



City of Duluth

411 West First Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802

Minutes - Final

Duluth Public Utilities Commission.

Tuesday, December 15, 2020

5:15 PM

Council Chambers, City Hall, 411 West First Street

NOTICE: The Duluth Public Utilities Commission will be holding its December 15, 2020 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 "December 2020 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 5:15 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Chris Adatte, Councilor Gary Anderson, Steve Lipinski, Councilor Derek Medved, Rob Prusak, Carrie Ryan, Councilor Joel Sipress

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

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

No citizens had comments at this time.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[DPUC036](#) Nov. 17, 2020 DPUC meeting minutes draft

Indexes:

Attachments: [11172020 DPUC meeting minutes draft](#)

Vice President Prusak motioned to approve the minutes, and the motion was approved unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Stormwater program management

[DPUC038](#) Waterfront properties storm billing levels

Indexes:

Attachments: [WaterFront Properties - Storm Billing Levels Comparison 12-15-2020](#)

Tom Johnson, Senior Engineer for the City, talked about the various waterfront properties billing levels and answered questions from commissioners. After some discussion, commissioners agreed that the proposed 80% credit for waterfront properties with water quality BMP's should be increased to 90%. There was also some discussion about phasing in the billing recalculations and credits. Most properties have already been recalculated. Those remaining are mainly waterfront properties, non-residential customers that have BMP's, and the school district. There was further discussion about the process and timing of waterfront property recalculations. Staff will prepare a resolution setting BMP credits effective July 1, 2021 for the January meeting. Staff will also work on the BMP credit application process and form.

[DPUC039](#) Waterfront property - tracking onto City road

Indexes:

Attachments: [WaterFront Property - Tracking onto City Road](#)

The photo provided by staff was an example of how waterfront properties can affect the City stormwater system and why everyone needs to share the costs to maintain it.

NEW BUSINESS

[DPUC037](#) 2021 DPUC meeting schedule

Indexes:

Attachments: [2021 DPUC Meeting Schedule](#)

Commissioner Sipress motioned to approve the 2021 meeting schedule, and the motion was approved unanimously.

UPDATES FROM STAFF

Eric Shaffer reported that construction season is done. Engineering staff has moved to all design work. Commissioner Lipinski asked if Utility Operations staff were working from home or on the street. Greg Guerrero replied that we are on track for our maintenance schedule. The office staff is on a rotating schedule, and the crews are coming in as needed.

COMMISSIONER QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS

Commissioner Anderson mentioned Comfort Systems delinquent customer accounts. In September 2019 there were about 750 delinquent accounts (\$700,000), and in 2020 there are over 1,800 delinquent accounts (\$1.9M). Jim Benning has information available about financial assistance that we would like to get out to the community. Flyers have been sent out as bill stuffers,

information has been provided to the press and media, and we have also called customers with the assistance information. We are not currently shutting any delinquent customers off because of the cold weather rule and the State and City emergency declarations. Staff will provide the financial assistance flyer to the councilors so they can share it.

Vice President Prusak asked when the end-of-year financial information for the utilities would be available. Kerry Venier responded that this information is usually available mid-February. Vice President Prusak also mentioned that he appreciated getting the stormwater information a week ahead of the meeting.

UPCOMING COUNCIL ACTIONS

Jim Benning mentioned a resolution for road salt. Commissioner Sipress asked about a new brine technology that was discussed previously. Jim Benning stated that we currently use brine and were testing spreaders. Automating things helps to save money, salt, and the environment. Tom Johnson mentioned that chloride salt management will be part of the MS4 permit. There is a lot of new technology coming that may change how we do things.

PREVIEW OF UPCOMING BUSINESS

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 19, 2021 at 5:15 p.m. The Commission will consider a resolution setting stormwater BMP credits.

KNOWN ABSENCES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

No absences were mentioned.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:58 p.m.