



City of Duluth

411 West First Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802

Minutes - Final

Duluth Public Utilities Commission.

Tuesday, June 16, 2020

5:15 PM

Council Chambers, City Hall, 411 West First Street

NOTICE: The Duluth Public Utilities Commission will be holding its June 16, 2020 Meeting by other electronic means pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Section 13D.021 in response to the COVID-19 emergency. Some members of the Board will be participating through video conference. Due to the COVID-19 emergency and the closure of City facilities, public comment will not be taken in person. However, members of the public can monitor the meeting and provide public comment on agenda items through WebEx Events. Visit <https://duluthmn.gov/live-meeting> to access the meeting. The public is also encouraged to submit written comment to jbenning@duluthmn.gov prior to the meeting. Please include "June 2020 DPUC Agenda" in the subject line, and include your name and address and the agenda item you are speaking to. The agenda can be found online at <https://duluthmn.gov/boards-commissions/duluth-public-utilities-commission/>. Please note that all public comment is considered Public Data.

CALL TO ORDER

President Ryan called the meeting to order at 5:16 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Chris McIntosh, Councilor Derek Medved, Rob Prusak, Carrie Ryan, Councilor Joel Sipress; Councilor Gary Anderson arrived at 5:22 p.m.

Staff Present: Bob Asleson, Jim Benning, Leanna Gilbert, Greg Guerrero, Tom Johnson, Chris Ostern, Eric Shaffer, Kerry Venier

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

No citizens were present for comment.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[DPUC019](#)

May 19, 2020 DPUC meeting minutes draft

Indexes:

Attachments: [05192020 DPUC meeting minutes draft](#)

Commissioner Prusak motioned to approve the minutes, and the motion was approved by all present.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Stormwater system discussion

Tom Johnson, Senior Engineer for the City, explained two additional slides that

were added to the stormwater presentation as requested at the previous meeting. There was some discussion about cost savings when repair is done prior to infrastructure failure. Tom will add a sentence to the slide about cost savings. The Commission also discussed utility staffing and Best Management Practices (BMP) discount management. Commissioners and staff reviewed the public education timeline. Staff will contact the Chamber of Commerce, the Greater Downtown Council, and the Duluth News Tribune Editorial Board to arrange meetings. A public meeting will be held in conjunction with the regular July meeting. The stormwater presentation will be posted on the website prior to the meeting. Written comments will also be accepted prior to the meeting.

Vacant PUC commissioner seat

[DPUC020](#) Section 2-184 Duluth City Code

Indexes:

Attachments: [Section 2-184 City Code](#)

PUC members are currently required to be residents of the City and pay charges for at least two of the utilities. There was some discussion about whether non-residents should be allowed to be on the Commission. The main concern was that non-rate payers would be setting utility rates. There are currently no applicants for the vacant PUC commissioner position. Commissioners and staff will continue to reach out to generate interest.

UPDATES FROM STAFF

Jim Benning reported that Verso will be shutting down indefinitely at the end of this month. They are our largest consumer of water. This will result in an annual net loss of approximately \$550,000, which is about the same as the additional revenue from one step of the 4.7% annual rate increase. Eric Shaffer is working on modifying the capital budget. He reported on various projects, including Superior Street water main, Fourth Avenue East water main, Second Street water main, Lower Michigan gas main relocation, the gas blanket project, and sanitary sewer lining projects.

UPCOMING COUNCIL ACTIONS

There is nothing of note for the next meeting.

COMMISSIONER QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS

There were no questions or comments at this time.

PREVIEW OF UPCOMING BUSINESS

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 21, 2020 at 5:15 p.m. A public meeting will be held in conjunction with the regular July meeting. Staff will arrange for meetings with the Chamber of Commerce, Greater Downtown Council, and the Duluth News Tribune Editorial Board.

KNOWN ABSENCES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

No absences were mentioned at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.