Citizens' Advisory Committee
Power Subcommittee

Approved Minutes

July 10, 2012

1155 Market Street, San Francisco
4th Floor Conference Room
5:30 - 7:00 pm

Members

Doug Cain – Chair
Walt Farrell
Stephen Bjorgan
Jessie Buendia
Ted Ko
Avni Jamdar

Staff Liaison: Ben Chan

Members present: Cain, Farrell, Ko, and Jamdar

ORDER OF BUSINESS

1. Call to order
Chair Doug Cain called the meeting to order at 5:38 PM.

2. Approval of Minutes of April 3, 2012
The committee approved the minutes.

3. Public Comments – matters within Subcommittee’s scope, not on today’s agenda
None.

4. Report from the chair
Mr. Cain welcomed new members Ms. Jamdar and Mr. Ko to the committee. The full CAC might have a resolution to support Community Choice Aggregation but it will have to wait because member Buendia is on vacation until mid-August.
5. Staff report
Presentation by Mary Tienken, Project Manager, Utility Services Group – update on street lights; previously presented to both the SFPUC Commission and the Board of Supervisors.

Recently the Commission and the Board heard a report about the levels of street light service that the SFPUC and PG&E provide. The report also detailed the feasibility of selling the city’s street lights to PG&E and vice versa. No action was taken on any item.

Throughout the city, SFPUC owns approximately 25,000 street lights while the rest of the 19,000 belong to PG&E. Both have standard cobra-head lights. Ownership patterns are mixed, which sometimes can be confusing for citizens who report street light problems. Whether consolidation of ownership of street lights would result in cost-efficiency has been a long-standing issue for over half a century.

SFPUC provides power to all street lights, regardless of ownership. Its operational budget pays for the maintenance and staffing. SFPUC has to pay PG&E a rate per light for its operation and maintenance costs. The rate is established and approved by the state’s public utilities commission (CPUC) every three to four years.

PG&E has been asked repeatedly when they plan on converting their high pressure sodium (HPS) light into LED lights.

The SFPUC pays in total $3.7 million per year for operations and maintenance for both the City’s and PG&E’s street lights. About $2.1 million goes to city staffing and $1.6 million goes to PG&E. SFPUC doesn’t own the distribution lines so it pays another $340,000 to PG&E each year.

All street light calls are now centralized through 311. SFPUC has a service goal of fixing simple outage within 48 hours. The bulk of the problems reported with 311 are maintenance.

In its report to the Commission, Power Enterprise does not recommend buying out PG&E’s lighting assets. Many of their lights have not been upgraded for a long time. One estimate says it will require $35 million to $42 million just to convert the oldest PG&E lights. SFPUC’s system is
also aging; that’s why the SFPUC will begin replacing 18,500 HPS lights with new, LED lights.

Some of the recommendations to the Board of Supervisors:

* Create a lighting assessment district that would allow neighborhoods to tax themselves to fund improvement. Ms. Jamdar said this idea would put poor communities at a disadvantage.
* Establish uniform levels of services such as the 48-hour goal.

The Board of Supervisor has no leverage over PG&E’s street lights, although it can pass a resolution urging the CPUC to take action.

The board’s hearing was announced in January this year but the hearing was not held until June. Record shows that during those intervening months PG&E’s street light response time improved.

There were several questions/suggestions throughout and after the presentation:

- Investigate how general rate cases calculate cost of depreciated assets like street lights;
- Ask the SFPUC Commission to petition the CPUC to include quality of service considerations when they determine street light maintenance fees in their next set of general rate cases; and,
- Is it a good idea to urge utilities to adopt centralized databases and LED lights?

6. Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 6:26 pm. The next meeting will be August 7, 2012.