



City of Duluth

411 West First Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802

Minutes - Final

Duluth Public Utilities Commission.

Tuesday, June 20, 2023

5:15 PM Lakewood Water Treatment Plant: 8130 Congdon Blvd

CALL TO ORDER

President Ryan called the meeting to order at 5:25 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Erin Abramson, Chris Adatte, Andrea Crouse, Councilor Noah Hobbs, Carrie Ryan, Councilor Terese Tomanek

Members Absent: Councilor Mike Mayou

Staff Present: Jim Benning, Cyndi Falconer, Leanna Gilbert, Greg Guerrero, Patrick Johnson, Chris Ostern, Tom Pfeffer, Steve Pitkanen, Lindsey Seifert-Monson, Kerry Venier

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

No comments were made at this time.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[DPUC105](#) May 16, 2023 DPUC meeting minutes draft

Indexes:

Attachments: [05162023 DPUC meeting minutes draft](#)

Commissioner Crouse motioned to approve the May 16, 2023 meeting minutes, and the motion was approved by all present.

NEW BUSINESS

[DPUC106](#) 23PUC-001- RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING PROCEDURES FOR APPEALS TO THE DULUTH PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION RELATED TO CLAIMS OF BILLING ERRORS.

Indexes:

Attachments: [23PUC-001 establishing refund time frame](#)

Jim Benning stated that this resolution formalizes how far back we will go for underpayment and overpayment for billing error appeals. Commissioner Abramson motioned to approve 23PUC-001, and the resolution was approved by

all present.

Water utility discussion

Staff presented an analysis of water utility projected expenses and consumption for the years 2024 to 2028. They also provided four different rate scenarios for the Commission to consider. There was some discussion about rates for municipalities and large commercial customers as well as water meter replacement. Commissioner Abramson asked to see the numbers instead of graphs. President Ryan asked to see all of the utility rates for context. Staff can provide a graphic of the rates and the effect on a monthly bill. Jim Benning explained the process and timeline for a rate increase. Commissioner Adatte left at 6:10 p.m. Commissioner Hobbs requested additional scenarios for consideration. Commissioner Abramson requested the water capital plan.

Lead services replacement update

Cyndi Falconer reported that the 8th Street project is about halfway through. We have submitted two of our 2023 projects to the State, and we will be submitting the other two this week. It looks like we will try to begin construction on all four projects this year. Tom Pfeffer is planning to bid the projects out every two weeks, so we can adjust as needed. We have started the process and requested another \$10M for the 2024 projects as well. We will focus on broken lead services, Central Hillside, and associated street projects. The filter program is moving along. We have distributed over 1,800 filters so far, and residents are requesting replacement filters. The website has been updated so residents can make appointments and requests online. Jim Benning stated that we are planning to hire more staff for the lead replacement program. Staff has discussed a blanket project to replace broken lead services. President Ryan asked about the status of the ordinance for replacing lead services at rental properties. We are still working on that with the Attorney's Office.

UPDATES FROM STAFF

Tom Pfeffer reported on ongoing utility projects including Morris Thomas water main, Michigan Street water and gas main, and Superior Street.

Jim Benning gave an update on the \$5M resiliency grant that we received for the Lakewood Pump Station.

COMMISSIONER QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS

Commissioner Abramson asked when WLSSD would be coming to explain their charges. They may be coming in October. Jim Benning suggested possibly meeting at WLSSD in October.

UPCOMING COUNCIL ACTIONS

No actions were mentioned.

PREVIEW OF UPCOMING BUSINESS

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 18, 2023 at 5:15 p.m. in City Council Chambers. Staff will present more water rate scenarios, the

projected budget numbers, and the 5-year capital improvement plan as requested. Staff should have proposed 2024 budget numbers for review in August.

KNOWN ABSENCES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Commissioner Abramson may need to leave by 6:15 p.m. on July 18.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:27 p.m.