



City of Duluth

411 West First Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802

Minutes - Draft

Duluth Public Utilities Commission.

Tuesday, April 20, 2021

5:15 PM

Council Chambers, City Hall, 411 West First Street

NOTICE: The Duluth Public Utilities Commission will be holding its April 20, 2021 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 "April 2021 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 5:19 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Chris Adatte, Andrea Crouse, Steve Lipinski, Councilor Derek Medved, Carrie Ryan, Councilor Terese Tomanek; Councilor Joel Sipress arrived at 5:26 p.m.

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

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

There were no comments from the public at this time.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[DPUC048](#) Mar. 16, 2021 DPUC meeting minutes draft

Indexes:

Attachments: [03162021 DPUC meeting minutes draft](#)

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Lead in water update

Eric Shaffer reported that staff is working on the lead services inventory and he hopes it is finished by June. We have done research on ways to control lead. The current method used is pH adjustment. We may wait on the water study until we do more research in our system. We are looking for 100 volunteers who have lead services to take water samples so we can get more data. Instructions for volunteering will be on the City website soon. Commissioner Adate offered to get the word out through an association of contractors. Staff will send a lead information sheet to commissioners. President Ryan asked about federal funding. Jim Benning said that he is hopeful that the federal government may provide assistance. He submitted lead service replacement as a potential use for any stimulus money received by the City.

NEW BUSINESS

ERU calculation update

Eric Shaffer reported that this is moving slowly. He contacted the consultant again today and requested a timeframe. Commissioner Tomanek asked how many customers were affected by the large adjustments. Eric Shaffer will get that information to her.

Election of Vice President

Commissioner Lipinski nominated Commissioner Adate for Vice President, and he was elected unanimously.

UPDATES FROM STAFF

Jim Benning reported that construction projects are starting. City Councilors will see resolutions awarding contracts on upcoming agendas. Eric Shaffer said that the PFA financing for Middle Booster Station came through. That project will be advertised for bid soon. Northland is working on Superior Street again. Everything is moving ahead. Eric Shaffer recommended creating a new natural gas rate between rate classes 50 and 60. This new rate 55 large volume production category would require industrial production with minimum usage of 4.5M CCF per year. This would be an interruptible rate. Staff would like to have a rate resolution on the agenda for next month. No current customers would qualify for this rate. Hypothetically, a new owner of the paper mill could qualify for this rate. The proposed new rate would be \$0.655 per CCF. If a customer were to come on in this new rate class, it would lower the rates for every other customer in the future. Staff answered various questions about the proposed new rate from commissioners. President Ryan will recuse herself from natural gas rate discussions and voting due to a conflict of interest.

COMMISSIONER QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS

There were no questions or comments at this time.

UPCOMING COUNCIL ACTIONS

Jim Benning mentioned that a few construction projects are on the agenda.

PREVIEW OF UPCOMING BUSINESS

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 18, 2021 at 5:15 p.m. Staff will prepare a natural gas rate resolution for the Commission to consider, and there should be an ERU calculation update. City staff is working on sanitary sewer system information, and there will be more discussion on that this summer and fall.

KNOWN ABSENCES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

No absences were mentioned.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:04 p.m.