

DULUTH PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
February 16, 2016

Members Present: Councilor Zack Filipovich, Rob Prusak, Jim Ramnes, Linda Sellner, Councilor Joel Sipress, Jason Thorsell, Councilor Em Westerlund

Members Absent: none

Staff Present: Bob Asleson, Jim Benning, Leanna Gilbert, Howard Jacobson, Eric Shaffer, Glenn Strid

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 5:16 p.m. by President Prusak.

Approval of previous meeting minutes

Old business:

16PUC-002 - RESOLUTION OF THE DULUTH PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION RECOMMENDING THAT THE CITY OF DULUTH AMEND SECTION 48-27 OF THE CITY CODE AUTHORIZING AUGMENTED CHARGES FOR UNAUTHORIZED TURNING ON OF WATER OR GAS SERVICE. (revised)

16-0Valve O - AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING A PENALTY FOR UNAUTHORIZED TURNING ON OF WATER OR GAS SERVICE AMENDING SECTION 48-27 OF THE DULUTH CITY CODE, 1959, AS AMENDED. (revised)

After Bob Asleson gave a brief explanation of the reasoning for the proposed penalty, Commissioner Sipress motioned to approve the revised version of resolution 16PUC-002 and the resolution was approved unanimously.

Water utility discussion

Eric Shaffer provided a list and gave a brief summary of capital projects that could be done in the next 5 years if there was a 6% rate increase. After staff and commissioners discussed the cost of water main breaks, debt service, and various other utility expenses, commissioners directed staff to bring a 6% rate increase resolution to the March meeting. A public hearing will be held at the beginning of that meeting.

New business:

16PUC-003 - RESOLUTION SEEKING TO PROVIDE A SUSTAINABLE ALTERNATIVE TO STORMWATER MANAGEMENT AND THEREBY REDUCE IMPERVIOUS SURFACE DEVELOPMENT IN SENSITIVE AREAS ALONG DULUTH'S TROUT STREAMS SO AS TO IMPROVE WATER QUALITY AND REDUCE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF FLOODING. (Sellner)

Commissioner Sellner explained the intent of this resolution and, after some discussion, most commissioners agreed with that intent. Commissioner Sipress suggested that councilors and staff should consider the issue and work out the details before this is officially brought to City Council. Commissioner Sipress motioned to approve 16PUC-003 and the resolution was approved unanimously.

Updates from staff

Jim Benning mentioned that the year-end adjustment from WLSSD resulted in a very small decrease. Residential sanitary sewer rates will remain the same. Commercial rates will decrease by \$0.01.

Upcoming Council actions

Jim Benning mentioned a resolution contracting with LHB to finalize the plans for the next phase of the lift bridge project, a resolution awarding the Campus Connector project for \$770K, a resolution to purchase water pipe for the 4th Street project, an agreement with the railroad to put a water main underneath the tracks, and the second reading of the ordinance adopting the State's cold weather rule.

Commissioner questions or comments

Commissioner Sellner mentioned the second reading of an ordinance modifying DPUC commissioner terms. Jim Benning stated that this change was approved by the DPUC in 2012, but it never went to Council. Resolution 12PUC-001 was made available to commissioners. Commissioner Sellner suggested extending the limit to three terms instead of two.

Commissioner Sipress would like to meet with Jim Benning, Eric Shaffer, and Keith Hamre to discuss the tax-forfeit parcels issue and the resolution that was just passed.

Vice President Thorsell inquired about the Superior Street project. Commissioner Sipress answered that the project is from 6th Avenue W to 4th Avenue E.

Preview of upcoming business

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, March 15, 2016, at 5:15 p.m. in City Council Chambers. Staff will prepare a water rate resolution as directed by the Commission. A public hearing will be held at the March meeting for this proposed water rate resolution. President Prusak mentioned the possibility of holding the May meeting at the Lakewood Treatment Plant.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 6:58 p.m.