



City of Duluth

411 West First Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802

Minutes - Final

Duluth Public Utilities Commission.

Tuesday, July 16, 2024

5:15 PM

Council Chambers, City Hall, 411 West First Street

CALL TO ORDER

President Ryan called the meeting to order at 5:18 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Erin Abramson, Andrea Crouse, Councilor Mike Mayou, Carrie Ryan, Councilor Terese Tomanek

Members Absent: Councilor Wendy Durrwachter

Staff Present: Cyndi Falconer, Leanna Gilbert, Amanda Mangan, Chris Ostern, Howard Smith, Kerry Venier

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Linda Herron, resident of 2617 E 5th Street, stated her appreciation for all of the efforts to help make this city a better place. She also requested that everyone speak into the microphones.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[DPUC127](#) June 18, 2024 DPUC meeting minutes draft

Indexes:

Attachments: [06182024 DPUC meeting minutes draft](#)

The June 18, 2024 meeting minutes were approved by all present.

NEW BUSINESS

Water System Funding Strategy

Howard Smith mentioned that the idea is to change the clean water surcharge into a water infrastructure fee to fund the necessary improvements to the water system. Kerry Venier stated that the ordinance to make this change is being drafted. This would basically be a debt service fund. Staff is compiling a list of projects and cost estimates to determine the amount of debt required to make the improvements. There was some discussion about stormwater damage mitigation.

2025 Draft Budget Review

Kerry Venier and Chris Ostern gave an overview of the draft 2025 budget for each of the utilities and answered questions from commissioners. Commissioner Tomanek requested the end of 2024 cash balances. There may still be changes to the proposed budget before the August meeting since some transportation projects are still being determined, but staff will highlight any changes made. Cyndi Falconer responded to questions regarding lead service projects and funding. Commissioner Mayou requested another meeting with WLSSD this year. Staff can arrange that for the fall when their budget has been set.

UPDATES FROM STAFF

Howard Smith stated that we are still waiting for the administrative order from the EPA. He also reported on various projects including the water plant resiliency project and the Woodland Booster Station reconstruction. He stated that there will be an inspection of the gas system by PHMSA in a month. He also reported that there are about 20 gas meters failing each week, which is why the upcoming gas meter replacement project is so important.

COMMISSIONER QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS

Vice President Abramson asked about the water pumped versus water sold in the 2023 PW&U Annual Report. Kerry Venier stated that there is an error that we are investigating. Chris Ostern mentioned that acceptable water loss is 10% due to things such as breaks in the system and street sweeping. Howard Smith stated that he thinks this is due to a metering issue at the water plant.

Commissioner Tomanek asked what to do if there is water running down the alley into the street. Howard Smith responded that this should be reported to Utility Dispatch at 218-730-4100 or online. Commissioner Mayou asked if sump pump discharges into the street should be reported to the same line. Howard Smith responded that those are usually referred to the Utility Resources Specialists, but Dispatch can forward it to them.

UPCOMING COUNCIL ACTIONS

Howard Smith mentioned that the appointment of Derek Medved to the DPUC should be on the next Council agenda.

PREVIEW OF UPCOMING BUSINESS

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, August 20, 2024 at 5:15 p.m. in City Council Chambers. The Commission will discuss the proposed 2025 budget and consider a resolution recommending the budget to City Council. The Commission will also consider a resolution setting 2025 utility fees. Discussion of the water system funding strategy will continue.

KNOWN ABSENCES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

No absences were mentioned.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:21 p.m.