BURLINGTON WATER DISTRICT
PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES

Multnomah County Tax Supervising and Conservation Commission (TSCC)

Date	**October 15, 2026**
Time	Approximately 4:52 p.m. start; adjourned approximately 5:40 p.m.
Location	Remote/online meeting
Purpose	Public hearing regarding Burlington Water District's proposed local option levy for fire and emergency services

1. Call to Order and Introductions

TSCC Vice Chair Rita Moore called the public hearing to order. She explained that TSCC conducts public hearings on proposed tax measures to provide information to the public and that TSCC does not take a position on or advocate for the proposed measure. The hearing was held to share information and ask questions a community member might reasonably have.

TSCC participants introduced themselves: Rita Moore, Erik Kvarsten, Will Terry, Tod Burton, Executive Director Allegra Wilhite, and Budget Analyst Brittanie Abayare. Burlington Water District representatives and participants included board member Tami Ege, prospective board member Robin Walden, and district bookkeeper Dan Zimmerman. Board chair Ricardo was unable to attend and had provided written responses for Tami Ege to use.

2. Public Comment

No members of the public had signed up to testify, and no public comments were offered.

3. Discussion of Proposed Levy and District Finances

Relationship to the prior measure and outreach

In response to a question about the prior fire protection local option levy considered in May, the District representative stated that the current measure is essentially the same as the previous measure. The District reported outreach efforts including attending a community picnic, canvassing neighborhoods, and sending customers a revised letter/mail piece with different wording.

Fire and emergency services contract and revenue gap

The District bookkeeper provided approximate figures from memory: the current annual fire and emergency services contract with the City of Portland was described as $225,000, while projected revenue from the permanent property tax rate was approximately $195,000. The District anticipated carrying forward about $15,000 in reserves. Commissioners discussed the resulting funding gap and the expected use of remaining reserves; the discussion characterized the projected shortfall after reserves as approximately $15,000. The figures were described as estimates during the meeting.

The bookkeeper said the revenue projections use TSCC projections, which account for an estimated 5% uncollectible amount, and noted that the projections had historically tracked reasonably well. He confirmed that the $225,000 amount represented the total value of the fire and emergency services contract for the current contract year and that the District has no staff of its own for this function.

The District operates on a July 1–June 30 fiscal year, while the fire services contract is on a calendar-year basis. The District said the next $225,000 payment was due in June 2027. If the levy passed, the new revenue

was expected to begin in the fiscal year starting July 1, 2027, with receipts expected in fall 2027; it would therefore not be available for the June 2027 contract payment.

Short-term bridge and other funding options

The bookkeeper said the District had cash reserves that could cover the near-term gap and that prior discussions with special-district resources had not identified a rule prohibiting use of water-rate revenue to cover the relatively small current-year deficit. The possibility was discussed as a potential bridge, not as a formal legal determination. Commissioners raised the importance of confirming the legal and equity implications, because water-rate customers and properties served by the fire contract may not align exactly.

If the levy were unsuccessful, options under exploration included a possible emergency-services fee on water bills, contacting other agencies or neighboring fire/emergency service districts about joining or obtaining service, and pursuing other funding approaches with assistance from Special Districts Association of Oregon (SDAO) consultants. The District said another discussion with SDAO was expected in December. Possible conversations with the City of Portland and City Council were also discussed as avenues for identifying an appropriate contact and seeking engagement.

Communications with the City of Portland and service concerns

The District reported that letters and requests for an appointment to discuss the contract had not received a response from the City of Portland. TSCC staff offered to contact the City's budget office to identify an appropriate contact, potentially in the budget or contract area. Commissioners suggested that appearing before City Council could be another way to raise the District's concerns.

The District described concerns about fire response times, citing estimates discussed with SDAO of approximately 14 minutes in Linnton and up to 20 minutes in other parts of the service area. The discussion also touched on the area's proximity to Portland's Critical Energy Infrastructure (CEI) hub and whether current City discussions about the hub and fire protection could provide a useful point of contact. These were suggestions for further exploration, not decisions or findings of the hearing.

Potential service-area partnerships

The District described previous or ongoing inquiries about alternative fire service arrangements, including Sauvie Island, Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue, and Scappoose. The District said Sauvie Island had not been interested when approached previously and Scappoose had previously indicated it lacked capacity, but the District was interested in revisiting potential options. Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue was discussed as a potentially promising avenue due to its proximity and service to unincorporated areas.

Participants discussed the District's unusual geography and the fact that the District serves only portions of Linnton and nearby areas. The number of properties covered by the contract was not confirmed; estimates of roughly 180–208 properties were mentioned, with mailings reaching about 200 addresses.

4. Board Vacancies and Governance

The District reported that Robin Walden was expected to be sworn in at the October 21 board meeting. Tami Ege said she had identified three prospective candidates who were invited to attend that meeting to observe and consider joining the board. One board position remained open, and another vacancy was expected in February when Anne Squire planned to leave. Doug, Robin Walden's husband, had indicated he might be willing to fill the future vacancy if no other candidate was found. The District expressed the goal of returning to a five-member board.

5. Public Information and Voter Awareness

In response to a question about what the public should understand about the levy, the District emphasized the importance of continued fire and emergency services and reported that some residents contacted during canvassing did not know what the measure funded. The District said the previous measure had failed by five votes and hoped that additional outreach would improve public understanding and turnout. Robin Walden was also helping share information with marina residents.

6. Additional Discussion and Closing

Commissioners encouraged the District to continue exploring contacts with the City of Portland, potential service partners, and SDAO, and to keep TSCC informed. The District noted that passage of the levy would alleviate some immediate concerns but would not resolve every longer-term issue. No formal action or vote was taken.

There being no further prepared questions, Rita Moore adjourned the hearing at approximately 5:40 p.m.

Follow-Up Items Identified in Discussion

- **TSCC staff (Allegra Wilhite):** Contact the City of Portland budget office to ask for a recommended contact regarding the District's fire-services contract and concerns.
- **Burlington Water District:** Continue outreach to the City of Portland, including considering whether to raise the issue with City Council or through discussions connected to the CEI hub.
- **Burlington Water District:** Continue exploring potential alternative service arrangements with Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue, Sauvie Island, Scappoose, and other nearby agencies.
- **Burlington Water District / SDAO:** Continue evaluating potential funding alternatives, including a possible utility-bill fee and other funding sources; reconvene with SDAO in December as discussed.
- **Burlington Water District:** Proceed with board recruitment and the planned October 21 board meeting, including onboarding Robin Walden and meeting prospective candidates.

Drafting note: These minutes summarize the supplied transcript. Financial figures and some details were stated approximately during the hearing and should be verified against District records before approval or publication.