



**ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY POLICY COMMITTEE
HIGHLIGHTS
Friday, March 22, 2024**

ATTENDANCE

Members: Illece Buckley Weber (Chair); Max Perrey (Vice Chair); Teresa Acosta; Paul Akinjo; Tess Albin-Smith; Valerie Arkin; Scott Bauer; Paolo Beltran; Kari Birdseye; Bob Branstrom; James Breitling; Rob Brewer; David Burke; Jennifer Cavanaugh; Margaret Clark; David Cohen; Matthew Downing; Eric Friedman; Debra Garnes; Kirsten Graham; Paige Kaluderovic; Sean Kelleher; Linda Launer; Candice Lee; Sylvia Lemus; Jeff Maloney; Julio Martinez; Deborah McGarrey; Kitty Moore; Jennifer Nakamura; Jeffrey Nibert; Stephanie Oddo; Tomas Oliva; Andy Pease; Kelli Pickler; Michael Ponce; Randall Putz; Karina Quintanilla; Gabriel Quinto; Candace Rankin Mumby; Vickie Riddle; Julie Ryan; Jeannette Sanchez-Palacios; Michael Silva; Dan Stefano; Kevin Wilk; Thomas Wong

Cal Cities Partners: Roderick Brewer

Staff: Melissa Sparks-Kranz, Legislative Affairs Lobbyist
Zack Cefalu, Legislative Affairs Analyst

I. General Briefing

In accordance with the customary practice of convening all policy committee members for a general briefing prior to the start of policy committee meetings, the Cal Cities advocacy team provided a [General Briefing Update](#), which includes the latest on legislative and budgetary matters affecting cities.

II. Welcome and Introductions

*Speakers: Chair Illece Buckley Weber, Mayor, Agoura Hills
Vice Chair Max Perrey, Councilmember, Mill Valley*

Chair Illece Buckley Weblar welcomed the committee and thanked everyone for being in person for the meeting.

III. Long-Term Urban Water Conservation Rulemaking

Speaker: Tia Flemming, Executive Director with the California Water Efficiency Partnership

Cal Cities Environmental Quality Lobbyist Melissa Sparks-Kranz introduced the guest speaker, Tia Flemming, Executive Director with the California Water Efficiency Partnership (CalWEP). CalWEP is an organization working to maximize urban water efficiency and conservation by advancing research, training, and public education. CalWEP also works to build collaborative approaches and partnerships to urban water conservation by integrating innovative technologies and practices that encourage effective public policies around water usage.

Ms. Flemming gave an overview of previous legislation regarding water usage and informed the committee of the importance of urban water usage as it relates to recent rulemaking with the State Water Resources Control Board, which began in August of last year. The regulation is currently open for a 15-day public comment period (March 12 to March 27, 2024) on the second version of the regulations for urban water suppliers and would go into effect January of next year.

Ms. Flemming gave the committee information about the new urban water usage standard that is comprised of five parts related to indoor and outdoor residential and commercial water use, and will be regulated as an overall urban water use objective for each urban water supplier moving forward. Under the new objective, cities will be required to categorize commercial indoor use with performance measures and implementation of best practices for water savings. Ms. Flemming also informed the committee of additional changes to the reporting requirements, which cities will be expected to comply with under the new regulatory framework.

IV. California Public Utilities Commission Electricity Fixed Charge Proceeding

Speaker: Shelly Lyser, Program Manager of Electricity Pricing and Informational

Chair Buckley Weber introduced the second guest speaker, Shelly Lyser, the Program Manager of Electricity and Pricing at the Public Advocates Office at the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). The Public Advocates Office is a state entity charged with helping to ensure residents of California are represented in CPUC proceedings and other forums. Generally, the CPUC is tasked with overseeing and regulating the investor-owned utilities to advance the state's energy and climate goals.

The speaker gave a presentation on recent policy (AB 205, 2022) that authorized the CPUC to develop an income graduated fixed charge for customers electricity bills. The committee was informed of what fixed rate charges are intended to do. It was highlighted that increasing utility rates are due to several factors such as solar rate subsidies, public purpose programs, wildfire mitigation increases, and state mandated programs, and drive the uptick in rates. Ms. Lyser explained that fixed charges are intended to help lessen the burden for low-income households, which are disproportionately burdened by the current system that charges all customers for their electricity usage. The CPUC is currently weighing various proposals that present income graduated fixed charges and the CPUC will need to make a determination on a final proposal no later than July 1, 2024. Following the presentation, the committee members had a robust discussion regarding electricity rates.

V. Public Comment

Public comments were provided by investor-owned utilities in opposition to AB 1999. Solar industry representatives provided public comments in support of AB 1999. Several other city representatives who do not have seats on the Environmental Quality Policy Committee made public comments in support of AB 1999.

VI. Legislative Agenda

[AB 1999 \(Irwin\): Electricity: Fixed Charges](#)

Cal Cities staff gave an overview of AB 1999 (Irwin), which would repeal the CPUC's authority to establish an income-graduated fixed charge on electricity bills. The bill would require the CPUC, beginning January 1, 2015, to authorize fixed charges that do not exceed \$5 per residential customer account per month for customers enrolled in the CARE program and \$10 per residential customer account per month for all other customers. Cal Cities staff highlighted to the committee the existing Cal Cities policy on electricity rates, which currently states that 'at this time' Cal Cities will not get involved in individual bills related to electricity pricing. Additional existing policy states that Cal Cities believes any solution to address energy crisis should encourage conservation and reward those with limited uses. Additionally, Cal Cities recognizes and should work to protect energy pricing impacts on low-income families. It was noted that this policy was adopted more than 20 years ago and the Environmental Quality Policy Committee can use this opportunity to re-evaluate if a policy changes would be beneficial at this time.

The committee was informed that taking a position on AB 1999 (Irwin) was an item of deliberation and the committee's decision would be presented to the board as a recommendation.

Several members addressed concerns with Cal Cities existing policies regarding energy pricing. Other members had concerns over the income graduated fixed charge proposals in front of the CPUC, while others had concerns with legislatively capping the fixed charge as included in AB 1999.

The Environmental Quality Policy Committee voted to take a watch position on AB 1999 (32-11-0).

VII. Legislative Update

Cal Cities staff prepared an update on two bills related to environmental quality that Cal Cities is sponsoring.

- *SB 972 (Min) Methane Emissions: Organic Waste Landfills.*
The measure would require CalRecycle to strengthen statewide efforts to support local jurisdictions to remove organic waste from landfills and reduce methane emissions. The measure would also require CalRecycle to develop procedures to allow local jurisdictions to request technical assistance for reporting.
- *AB 2330 (Holden) Endangered Species: Wildfire Preparedness Activities.*
This measure would streamline environmental permits for local agencies to perform vegetation management activities in fire hazard severity zones adjacent to urban communities.

VIII. Closing Remarks and Adjourn

Chair Buckley Weber and Vice-Chair Perrey thanked the committee for their hard work and provided some closing remarks. Chair Buckley Weber adjourned the committee meeting.

Next Virtual Meeting: Friday, June 21, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.