

DULUTH PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

December 8, 2010

Members Present: John Bruggeman, Councilor Daniel Hartman, Patrick Huston, Jennifer Vossen Julsrud, Linda Ross Sellner

Staff Present: Bob Asleson, Jim Benning, Leanna Gilbert, Howard Jacobson, Eric Shaffer, Glenn Strid, Pete Upton

Members Absent: Councilor Jay Fosle and Councilor Kerry Gauthier

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 5:50 p.m. by President Julsrud.

Note: This was not an official meeting as there was only one City Councilor present and therefore no quorum.

Old business:

Mission statement

Commissioners discussed proposed changes to the mission statement. Those present agreed that it should be edited and shortened to read: "It is the mission of the Duluth Public Utilities Commission to ensure safe, reliable, efficient utilities services at reasonable rates." Approval of this document was tabled until the next meeting as there was no quorum.

Sewer utility budget

Commissioners discussed WLSSD's plan for future rate increases and how they allocate charges. Staff will figure out what type of rate increase would be necessary to compensate for the rate increases from WLSSD for the next meeting. The commission requested that City staff look into making WLSSD's charge a pass-through.

New business:

Updates from staff

Staff reported on recent and ongoing gas hits and water main breaks.

Upcoming Council actions

Ordinance 10-064-O had its first reading before the City Council. This is the ordinance that would give appeals authority to this commission. There were no questions brought forth at the agenda session or the Council meeting. Eric Shaffer mentioned that he is looking into hiring an engineer to design the Dodge Street pump station project. There was some discussion about the feasibility of this.

Gas utility budget and infrastructure

Staff provided informational documents including the gas utility portion of the 2011 City budget book, the cash projection for 2010-2012, the capital projects budget for 2011-2015, transfers to the general fund from 2006 to projected 2011, and the natural gas rate history from 1997 to present. Staff answered questions from the commissioners about these topics. Howard Jacobson and Pete Upton presented an overview of natural gas purchasing and distribution.

Goals for 2011

President Julsrud introduced a discussion of the commission's goals for next year, including the pass-through of WLSSD charges and conservation rates. President Julsrud suggested that the commissioners should go around and see various utility sites that need improvement with Steve Lipinski, Manager of Utility Operations. Commissioners will get a list of locations of interest to Jim Benning. Commissioners suggested that the DPUC website be updated to resemble those of other City committees and boards.

The commission will focus on stormwater in January. Jim Benning has made tentative arrangements to have AE2S present their water rate study findings in February. President Julsrud and Commissioner Hartman suggested that the commission discuss bonding and funding at a future meeting.

There will be a new Commissioner in January to replace Councilor Kerry Gauthier. This commissioner will be educated about the various utilities by City staff outside of meetings.

Agenda for next meeting

The next meeting will be in City Hall Room 106A on Wednesday, January 12, 2011, at 5:15 p.m. The commission will discuss old business items and then focus on the stormwater utility.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

A recording of this meeting is available upon request.