

# Metro 2021-22 Public Hearing Minutes

Thursday, June 3, 2021

12:30 pm

Metro Council  
Chambers 600 NE  
Grand Avenue  
Portland, Oregon

**Held Via Virtual Meeting**

**Present:**

**TSCC:**

Chair David Barringer, Vice-Chair James Ofsink, Commissioner Margo Norton, Commissioner Mark Wubbold, Commissioner Harmony Quiroz, Executive Director Craig Gibons, and Budget Analyst Tunie Betschart.

**Absent:** None

**Metro:**

Metro Council Members: President Lynn Peterson and Councilors Juan Carlos Gonzalez, Shirley Craddick, Christine Lewis, Gerritt Rosenthal, Mary Nolan, and Bob Stacey

Metro staff: Chief Operating Officer Marissa Madrigal, Chief Operating Officer Brian Kennedy; Metro's Attorney Carrie MacLaren, Director of Waste Prevention and Environmental Services Roy Brower, EEI Director Raahi Reddy, Planning and Development Director Elissa Gertler, and Regional Housing Director Patricia Rojas

Chair David Barringer opened the public hearing to consider Metro's 2021-22 Approved Budget. He asked the Commissioners and staff to introduce themselves. He then asked if any Commissioners have business relationships with the district that could be perceived as a conflict of interest. There were none.

He commended the District for their contribution to the area's Covid vaccination efforts saying it was great to see the Oregon Convention Center used for the vaccine events.

Then he asked the District to introduce the Metro Council and staff, make brief introductory remarks about the budget, and then the commissioners would ask a few questions. Following the questions, testimony from the public would be taken.

After the process description and introductions, Chair Barringer turned the floor over to Metro President Lynn Peterson.

President Peterson thanked commissioners for their public service. Next, she thanked the financial team for their leadership during the budget process and their excellent work on the Budget. Then, Ms. Peterson gave an overview of Metro's Budget and described how the pandemic had affected the agency. Finally, she explained five critical areas of service Metro is focusing on for the region.

They are:

- Visitor venues that have been serving the public and pitching in to support Covid-19 response
- WPES department that manages the region's garbage and recycling system
- Planning & Development department, working to maintain and increase livability for everyone in the region
- Parks & nature department that brings people closer to nature and protects parks and natural areas
- Growing housing team, working to build more affordable housing in the region, and implement the supportive services necessary to meet the needs of people in the region

She concluded by stating they have provided critical services to the region. Metro is proud of its regional accomplishments.

Following this overview of the budget, Chair Barringer moved to the prepared questions.

### **TSCC Questions:**

#### **Chair Barringer asked the following questions:**

Visitor Venues took a big hit last year. What is the plan for returning them to service this year? Do you think the pandemic will have any lasting impact on the operation of the venues? Are you planning for any changes in those services, the audiences, or the operating costs, given your pandemic experience?

Councilor Christine Lewis tackled these questions saying over the last 14 months, Metro's visitor venues made drastic cuts in personnel costs and operating expenses to maintain reserves. Currently, guidance in Multnomah County will allow the venues to resume indoor operations at 50% capacity.

The Oregon Convention Center has conventions scheduled beginning in August 2021. Organizations are eager to resume this type of business. Portland Expo Center, which relies heavily on local consumer shows, recently hosted the Pacific Northwest Sportsman Show with great success. In addition, Portland 5 has events scheduled for this fall. Metro believes those events will happen based on decreasing COVID restrictions but will require relaxing current social distancing guidelines.

The Oregon Zoo was closed from mid-March to mid-July 2020 and reopened with limited timed capacity. As restrictions continue to ease for the outdoor venue, the district expects available capacity to steadily increase, allowing more guests to visit this upcoming year. The zoo is also planning for some special events and limited catering events starting back up in some capacity this year. The anticipated attendance is at least a million guests this next fiscal year, about 67% of historical figures, and could be higher as the situation and guidance improve.

She addressed the question about the pandemic having a lasting impact on the operation of the venues by saying yes, they are expecting a gradual ramp-up in their business levels, hitting pre-pandemic levels around 2026. The necessary adjustments have been made to “ramp up” as the business returns.

To the question, about planning for any changes in services, the audiences, or the operating costs, given what they have learned during the pandemic, she said they are evaluating all of the service offerings at the venues, including what work needs to be done by in-house staff and what work can be delayed or temporarily done by others. The rebuilding of each department is being done conservatively and may require the shows to absorb more of the cost of service for their events. A reconstruction of the management teams at each venue and span of control will increase during this recovery. Bringing back staff that performs the services needed by the clients is critical. At the core of this budget, the district is making sure they are reopening and reopening safely.

**Commissioner Ofsink asked this follow up question:**

You mentioned new efficiencies or lessons learned that would be carried forward. Will you please elaborate on this?

Ms. Lewis gave the example of the theatre and balancing the number of backstage people. She gave the example of managing and parking at P5. That is necessary when loading in and out a large Broadway production. But not required when there is only a one-person production at a small theatre, 50 parking assistants are not needed to help load and unload. They are looking at what the goals are as far as providing assistance. It is unknown if they will still need someone to handle parking permits with the City of Portland. These types of things are being discussed and will need to be worked through.

**Commissioner Norton asked this follow up question:**

I believe you mentioned having the shows absorb more of the costs. Will this change in fee structure apply to local arts groups, symphony, ballet, or opera who have always enjoyed some unique fee structure?

Ms. Lewis replied that P5 has always had a three-tier fee structure, Commercial Rate, Resident Company Rates, and lower non-profit rates. She said she expects them to continue with that rate structure and maintain the same philosophy. The rate-setting is done by MERC and approved by the board.

**Commissioner Wubbold asked the following questions:**

Transient lodging taxes did not come in as anticipated this year. What is the plan for paying the Convention Center Hotel debt service now? Is this revenue stream pledged for any other debt service and what will be done in that situation?

President Peterson fielded this question saying two sources of revenue secure the 2017 hotel bonds. First, the Visitor Facilities Trust Account is governed by the Visitor Facilities Intergovernmental Agreement between Metro, the City of Portland and Multnomah County, and received the first transient lodging tax revenues. The second source is from payments to Metro from Multnomah County's Excise Tax Fund for the operation of the Oregon Convention Center. To date, all required debt service payments have been made from the

### Visitor Facilities Trust Account (VFTA).

Transient lodging tax revenues in the VFTA will be insufficient to fund all required payments in FY2021, requiring the balance to be funded from reserves. As of July 1, 2020, VFTA reserves were \$22,829,082. County staff forecast the fund's reserves dropping to \$15,781,682 on June 30, 2021, after required debt service and program allocation payments are made.

### **Commissioner Quiroz asked the following questions:**

The Budget includes funding to enhance the Regional Illegal Dumping program. Can you explain how that program works and what impact the changes will make?

Councilor Mary Nolan responded by saying that Metro's RID Patrol program cleans up dumped and abandoned garbage across the greater Portland area and provides cleanup and disposal support to the houseless community and local jurisdictions addressing impacts from people living in public spaces. Unfortunately, the program saw its cleanup resources cut in half during the pandemic as the demands for services increased significantly. Before the pandemic, the program relied heavily on incarcerated labor to provide its services. The increased funding provides the program the ability to add additional crews through expanding its workforce transition program to provide cleanup services and improve program response to demands for services. RID Patrol partners with Central City Concert to provide a cleanup crew and added a second CCC cleanup crew. Currently, the workforce transition program consists of one crew - one Metro staff person and two crew members from community-based organizations. Current staffing partners are Constructing Hope and Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center. In addition, RID Patrol just hired three additional RID crew leads to add three more workforce transition crews, creating 6-10 different crew member positions. These crew member positions will be staffed through partnerships with community organizations that provide services to people experiencing employment barriers such as formerly incarcerated, long-term unemployment, and other challenges. The RID Patrol program is in the process of adding additional staffing partners. These different crews will not only help the program reduce its response times but offers job opportunities.

### **Commissioner Ofsink asked these follow-up questions:**

Which employees are Metro employees and which are contracted out? Are there going to be four new teams, and will the team leaders be Metro employees?

Mr. Roy Brower added the following explanations saying they are adding additional staff that will help with coordination and the administrative piece, taking calls on illegal dumping. In addition, they are adding another staff person to help with paint donations and the graffiti removal process. The four crews plus two Central City crews could expand to eight crews and have Metro employees as leaders.

### **Commissioner Norton asked the following questions:**

A crucial part of the RID program is workforce development. Where is Metro going with workforce development? How will that work in that program, and how does it dovetail with other Metro workforce development programs?

Councilor Bob Stacey said they have several initiatives in workforce development, collaborating with external workforce partners and internal workforce partners. The funding provides some additional capacity on the team to develop further the workforce development components and created pathways into and out of the program. RID Patrol collaborates with external workforce partners in addition to internal workforce partners such as Metro Paint, Metro South Traffic program, and the Construction Careers Pathway Project to find developmental and long-term employment opportunities within Metro.

This is an expansion. Does Metro foresee the continued growth of workforce development?

Councilor Stacey said Metro is all about workforce development, bringing in communities of color, disadvantaged folks, and minorities wherever there is an opportunity.

Ms. Marissa Madrigal added that as an organization funded by public dollars, they think it is essential, not just their service but also how they provide that service. So Metro wants to examine all the ways in which their employment practices can benefit the community, whether that is through providing excellent wages, great benefits, and stability, to career ladders. So from the bottom to the specialized areas of work, Metro wants to be an organization that positively impacts every dollar through employment and services.

Ms. Raahi Reddy added through the model that Construction Careers Pathway Project Metro could continue to leverage its ability to convene regional partners and to work with workforce advocates. This leverage could move into and communities of color to create more opportunities and more regional sharing to further workforce equity, especially in sectors where Metro has a role.

They are excited about the RID program expansion. They are thinking of additional ways they can expand family-sustaining jobs for BIPOC communities and women workers. This is an area of Metro's DEI program, along with partners, departments, and venues that will continue to build and deepen in this next year. They will be looking internally at what they can do with career ladders and onboarding community jobs at Metro and externally with their private sector relationships.

She concluded by saying they hope to come back in the next couple of years to have more conversations about this and explore more ways to invest in workforce development. This program is needed now more than ever, following the economic downturn after the pandemic.

**Commissioner Wubbold asked these follow-up questions:**

I see the jobs in Metro, the training, and the opportunities. Is the plan to advance those career paths through the partner organizations or build career ladders with Metro, so they can continue to climb from Metro entry-level all the way up through all the various services Metro provides? Or is it more about helping the partner organizations establish ladders that people can advance through within those organizations?

Ms. Reddy answered, saying it is both. There are a lot of areas within Metro that require specialized expertise. This is an opportunity to work with Metro's partners. It is not an either/or but rather how many different ways can Metro build community and organizational resilience through stable, well-paying, family-supporting careers.

**Commissioner Ofsink asked these questions:**

What does Capacity Building mean in relation to Civic Engagement? What types of activities would this funding support in the region?

Councilor Lewis responded, saying this Community Capacity Building Work goes back to the Budget two years ago. At that time, they decided they needed to go through their entire process to figure out what the agency could do to prevent being in an echo chamber, not hearing from the communities they serve.

They went through an intensive co-creative process with 11 community-based organizations, working with Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Metro heard loud and clear what it takes to achieve full democratic participation of greater Portland's communities of color. First - it takes trust, relationship, and time - Black, Indigenous, and other communities of color have been and continue to be harmed by the government. Metro has long enlisted the partnership of trusted Community-based organizations to support the rebuilding of trust and nurturing of relationships. Second, it takes well-supported and equipped leaders of color who can navigate the landscape of public participation - by supporting decision-makers, joining advisory committees, and organizing in their communities. Here too, Metro leans on their community partners to support these leaders.

Metro's new Civic Engagement Capacity Building program seeks to more meaningfully support CBOs serving communities of color in deepening civic participation among the region's historically marginalized and politically disenfranchised communities. In particular - the program hopes to build civic engagement capacity in under-resourced areas of the region - Clackamas County, Washington County, and East Multnomah County. This 3-year grant program will support activities such as BIPOC leadership development, civic skill-building for staff and community members, member recruitment and relationship building, and community visioning. Ultimately, grantees will support more leaders of color sharing their perspectives during Metro's community engagement and decision-making process to help Metro be more inclusive and achieve more equitable outcomes. This is just one more step that Metro can take to be more inclusive and achieve more equitable results for the region. A report outlining the findings from numerous discussions with community partners was submitted to Metro Council with the original budget proposal in January 2020.

Do you have a sense of how many grants and the range of funding this involves?

Ms. Reddy said they anticipate four or five grants. They told organizations that grant amounts per year would be between \$80 and \$ 100 thousand. People have applied for varying levels of grants. They are reviewing the finalists and should have some decisions by the end of the month and come back to the Metro Council to share the finalists.

**Chair Barringer asked the following questions:**

What is in the pipeline for the Affordable Housing bond measure work, and what results will we see next year? Are all the districts participating as planned?

Councilor Rosenthal responded, saying Metro and partners are more than halfway to achieving the goal of 3,900 units with only 33% of bond funds committed. As of December 2020, four projects were under construction and 15 more in the pipeline, set to break ground

in 2021. Collectively, this represents 2,045 affordable homes, including 1,057 family-sized dwellings, which is 2+ bedrooms, 623 units designated for a household with incomes at 30% or less of area median income or below.

Metro's recently released 2020 Housing Bond Annual Report includes a map of these projects, geographically distributed across the three counties. All districts are participating; of the current pipeline units, 22% are in Clackamas County, 25% are in Multnomah County, and 52% are in Washington County. These numbers reflect early action by Washington County and Beaverton to commit funding to projects. It is expected that Clackamas County, Portland, Gresham, Hillsboro, and Home Forward will add many more units to the pipeline in 2021.

Bond investments demonstrate strong outcomes toward the goal of advancing fair housing and reducing segregation regionally. Of these units, 46% are in areas lower than the regional average percentage of people of color, and 59% are in areas with a lower share of per capita regulated affordable housing. Moreover, the investments are primarily located in areas with access to public transportation and walkable neighborhoods, including 69% of total units within either a quarter-mile of frequent service bus or a half-mile of MAX and 70% with a walk score of 50, which is "somewhat walkable," or better. In addition, the distribution of bond investments across the region shows substantial support for the goal of stabilizing communities at a higher risk for displacement, particularly communities of color and people with limited English proficiency. Of the total units in the pipeline, 54% are located in areas that have a higher proportion of people of color, and 73% are located in places that have higher than average concentrations of either people of color or people who speak English less than "very well."

**Commissioner Wubbold asked this follow-up question:**

Will contingencies that have been built into the contracts be sufficient with the dramatic increase in material costs?

Ms. Patricia Rojas answered that they had included sufficient contingencies to cover the rising cost of materials.

Ms. Elissa Gertler added that they work closely with each of the implementing jurisdictions on their improvement strategies, so they have some thought of the resources needed to meet their share of the regional targets. The pipeline of projects is somewhat expected in those strategies, so Metro already knows what projects are in the works. She said they are assessing moment-in-time expenditures and managing activity. So each jurisdiction does have a plan.

**Commissioner Quiroz asked the following questions:**

All three counties now have an approved plan for supportive housing. What results do you expect to see in FY22? This is supported by Income tax. How is the flow of income tax funds for this program? Last year your goal was to set up collections. How are the initial collections, and do you expect revenue next year to be at the original level? Are collections meeting projections?

Councilor Nolan fielded these questions stating Metro and its county partners have spent the last year preparing to implement this groundbreaking program to end homelessness in

the region. Metro's work plan and code describe a process for review. It defines the local advisory body, after inclusive community engagement and extensive analysis, makes a recommendation for the county board of commissioners to approve a local implementation plan. This plan is then ready for review by Metro's Regional Oversight Committee, which considers recommending the plan for approval by the Metro Council. She said she had a correction to the question. To date, Multnomah and Washington County's local implementation plans have been approved by Metro Council, and the Clackamas County LIP will go to Council for approval on June 17, 2021.

In FY22, Metro will see a significant scaling of homeless services systems and capacity across the region and will see significant impacts in the lives of individuals experiencing homelessness. For example, in year one, the district anticipates supporting 1500 households in the category of chronically houseless with permanent supportive housing. This strategy will provide housing, rent assistance, and critical services to those with the highest needs. At least 665 new year-round shelter beds are projected to be added. This will increase to at least 715 during the winter months. Washington County does not currently have year-round shelter beds. With Supporting Housing Services (SHS), they will have 100 year-round shelter beds, which increases to 150 in the winter months. Metro will see significant regional services increase in outreach services, shelter capacity, placement into permanent housing, long-term rent assistance, rapid rehousing, eviction prevention, case management, and permanent supportive housing. Thousands of individuals will receive services the first year.

The region will also see a new level of coordination among the counties and Metro's planning process to develop a regional system. Metro has increased its internal capacity to accomplish this planning by effectively recruiting talent from organizations with success in that area. She gave the example of Patricia Rojas.

She said the piece that is the last element of putting this together is for Metro to convene a Tri-County Coordinating committee for this effort. She commended Washington County Chair Kathryn Harrington for expressing this concept when she presented Washington County's implementation plan. She recognized that this is a regional problem. She said they are providing a proportional amount of the solution needed for the entire region regardless of the kind of arbitrary county boundaries. Washington County will do the proportion that the revenue distributed to the County will allow. That spirit is what needs to be captured in this coordinating effort. These actions would reduce or eliminate duplication of efforts making sure people are not falling between where one County provides services, and another takes over. This would create a seamless safety net for those needing the services in the entire region.

In addition to program work, Metro has also been working to implement the new tax collection system. In the summer of 2020, Metro formed a tax implementation advisory table to inform staff on technical aspects of tax implementation, technical issues and provide recommendations to ensure a smooth, legal and easy tax collection process. They also signed an IGA with the City of Portland to administer these taxes. The City has the experience, the technical capability, and a scalable team to collect these taxes for Metro. Metro Council adopted the new income tax codes in December 2020, and the tax became effective January 1, 2021. With the code adopted, Metro began the communication plan. Collections started in April 2021. The April 2021 collections were \$500,000, which is primarily business income tax estimated payments. Collections are expected to begin slowly and gradually pick up through January 2022 as more payroll companies and employers



complete the setup of payroll withholding and start offering it. Collections are expected to peak in April 2022, when the calendar year 2021 tax returns are due. This is the expected pattern for a new income tax. However, Metro's collection may be slower because the region hasn't had a local personal income tax since 2005. A business income tax is new for businesses in Washington and Clackamas counties.

Metro's SHS revenue estimate in the FY22 approved Budget is \$180 million. This estimate has changed from the original estimate of \$250 million based on changes made by the Metro Council to address potential double taxation and other issues. Those changes are anticipated to reduce revenues by 10-16% or \$25-\$40 million per year. In addition, the pandemic has impacted the income of some businesses and individuals subject to these taxes, and Metro has lowered the tax revenue estimated as a result. Based on this revenue estimate, Metro has budgeted \$151 million in distributions to the county partners.

Ms. Rojas added they expect somewhere between 1100 and 1500 new shelter beds this year, primarily for population A, folks experiencing long-term homelessness, having at least one disability, and a meager income. This is a significant investment. They also anticipate another 1500 placement in permanent supportive housing for the type A population. So in just these two examples, there is a potential to serve 3,000 folks. She concluded by stating there will be a lot of infrastructure building this year.

**Commissioner Ofsink asked these questions:**

With the voter approval of the affordable housing bond measure and the homeless services measure, the community expects to see fewer people living outside. In this Budget, what is Metro's confidence level that you will meet the community's expectations? What progress will we see?

Councilor Stacey responded, saying they are doing a lot to reduce those experiencing homelessness. Should current conditions remain constant, there will be a visible reduction in homelessness. One significant risk is the expiring moratorium on evictions for families for failure to pay rent. If that should happen, it will be difficult to see any reduction in the homeless population. Counties are actively distributing federal rent assistance and will align federal and local funding to maximize Supporting Housing Service dollars and prevent homelessness for thousands of households.

**Commissioner Norton asked the following questions:**

Metro initiated a solid waste system facility planning process this year. Why is this study needed? Who is participating in this effort? How far do you plan to get next year? What is the status of the south county solid waste facility?

Councilor Rosenthal said the purpose of this project is to develop a Solid Waste System Facilities Plan that will identify:

- The facility-based services necessary for achieving the goals of the 2030 Regional Waste Plan
- The current and anticipated gaps in those services
- Alternative pathways for the public and private sectors to fill the gaps

Covid has thrown them a few curveballs and it is hard to predict what will evolve as the economy recovers. In addition, technology is changing, waste streams are changing,

plastics disposal is changing, and there are other changes in transportation of solid waste. So it is a changing environment. Therefore, it is necessary to come up with specific plans for reaching the 2030 goals.

The pathways may include construction of new facilities, incorporation of new services within existing facilities, and non-facility-based alternatives, if practical. In addition, the pathways will consist of consideration of costs and ratepayer impacts and elevate the needs of communities of color and other groups historically underserved by the solid waste system.

While Metro's 2030 Regional Waste Plan provides overall direction for the region's policy and programmatic efforts, it does not provide detailed analyses and work plans for implementing this direction. The System Facilities Plan will give the Metro Council, Chief Operating Officer, and department leadership an assessment of facility service needs and gaps to inform their decision-making on how and when to address those gaps through:

- Direct investment in, and ownership of, facilities
- Policies both, financial or other incentives to the private sector
- Regulatory requirements for the private sector

Staff expects to substantially or entirely carry out the project by the end of the 21-22 fiscal year, with uncertainty primarily driven by the ability to meet timelines for community and stakeholder engagement.

Work is continuing to site, design, and construct a new facility in Clackamas County to provide some or all of the Metro South Transfer Station services in Oregon City. South Station has some space limitations and some issues with floodplain during the 1996 floods. There are certain limitations for parking too. A Purchase and Sale Agreement is in effect for a property on Jennifer Street in the Clackamas Industrial Area. Metro has been conducting environmental and geotechnical due diligence on the site and engaging with a Community Advisory Group, local governments, and other key stakeholders. Staff anticipates that Council will decide in the early fall of this year on whether to proceed with the purchase of the site. If this site is purchased, there will be a discussion on what facilities to have there. A lot of planning will need to be done in those two years.

Mr. Brower added that Metro South is their most vulnerable facility, built back in the 1980s. They have had to hire extra staff to handle the traffic to mitigate safety concerns.

**Commissioner Wubbold asked these questions:**

Metro funnels much of its dedicated revenue to other organizations to carry out the objectives of the funding. Money for housing, homeless services, transportation and planning studies, parks and nature, etc. How is metro monitoring accountability for all these programs? Is there one standard, or do specific programs vary or have additional controls?

Councilor Craddick responded, saying Metro is committed to investing voter-approved funds transparently, accountably, and with meaningful public oversight. They take very seriously their role in ensuring that programs are implemented following voter intent.

There is a sizeable fiscal component to this, of course, but also programmatic accountability to deliver results. The Metro COO, Marissa Madrigal, monitors all of these programs through regular meetings with senior management and oversight of the development and execution of multi-year work plans. In addition, Metro Council provides additional monitoring and

accountability through regular work session updates, management reports, and the annual budget process.

In addition, Metro has several external accountability measures that vary by program. She gave highlights on the most recently passed initiatives.

Parks and Nature have approved three bond measures since 1995 and two levies. The Natural Areas and Capital Performance Oversight Committee keep Metro accountable and transparent in its use of capital funds from the \$475 million 2019 nature bond and the 2018 parks and natural areas levy, which raises about \$16 million a year. Voters overwhelmingly approved both measures. The capital oversight committee is the main external body for accountability. It will provide transparent oversight of the 2019 bond measure by reviewing implementation to ensure consistency with the measure's requirements and principles.

In addition, Metro also produces an annual report presented to Council and published externally and expands beyond capital funds. A public accounting firm will conduct an annual financial audit of the expenditure of the bond proceeds, and the results will be published on Metro's website.

Affordable Housing Bond is the initiative that has been discussed at this hearing. Metro practices transparency and strives for good stewardship of community resources entrusted to it by the public. For Metro's housing programs, accountability means independent and transparent oversight, regular audits, and publicly available information on progress toward goals and outcomes. Metro's Affordable Housing Bond program is overseen by an independent affordable housing bond oversight committee appointed by the Metro Council. The community oversight committee has already reviewed each implementing jurisdiction's plan for consistency with the program. It is responsible for ongoing monitoring of outcomes throughout implementation, including an annual report to Metro Council. The committee meets at least quarterly, and meetings are open to the public.

The Supportive Housing Services Regional Oversight committee is comprised of volunteer public officials convened to provide independent and transparent oversight of the regional program. The committee will include individuals with diverse personal and professional experience and expertise, including people with lived experiences of housing instability and homelessness. The committee will evaluate implementation to ensure it is consistent with program goals and principles. The committee will also make annual reports and presentations to the Metro Council and the boards of commissioners of Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties regarding the program's challenges, successes, and outcomes. The regional oversight committee will meet at least every three months throughout the life of the regional Supportive Housing Services program.

She concluded by saying there is a lot of effort to ensure they accomplish what they said they would do. Without the public's trust, they would not be able to do their work.

**Vice-Chair Ofsink asked the following questions since Chair Barringer had lost the connection to the hearing:**

How will the pandemic impact the Metro work environment? Are employees scheduled to return to their regular workstations? Will those workstations be configured differently? And the Metro Headquarters building has been planned for upgrades for several years. What is the plan for that rehab now that the pandemic has made its mark?

Ms. Lewis fielded these questions stating much of Metro's workforce doesn't work in the Metro Regional Center, and many have been on the job every day throughout the pandemic. Transfer stations are a great example. They only close on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Years' Days. Metro's work takes place throughout the region. They have followed state guidelines regarding the continuation of services at locations that provide public services and continue to monitor changes to policies and guidelines. At this time, Metro is proceeding with caution to reduce risk to employees and the public.

The COVID pandemic fundamentally changed how they worked and provided time to rethink how the Metro Regional Center was being used and an opportunity to move forward with some improvements that have been planned for years. In addition to the previously planned improvements, new investments in technology will help Metro function more efficiently.

Metro leadership supported working remotely and recognized the need to pivot at the pandemic's beginning to a more flexible work environment. As a result, instead of adding more single occupancy cubicles throughout the building, Metro added more collaboration spaces and additional workstations to meet the changing needs. In addition, offices that used to be single-occupancy will now function as rooms that all staff can access for small meetings, focus space, or health and wellness. This flexible hybrid work approach and changing number of workstations reduced Metro's need to seek additional off-site office space.

Remote work will be protected for all Metro staff whose jobs can be done remotely in the future. While they are closely monitoring the impacts of COVID-19 and the Governor's reopening phases, they won't welcome staff back to the office until it is safe to do so. Still, remote working will continue to be a part of Metro's work culture even after it's safe to return to the office. Working from home doesn't work for everyone. However, some people are very eager and have very legitimate needs to get back into the office.

Regarding returning to work at the Metro Regional Center (MRC), if health metrics allow, a limited number of workspaces at the MRC may be made available for a small number of Metro employees in late June or early July.

The building will not reopen to everyone all at once. Instead, it will reopen in phases. Small groups of staff will test workspaces and new technology in conference rooms and workstations before the building is open more widely.

The Metro Together Workplace Project team asks staff and community members for feedback to help inform and adjust technology, workspaces, and other aspects of the building as staff begin slowly to work from the office space as appropriate.

She concluded by stating that is the framework under which they are operating. However, there are still some unknowns as they return as they must operate under guidelines that are not theirs to create. Flexibility is here to stay. Metro will manage for productivity through purpose and process and not rely on space as they have in the past.

**Vice-Chair Ofsink said:**

A lot of districts and local employers are interested in keeping the remote flexibility. However, it comes with its own set of challenges. It will be interesting to see how this develops.

Vice-chair Ofsink thanked the Metro President, Councilors, and staff for the excellent discussion of the prepared questions. Then, he asked if anyone would like to give testimony. Executive Director Gibons said no one had signed up to give testimony.

Vice-Chair Ofsink closed the Public Hearing and opened the regular meeting of the Tax Supervising and Conservation Commission. He asked Executive Director Gibons for comments on the budget. He said the budget document was well organized. It was a pleasure working with staff as they had quick responses to any questions. Executive Director Gibons said staff has no objections or recommendations to include in the Certification Letter.

He asked the TSCC commissioners if anyone had any additional comments. There were none.

Commissioner Norton moved to certify Metro's 2021-22 Approved Budget as presented by staff. Commissioner Quiroz seconded the motion, which carried with a unanimous vote. (5 with the return of Chair Barringer).

With there being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:05

**Minutes approved by Commission  
At June 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting.**