



ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY POLICY COMMITTEE

Highlights
January 23, 2026

ATTENDANCE

Members: Max Perrey (Chair); Scott Bauer (Vice Chair); Teresa Acosta; Paul Akinjo; Tess Albin-Smith; Brent Bartlett; Edward Belden; Paolo Beltran; Christine Boles; Olivia Calderon; Jonathan Cruz; Michelle D'Anna; Matt Downing; Patti Garibay; Debra Garnes; Jennifer Gates; Nancy Howze; Leslie Jordan; Eric Knight; Barbara Leary; Joe Lillio; Elaine Litster; Maika Llorens; Marijane Lopez-Taff; Sara Margulies; Julio Martinez; Conna McCarthy; John McCormick; Deborah McGarrey; David Newman; Ian Oblesby; Chuck Page; Randall Putz; Karina Quintanilla; Manny Ramirez; Candice Rankin-Mumby; Ariana Rodriguez; Julie Ryan; Toyashi Sebbag; Patty Senecal; Jason Shykowski; Mike Silva; Amy Steward; Matthew Summers; Amanda Szakats; Toni Taber; Igor Tregub; Kathleen Treseder; Kevin Wilk

League Partners: Bob Brown

Staff: Melissa Sparks-Kranz, Legislative Affairs Lobbyist
Leila Romero, Policy & Legislative Affairs Analyst

I. **Welcome and Introductions**

Following the General Briefing, Chair Perrey and Vice Chair Bauer welcomed committee members and introduced themselves and Cal Cities staff. Committee members provided self-introductions.

II. **Public Comment**

Chair Perrey opened the floor for public comment. One comment was received from a city councilmember not on the policy committee who supports community choice aggregation as a tool for cities in securing energy reliability.

III. **Speaker: Energy Policy Priorities from the Public Advocates**

Chair Perrey introduced guest speaker Linda Serizawa, Director, California Public Advocates Office, who provided an overview of energy and water affordability trends, noting that electricity rates have increased over the last decade and now exceed the rate of inflation.

Ms. Serizawa highlighted three primary drivers of rising energy rates: distribution wildfire-related expenses, distribution and transmission maintenance and upgrades, and other program incentives. She outlined four policy levers to address affordability, including reducing utility operating expenses, lowering capital costs, phasing out programs funded through rates that are not cost-effective, and revisiting rate structures and subsidies. Ms. Serizawa also discussed concerns related to rooftop solar compensation and emphasized the need to address wildfire liability costs through alternative approaches.

Committee members engaged in discussion regarding community choice aggregation cost pressures, grid reliability, and ongoing legislative and regulatory efforts to improve affordability.

IV. Committee Orientation and Parliamentary Procedures

Environmental Quality Lobbyist Melissa Sparks-Kranz reviewed the role and purpose of the policy committee as well as the parliamentary procedures for the committee.

V. Cal Cities 2026 Advocacy Priorities

Environmental Quality Lobbyist Melissa Sparks-Kranz provided an overview of [Cal Cities 2026 Advocacy Priorities](#):

- Protect and enhance local revenues and expand economic development tools.
- Strengthen partnerships with the state to improve public safety.
- Secure investments to prevent and reduce homelessness and increase the supply of affordable housing.
- Strengthen climate change resiliency and disaster preparedness.

VI. Existing Policy and Guiding Principles

Environmental Quality Lobbyist Melissa Sparks-Kranz presented proposed updates to the Cal Cities *Summary of Existing Policy and Guiding Principles*. Staff explained that these updates codify policy positions previously approved by the Board of Directors and incorporated additional guidance consistent with recent committee actions from the last year.

VII. Adoption of the 2026 Work Plan

Environmental Quality Lobbyist Melissa Sparks-Kranz presented survey results informing the proposed 2026 work plan. Based on member feedback, the committee identified the following top priorities:

1. Disaster and Emergency Preparedness and Response and Funding
2. Energy and Utilities
3. Water and Wastewater

Committee members discussed wildfire liability, wastewater infrastructure, stormwater management, climate resiliency, and emergency preparedness. A motion to adopt the 2026 work plan was made and seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Speaker: Overview of Inverse Condemnation

Chair Perrey introduced guest speaker Michael Colantuono, a municipal attorney, who provided an overview of inverse condemnation law, including its constitutional foundations, key legal elements, and implications for cities and public agencies. The presentation addressed liability exposure related to public improvements, wildfire and flood cases, shared causation, and risk management strategies.

IX. SB 254 (2025) Update: Natural Catastrophe Resiliency Study

Environmental Quality Lobbyist Melissa Sparks-Kranz provided an update on SB 254 and reviewed Cal Cities' joint submission with CSAC and RCRC to the California Earthquake Authority. Staff summarized key recommendations related to insurance affordability, wildfire risk mitigation, infrastructure hardening, and inverse condemnation.

X. State Legislation, Budget, and Regulatory Update

Environmental Quality Lobbyist Melissa Sparks-Kranz reviewed the eight subject areas of focus within the Environmental Quality portfolio as an overview of the scope of the

work in the portfolio. Ms. Sparks-Kranz then reviewed the key legislative issues Cal Cities anticipates in 2026 to include:

- Wildfire liability
- Clean energy and grid reliability/affordability
- Clean-up to the CEQA reform
- Water management, including wastewater concerns
- Coastal issues, including federal plan for increased offshore oil and gas development
- Funding for climate resilience (Proposition 4 & Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund)
- Solid waste and recycling, including single use plastics and bio-plastics

XI. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 pm by the Chair.

Next Meeting: Friday, March 27, Hilton Orange County/Costa Mesa, 10:00am – 2:00pm