



Community Advisory Panel Meeting Minutes for June 6, 2024

Members attending the meeting: Christina Bouler, Isaac Collins, Tiki Dixon, Ty Hall, Barbara Kelly, Terry Ledford, Claudia Mata, Keira Wyatt

Others in attendance:

Facilitator: Dawn Ford

KUB Staff: John Williams, Elaine Reed, Nick Bridgeman, Nathan Babelay, Mark Walker, Tiffany Martin, Erin Gill, John Gresham, Elba Marshall

New Business

The Community Advisory Panel met at 3:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 6th, 2024, at KUB's Hoskins Operations Center (4505 Middlebrook Pike).

Facilitator Dawn Ford asked if there were any changes to the April meeting minutes. There were no changes, and the panel approved the minutes.

Ms. Ford introduced the meeting's topic as vegetation management and its critical role to KUB and other utility systems. She then introduced John Williams, Senior Vice President and Chief Infrastructure & Compliance Officer for KUB, to begin the presentation.

Mr. Williams began by saying this is a timely discussion with spring and summer storms impacting the electric system. He said he was proud of the work done by the Vegetation Management team to improve the reliability of the system. He said the team would discuss the program overall and present two recommendations for discussion. He introduced Elaine Reed, Supervisor of Vegetation Management, Nick Bridgeman, Vegetation Management Forester, and Nathan Babelay, Director of Maintenance. Ms. Reed and Mr. Bridgeman proceeded to give an overview of KUB's Vegetation Management program and proposed changes.

Tiki Dixon asked what's done for a customer who doesn't want their tree cut down. Ms. Reed says KUB does not cut the tree down without homeowner approval. Mr. Dixon asked if the tree would be cut down if it was leaning towards the lines. Ms. Reed said the tree would still not be cut down without the homeowner's approval.

Ms. Reed asked for input from the Panel regarding the Vegetation Management Customer Advocate role. This role was created to resolve elevated customer tree pruning concerns. Customers can call the advocate directly. While the advocate is an employee of KUB, they are separate from the Vegetation Management team. KUB now recommends that this role be dissolved and tree issues route through the Customer Service team.

Mr. Dixon asked if KUB pays this employee separately to be an advocate. Ms. Reed clarified that the advocate role is a small part of the employee's normal duties. Ms. Reed continued that the request for dissolving the role comes from a lack of use by the community. She said over the years they have seen less of a need for the role as the in-house foresters can speak with the customers and resolve many of the issues. The Customer Service team is also trained to handle disputes if they escalate.

Mr. Williams expanded on this by saying enhancements to communication and the tools available to the Vegetation Management team are greater than they were when this advocate role was created. There is also a customer resolution process utilizing best practices that is better equipped to assist with disputes. These recommendations and the input from the Panel will be shared with the KUB Board.

Keira Wyatt asked how KUB would choose which members of the Customer Service team would respond to the disputes the advocate originally would have handled. John Williams said that the Customer Service team is well trained to handle disputes.

Tiffany Martin, Senior Vice President and Chief Customer Officer, said there is a smaller staff of Customer Resolution Specialists that handle escalated concerns. These specialists are trained to go into the field to understand the dispute and see the customer's point of view. They work on a solution that fits both the customer's needs and KUB's needs. Anybody from this group could work on the vegetation management concerns, but they are assigned specific geographic areas that they represent. This allows them to build relationships in their assigned area. In some cases, disputes can still be escalated to managers, directors, and even senior staff to manage.

Mr. Williams asked the Panel for their feedback and concerns regarding the potential change to the Vegetation Management Customer Advocate position.

Mr. Dixon said the change makes sense thanks to the training and processes used by the Customer Service team.

Barbara Kelly added that having specialists go out in the field to resolve issues is ideal as there are things that are hard to resolve over the phone.

Mr. Williams continued the presentation by discussing overhang removal. Currently, there is an established overhang of 10 feet for KUB's distribution lines. KUB only removes overhang above the clearance zone if it is dead, weak, diseased, or possesses other risks for failure. KUB's recommendation is to remove this overhang completely. This would improve safety, reliability, and repair costs. Mr. Williams continued that customers expect

greater reliability than ever before. As this demand for reliability increases, it's important to bring up a change that will improve this but will also cause aesthetic changes.

Mr. Dixon asked if cutting a tree causes an issue with weight distribution since one side will now be heavier. Mr. Bridgeman answered that the most important thing is how the pruning cuts are performed. Trees can compartmentalize the load based on these cuts. Foresters evaluate the trees for anything that can be structurally compromising. Mr. Dixon asked if wind or snow weighing down the branches on the uncut side of a tree could cause it to fall. Mr. Bridgeman said a healthy and stable tree would still support this change in weight distribution. He also added that any work that would require the removal of the tree would be offered to the customer. Mr. Dixon asked Mark Walker, Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, how this change to remove the overhanging limbs would affect the budget for Vegetation Management. Mr. Walker said this would cause an increase in the cost of trimming but should not impact the budget overall. Mr. Williams added that he believes Vegetation Management is well funded, and the team would be able to balance the needs of the program with the costs. Ms. Reed added that the overhanging limbs would only need to be removed once and then would not have an impact in the future. Mr. Walker also said that the cost of this change now would help lower costs due to vegetation caused outages in the long term.

Christina Boulter asked if there was data on what percentages of damage were caused by these overhanging limbs. Mr. Williams answered that it's about 15-20% of the vegetation outages that they see. The majority of impacts come from trees outside of KUB's right-of-way. There is some uncertainty on this amount based on what the crews put in their reports. Mr. Williams said he believes the actual number of damage events from overhanging limbs is slightly higher. Ms. Boulter asked if there was any consideration to moving lines underground. Mr. Williams said this is a frequent question that comes up. He said it is very expensive to bury the lines, it can cause damage to root systems, and the utility poles are shared with communications companies which would also need to be buried. Ms. Reed added there are times during the design phase where lines could be planned in different areas if it would cause a large impact to trees.

Ms. Kelly shared she believes individual customers do not like the lateral pruning method due to the look of the tree. She asked if KUB has popular support or if they receive complaints from customers regarding this method of pruning. Ms. Reed said they explain to customers that the pruning is done for the health of the tree and not for the aesthetics. She reiterated that lateral pruning allows for better healing of the tree.

Mr. Bridgeman mentioned the numerous service requests KUB receives from customers asking for trees to be inspected near lines. He encouraged anyone with these concerns to contact KUB for assistance.

Mr. Williams concluded by saying this decision looks at aesthetics versus reliability, and he appreciates the feedback and insights that were provided as KUB considers this change to the policy.

Ty Hall discussed what the increase in tree removal would be from this change. He assumes this would impact older, larger trees due to the height.

Terry Ledford asked if there are federal requirements KUB must adhere to that factor into this plan. Mr. Williams said those requirements apply more to TVA, but KUB's requirements and clearances are for public safety.

Mr. Dixon said communication is important with homeowners, so they are not surprised by work done on their trees. Mr. Williams again thanked the foresters for being proactive with customers and discussing their concerns.

Ms. Ford asked if there were any materials the Panel would like to have to distribute to their constituents. The materials would be emailed to the Panel following the meeting.

Isaac Collins asked where the biggest vegetation issues are experienced. Mr. Williams said compact, hilly areas are the most difficult. Ms. Reed added that the older areas have older trees which could also be in decline.

Mr. Hall asked what the percentage of outages are due to vegetation on subtransmission lines since they have a 25-foot clearance. Ms. Reed said it has happened as trees taller than 25 feet will fall outside of the clearance zone. KUB said they would follow up with the information to the Panel.

Ms. Ford announced that the next meeting would be October 3rd.

No members of the public addressed the panel during the public forum.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.