



City of Duluth

411 West First Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802

Minutes - Final

Duluth Public Utilities Commission.

Tuesday, April 16, 2024

5:15 PM

Council Chambers, City Hall, 411 West First Street

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Crouse called the meeting to order at 5:15 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Erin Abramson, Andrea Crouse, Councilor Wendy Durrwachter, Councilor Mike Mayou, Councilor Terese Tomanek

Members Absent: Carrie Ryan

Staff Present: Jim Benning, Jean Coleman, Cyndi Falconer, Leanna Gilbert, Chris Ostern, Howard Smith, Kerry Venier

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

No comments were made at this time.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[DPUC125](#) March 26, 2024 DPUC meeting minutes draft

Indexes:

Attachments: [03262024 DPUC meeting minutes draft](#)

The March 26, 2024 meeting minutes were approved by all present.

NEW BUSINESS

Election of Vice President

Commissioner Crouse nominated Commissioner Abramson for Vice President, and the nomination was approved by all present.

Presentation by Duluth Climate & Energy Network

Eric Enberg, Bret Pence, and Brett Cease gave a presentation on behalf of the Duluth Climate & Energy Network titled Planning for Decarbonization: Duluth's Gas Utility. They proposed moving away from the use of natural gas. Commissioners asked various questions about geothermal systems, who owns the utilities in the example cities, disposal of old natural gas appliances, and

funding for and costs of conversion. Assistant City Attorney Coleman advised the Commission to take the information that was provided and think about what they can do within the Commission's authorities. The Commission's authorities are mainly setting rates and fees, hearing appeals, and moving forward on expansion of the water, natural gas, sanitary sewer, and stormwater systems. Commissioner Mayou requested a conversation with Assistant City Attorney Coleman and Director Benning about what those avenues might be. Eric Enberg suggested writing a letter to the City Council recommending a change to the Commission's authority. There was some discussion about collaborating with the Sustainability Office.

UPDATES FROM STAFF

Cyndi Falconer reported that construction of the lead replacement projects in Gary and Lincoln Park began this week. There will be another project in New Duluth this summer and one for high priority lead lines. We received a grant of \$75,000 from the State to complete our lead line inventory, which moved our deadline for submission up to July 15. We are on track to meet the deadline. 2025 projects will be in Lincoln Park and a section of Central Hillside in addition to high priority lines. There will also be coordination with street projects. We have not had any issues with availability of contractors or materials for these projects. Jim Benning testified at the House Capital Investments Committee for the improvements to the water treatment plant. He is optimistic that we may receive 50% of the \$14M project. Howard Smith responded to questions about lead services on segments of Sixth Avenue East.

COMMISSIONER QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS

Commissioner Crouse asked about filling the open seat on the Commission. Jim Benning encouraged commissioners to recruit applicants.

UPCOMING COUNCIL ACTIONS

No upcoming actions were mentioned.

PREVIEW OF UPCOMING BUSINESS

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 21, 2024 at 5:15 p.m. in City Council Chambers.

KNOWN ABSENCES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Vice President Abramson mentioned that she and President Ryan will not be available on May 21.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:26 p.m.