

**DULUTH PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**April 19, 2016**

**Members Present:** Jen Julsrud, Jim Lewis, Rob Prusak, Councilor Joel Sipress, Jason Thorsell, Councilor Em Westerlund

**Members Absent:** Councilor Zack Filipovich

**Staff Present:** Bob Asleson, Liz Bieter, Leanna Gilbert, Howard Jacobson, Eric Shaffer, Glenn Strid

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 5:18 p.m. by President Prusak.

**Approval of previous meeting & hearing minutes**

**New business:**

**Discuss method and amount of penalty for unauthorized turning on of service**

Liz Bieter suggested \$100 for the first incident, \$200 for the second, and \$400 for the third incident within a rolling 12-month period. This penalty would be in addition to estimated or actual usage. There was some discussion as to whether this should apply to both water and gas or for water only. Some thought that gas should be treated differently. Eric Shaffer would pursue legal action at the state level if someone were to turn on a gas service without authorization. Liz Bieter will research what other communities do for this as requested by commissioners.

**Location of May meeting**

The commission had previously discussed holding the May meeting at the Lakewood Treatment Plant. Commissioners decided that they would like to tour the facility first and then have the meeting.

**Updates from staff**

Eric Shaffer reported that construction is starting up again. The contractor started working on the Michigan Street project this week.

Liz Bieter mentioned that staff has been looking at the payment processing system. One of the ways to pay is to call in and have one of the customer service representatives run a credit card. About 20% of customers pay this way. Liz is proposing a small fee for this service, as processing payments in this way takes more time and any card numbers that are written down need to be secured and then cross-shredded. Customers would still be able to pay with a credit card in person, online, or by phone via the automated system. The phone system will be updated on Friday and the cues will be changed so that those selecting payment with a credit card will be routed directly to the automated system. Hopefully this will help with the number of customers wanting to have representatives run their credit card for them. Liz will report on this again at the next meeting.

**Upcoming Council actions**

No upcoming actions were noted.

**Commissioner questions or comments**

Commissioner Sipress requested a 4<sup>th</sup> Street update. Eric Shaffer responded that the design plans were done a few months ago. It is a Minnesota State Aid route, so the plans have been submitted to the State

for review by the County. Once the review is complete, the County will advertise the project for bids. The County contacted Eric last week requesting the City specs to go with the plan by April 25<sup>th</sup>, so they must anticipate receiving the plans back from the State fairly soon. Normally the bid process takes a few weeks and then the contract process takes another few weeks. Hopefully construction will start by July 1<sup>st</sup> on the County road. We had hoped they would get to 18<sup>th</sup> Ave E, but that is unlikely. Commissioner Sipress asked if a section would be dug up for the gas line this year and then dug up again next year for other things. Eric responded that there has been some discussion that the actual construction will only make it to 14<sup>th</sup> Ave E. The gas line goes to 18<sup>th</sup> Ave E and then splits. Even if the street project stops at 14<sup>th</sup>, we will continue the gas line to 18<sup>th</sup> so that we can make our connection up on College this year. There is a separate gas project that has not bid yet that will be putting pipe up 18<sup>th</sup> and across Snelling. This project will also be moving ahead, and we want to be able to tie those two together. As far as tearing the road up, a big chunk of the gas line will be installed under the sidewalk by directional drilling. We will also be putting in gas line outside of the County project between 4<sup>th</sup> Ave E and 6<sup>th</sup> Ave E. This is all part of the 5-year capital plan that was reviewed and approved by the Commission. Commissioner Sipress asked about the temporary pavement between 12<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Ave E. Eric Shaffer stated that the County would probably request that the City repave this section. Commissioner Julsrud requested that copies of the 5-year capital plans be provided to new commissioners. Eric Shaffer will send them.

Commissioner Julsrud suggested that we review term limits for commissioners. Ours is currently limited to two terms. She would like to ensure that good commissioners can remain on the Commission. Commissioner Sipress stated that term limits are changed by City Council ordinance. The Commission could recommend a change.

#### **Preview of upcoming business**

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 17, 2016, at 5:15 p.m. at the Lakewood Water Treatment Plant, 8130 Congdon Blvd. The Commission will continue to discuss the proposed penalty for unauthorized turning on of services and the proposed fee for payment processing.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 5:58 p.m.