honor the culture, traditions, and resilience of the Tlingit people. *Gunalchéesh!*

C. ROLL CALL

UAB Members Present: Andrew Campbell (Chair), Stuart Cohen, Geoff Larson, Grant Ritter, Buffy Pederson

CBJ Staff Present: Denise Koch, EPW Director; Brian McGuire, Utilities Superintendent; Chad Gubala, Production & Treatment Manager; Nathan Bodensadt, Utilities Administrative Coordinator

D. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Approved without comment.

E. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. February 13, 2025 - Regular Meeting

Approved without comment.

F. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

No Public Participation

G. AGENDA TOPICS

2. Utility Update

Chad Gubala reported on recent federal regulatory changes and their impact on utility operations:

- Suspension of regulatory actions by executive order in January 2025
- Utility response includes enhanced focus on best management practices and documentation
- Lead Service Line Inventory (LSLI) program continues despite regulatory uncertainty

Brian McGuire provided an update on current staffing challenges:

- The Wastewater treatment team is currently very understaffed, and many operators with a significant amount of experience are unavailable. The Utility has been working to fill positions.
- One new local hire started this week
- Ongoing vacancy for water treatment operator position
- Field operations supervisor position has two candidates scheduled for interviews
- Source control coordinator position in classification process

Discussion of upcoming water system maintenance:

- Planned Salmon Creek water outage for April-June 2026 due to AELP upper Penstock replacement
- Testing of pressure configurations for water supply system planned. Some questions were raised about adequate water for fire suppression to the community during the outage, which the Utility expressed awareness of. There is little concern of a loss of pressure in downtown Juneau as that area is served by Last Chance Basin. The Utility continues to work on plans to ensure adequate supply for fire suppression and regular use is provided to the rest of the distribution system.
- Suspension of cruise ship water supply during the maintenance period was discussed, and cruise companies are already aware of this restriction.

3. Discussion: Industrial User Rates

Stuart Cohen led discussion on reviewing industrial user rates:

- Current sewer code contains ambiguous formulas for industrial user charges, and are not consistent throughout the code. One section specifies a formula based on waste compounds, while another sets a flat rate.
- The Utilities team has explored rate structures used by comparable utilities to develop a more appropriate approach.
- The group discussed several key considerations, including equitable charging for different types of users, cost implications of lift stations and other infrastructure, and the need for a fair rate structure for cruise lines and waste haulers.
- Some next steps including extending the CBJ SCADA system into the collections system, reviewing administrative and permitting issues, and developing improved monitoring processes.

This conversation led to a discussion of the biosolids pyrolysis project:

- \$2 million grant application in process for design phase to process biosolids.
- Potential to save \$2-3 million annually in biosolids transportation and disposal costs
- Implementation would require an additional \$4-5M after the design phase.
- Project will complement existing biosolids crusher project
- The project received assembly approval on March 3rd. The next steps include securing DEC approval and navigating CBJ procurement processes. Implementation would follow other ongoing engineering projects, including the Utilities Crusher.
- Mr. Ritter raised questions about cost comparison between pyrolysis and standard incineration methods. Discussion was tabled for a future meeting due to time constraints.
- Potential benefits of the pyrolysis unit include producing biochar and carbon black that could be a revenue source for the CBJ. Additionally, removing PFAS from biosolids through the pyrolysis could eliminate the need to ship biosolids out of state, which would have a significant annual savings.

4. UAB Terms and Annual Report

Mr. Bodensadt shared with the UAB that one member, Ms. Pederson, had a term ending in May 2025. He also reminded the UAB that an annual report was due in May 2025.

H. NEXT MEETING DATE

5. April 10, 2025 at 5:15 PM

I. SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

6. Congressionally Directed Spending Letters- Approved & Signed 2/13/2025

J. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 6:26 PM.

ADA accommodations available upon request: Please contact the Clerk's office 36 hours prior to any meeting so arrangements can be made for closed captioning or sign language interpreter services depending on the meeting format. The Clerk's office telephone number is 586-5278, e-mail: city.clerk@juneau.gov.