



# City of Duluth

411 West First Street  
Duluth, Minnesota 55802

## Minutes - Draft

### Duluth Public Utilities Commission.

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Tuesday, December 16, 2025

5:15 PM

Council Chambers, City Hall, 411 West First Street

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#### CALL TO ORDER

President Ryan called the meeting to order at 5:18 p.m.

#### ROLL CALL

**Members Present:** Councilor Deborah DeLuca, Councilor Wendy Durrwachter, Carrie Ryan, Brad Scott, Councilor Terese Tomanek

**Members Absent:** Andrea Crouse, Derek Medved

**Staff Present:** Nick Anderson, Josh Bailey, Jim Benning, Cyndi Falconer, Leanna Gilbert, Chris Ostern, Lydia Schroeder, Howie Smith, Kerry Venier

#### PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

There were no comments from the public at this time.

#### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[DPUC163](#) Oct. 21, 2025 DPUC meeting minutes draft

Indexes:

Attachments: [10212025 DPUC meeting minutes draft](#)

The October 21, 2025 meeting minutes were approved by all present.

#### UNFINISHED BUSINESS

[DPUC161](#) 2026 proposed utilities fees

Indexes:

Attachments: [2026 Fees](#)

Updated 2026 proposed utilities fees were provided in the meeting packet. City staff answered a couple of questions from commissioners.

[DPUC162](#) 25PUC-006 - RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING FEES FOR VARIOUS UTILITY-RELATED SERVICES.

Indexes:

Attachments: [25PUC-006 2026 utility fees](#)

President Ryan motioned to approve resolution 25PUC-006 establishing 2026 fees, and the resolution was approved by all present.

### **Paperless billing and credit card charges**

Lydia Schroeder gave a summary of the new customer portal and the cost of printing bills. City staff proposes a \$0.63 statement charge to offset the printing costs. City Auditor Josh Bailey stated that we get an interchange rate for utility credit card payments that is between 1.01%-1.27% compared to 2.85% for permitting fees. If we added a credit card surcharge or convenience fee, we would lose the lower interchange rate. The current model is the cheapest for all parties involved. Lydia will do more research on implementing the proposed statement charge, and Attorney Nick Anderson will look into the fee process.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### [DPUC164](#) 2026 Budget WLSSD

Indexes:

Attachments: [2026 Budget WLSSD letter dated 10142025](#)

Kerry Venier summarized the budget letter from WLSSD that was included in the meeting packet. He mentioned that the City will receive another letter in January or February with the annual true-up, which will result in a sanitary sewer rate adjustment in March.

### [DPUC165](#) 2026 DPUC meeting schedule

Indexes:

Attachments: [2026 DPUC Meeting Schedule](#)

The 2026 meeting schedule was approved. All meetings should be on the third Tuesday of each month in City Council Chambers. It was mentioned that new councilors may be assigned to the commission in January.

### **Water Infrastructure Surcharge rates update**

Jim Benning stated that the water infrastructure surcharge rate is to be reviewed annually. Next month City staff is planning to recommend that the rate remain the same in 2026.

## **UPDATES FROM STAFF**

Howie Smith reported on various projects including the Woodland Booster Station, the water plant filter project, water tower restoration, lead service replacement projects, and the Palm Street smart pond. Jim Benning mentioned that the Minnesota Department of Health may require more redundancies for the water treatment process. Nick Anderson stated that this will be his last meeting with us, since he is going to work for St. Louis County. Commissioner Durrwachter asked about the airport issue. Jim Benning stated that the

Commission's ruling stands, but we may negotiate additional credits or exempt areas. Cyndi Falconer reported that the annual lead identification letter was sent out. We replaced about 1,750 services this year and are anticipating being able to replace 1,000 services next year. These will be three or four separate projects. The first two projects should be bid soon. The 2027 designs are already done.

### **COMMISSIONER QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS**

There were no questions or comments at this time.

### **UPCOMING COUNCIL ACTIONS**

No upcoming actions were mentioned.

### **PREVIEW OF UPCOMING BUSINESS**

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 20, 2026 at 5:15 p.m. in City Council Chambers. City staff will put together a plan of action for paperless billing and recommend that the water infrastructure surcharge remain the same.

### **KNOWN ABSENCES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

No absences were mentioned.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

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