



City of Duluth

411 West First Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802

Minutes - Final

Duluth Public Utilities Commission.

Tuesday, May 16, 2023

5:15 PM

Council Chambers, City Hall, 411 West First Street

CALL TO ORDER

President Ryan called the meeting to order at 5:20 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Erin Abramson, Chris Adatte, Andrea Crouse, Councilor Mike Mayou, Carrie Ryan, Councilor Terese Tomanek

Members Absent: Councilor Noah Hobbs

Staff Present: Jodi Amundson, Jim Benning, Jean Coleman, Cyndi Falconer, Leanna Gilbert, Chris Ostern, Tom Pfeffer, John Upton, Kerry Venier

UTILITY APPEAL HEARING

[DPUC103](#)

Richard Flesvig utility appeal

Indexes:

Attachments: [Richard Flesvig utility appeal form 03272023](#)

[PUC Appeal 7227 Clay St Staff Report](#)

[Recommendation for Duluth Public Utilities Commission on Flesvig Appeal](#)

Richard and Karen Flesvig appealed stormwater utility charges from 1998 to 2021 for a previously owned property. They requested a full refund of all charges. After some discussion about how the City charges for stormwater on certain properties and the department policy for billing errors, the Commission agreed to refund half of the total charges. President Ryan motioned to refund the Flesvigs half of \$1,401.82 for a partial refund of \$700.91, and the motion passed (Nay: Commissioner Abramson and Commissioner Tomanek).

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Cristin Curwick, resident of 618 ½ N 56th Ave. W, spoke on behalf of the Minnesota Environmental Partnership. She thanked the City for their efforts to clean up the lead service lines and mentioned past participation in lead service line testing and community organization efforts. She is excited for continued collaboration with the City for safe, clean drinking water.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[DPUC100](#) January 17, 2023 DPUC meeting minutes draft

Indexes:

Attachments: [01172023 DPUC meeting minutes draft](#)

President Ryan motioned to approve the January 17, 2023 meeting minutes, and the motion was approved (Abstain: Commissioner Abramson).

[DPUC102](#) March 21, 2023 DPUC meeting notes draft

Indexes:

Attachments: [03212023 DPUC meeting notes draft](#)

President Ryan motioned to approve the March 21, 2023 meeting notes, and the motion was approved (Abstain: Commissioner Abramson and Commissioner Tomanek).

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

[DPUC101](#) WLSSD Wastewater Treatment Year-End Adjustments

Indexes:

Attachments: [WLSSD 2023 Wastewater Treatment Year-End Adjustments letter dated Feb. 3, 2023](#)

Jim Benning stated that Marianne Bohren, Executive Director of WLSSD, was unable to attend this meeting. Alternate dates have been offered, so this item should be on a future agenda.

NEW BUSINESS

Water utility discussion

Jim Benning mentioned that this is the last year of the previous multi-year water rate increase. City staff will be preparing different water rate scenarios for the Commission to consider. Kerry Venier gave a brief overview of the state of the water utility. President Ryan requested that commissioners be educated on the water system so they can actually see the system components. Jim Benning suggested holding a meeting at the Lakewood Water Treatment Plant. Staff will arrange to meet at Lakewood for the June meeting.

Lead services replacement update

Cyndi Falconer reported that Governor Walz signed the bill to fund lead replacement in Minnesota. We have four projects ready, so we are waiting for the application from the State. Plans have already been submitted for two of the projects. We are already planning for 2024. Because the funding legislation was just passed, we are not sure if we will be able to do all four projects planned for 2023. The two projects that were already submitted are for Gary and New Duluth. There was some discussion about the funding process and eligibility. Cyndi reported that about 1,600 water filters have been distributed. Replacement filters

are available at no charge and can be requested by phone or email. Residents will also be able to request replacement filters online soon. There was some discussion about the number of lead services needing replacement and the time and funding needed to replace them. The 8th Street pilot project resumed last week, and those 60 remaining services should be replaced in the next two months.

UPDATES FROM STAFF

Jim Benning mentioned that former commissioner Rob Prusak passed away. He stated that the governor will be visiting the 8th Street project on Thursday.

Tom Pfeffer reported on ongoing utility projects including Morris Thomas water main, Michigan Street water and gas main, the gas blanket project, and storm and water work in coordination with MNDOT in Riverside, Gary, and Fond du Lac.

COMMISSIONER QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS

President Ryan welcomed Commissioner Abramson.

UPCOMING COUNCIL ACTIONS

Jim Benning mentioned a contract for cured-in-place pipe at various locations throughout the City that will be on the next agenda. There will also be a chloride reduction presentation on Thursday at 4:30 p.m.

PREVIEW OF UPCOMING BUSINESS

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 20, 2023 at 5:15 p.m. at the Lakewood Water Treatment Plant. Staff will present various water rate scenarios for the Commission to consider. Someone from WLSSD may be present to explain their wastewater charges.

KNOWN ABSENCES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Commissioner Mayou will not be able to attend the June 20, 2023 meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:20 p.m.