



City of Duluth

411 West First Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802

Minutes - Draft

Duluth Public Utilities Commission.

Tuesday, March 26, 2024

5:15 PM

Council Chambers, City Hall, 411 West First Street

CALL TO ORDER

President Ryan called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Erin Abramson, Chris Adatte, Councilor Wendy Durrwachter, Councilor Mike Mayou, Carrie Ryan, Councilor Terese Tomanek

Members Absent: Andrea Crouse

Staff Present: Jim Benning, Cyndi Falconer, Leanna Gilbert, Amanda Mangan, Chris Ostern, Howard Smith

PUBLIC HEARING: 5-YEAR 9.25% WATER VARIABLE RATE INCREASE

The commission held a public hearing on water variable rates resolution 24PUC-001.

Citizens present for comment were:

Darrel Johnson, City of Rice Lake

Troy DeWall, City of Proctor

Darrel Johnson commented on the difficulty of rate increases on citizens. He said that Rice Lake does not want to pay for all of Duluth's upgrades, and they would like to revisit the rates for outlying communities.

Troy DeWall asked when the last rate study was done, if the rate is a reasonable allocation of capital repair and operating expenses which contribute to Proctor's water service request, which mains are next on the list to replace, and if the water rate resolution would go to City Council for final approval. Jim Benning responded that the Commission has rate setting authority given to them by the City Council. City Council is notified of any rate resolutions approved by the Commission and has the authority to veto them by a supermajority.

The hearing was closed at 5:44 p.m., and the Commission moved on to the regular meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

No comments were made at this time.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[DPUC123](#) February 20, 2024 DPUC meeting minutes draft

Indexes:

Attachments: [02202024 DPUC meeting minutes draft](#)

The February 20, 2024 meeting minutes were approved by all present.

NEW BUSINESS

[DPUC124](#) 24PUC-001 RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING WATER RATES EFFECTIVE WITH METER READINGS AFTER APRIL 14, 2024; SUPERSEDING ALL PRIOR INCONSISTENT OR CONFLICTING RATES AS OF APRIL 15, 2024.

Indexes:

Attachments: [24PUC-001 water variable rate 5-yr increases](#)

After some discussion, Commissioner Mayou motioned to approve resolution 24PUC-001 establishing water rates effective April 15, 2024, and the resolution was approved by all present.

UPDATES FROM STAFF

Jim Benning mentioned that City staff has reviewed the sanitary sewer rates and determined that no change is necessary at this time. He also mentioned that there are no tax implications for lead service replacements on the private side. Cyndi Falconer reported that construction of lead service replacement projects in Gary and Lincoln Park will begin in mid-April. Howard Smith provided data on sanitary flows as requested at the previous meeting.

COMMISSIONER QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS

Commissioner Tomanek asked about discounts for flushing lead lines and discounts for gardeners.

UPCOMING COUNCIL ACTIONS

No upcoming actions were mentioned.

PREVIEW OF UPCOMING BUSINESS

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 16, 2024 at 5:15 p.m. in City Council Chambers. The Commission will have a presentation from the Citizens Climate Lobby.

KNOWN ABSENCES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

President Ryan will not be available on April 16. Vice President Adatte is resigning to be on the Planning Commission instead. This is his last meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:09 p.m.