

DULUTH PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Tuesday, May 20, 2014

City Council Chambers

AGENDA

1. Roll call
2. Approval of previous meeting minutes
3. Old business
 - 3.1 Review of utility cash projections
4. New business
 - 4.1 Energy efficiency (Jodi Slick)
5. Updates from staff
6. Upcoming Council actions
7. Commissioner questions or comments
8. Preview of upcoming business

DULUTH PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
April 15, 2014

Members Present: Councilor Zack Filipovich, Councilor Jennifer Julsrud, Rob Prusak, Jim Ramnes, Linda Sellner, Councilor Joel Sipress, Jason Thorsell

Members Absent: none

Staff Present: Jodi Amundson, Bob Asleson, Jim Benning, Leanna Gilbert, Eric Shaffer, Glenn Strid

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 5:19 p.m. by President Prusak.

Approval of previous hearing and meeting minutes

New business:

14PUC-002 - RESOLUTION REQUESTING THAT CITY COUNCIL AMEND SECTION 43-9 OF THE CITY CODE TO REDUCE THE SPRINKLING CREDIT BY ONE UNIT PER MONTH.

Jim Benning stated that the resolution should read "100 cubic feet per month" instead of "100 gallons per month" and also gave a brief explanation of the purpose of the resolution. Commissioner Julsrud motioned to amend resolution 14PUC-002 to read "cubic feet" instead of "gallons". The amendment passed unanimously. Commissioner Julsrud motioned to approve the amended resolution. Resolution 14PUC-002 passed unanimously as amended.

Updates from staff

Eric Shaffer reported that the West Duluth Reservoir roof removal is about 3/4 done. They will start working on the columns next. The first roof pour will probably take place by the end of May. The final roof pour should occur in September. There will be about a month of work after that before the project is complete.

Cash projection worksheets for each utility were sent out via e-mail to commissioners prior to this meeting. Glenn Strid answered questions from commissioners. Commissioners will review the projections further and discuss them again next month.

Upcoming Council actions

Jim Benning stated that the 3rd Street gas pipe replacement project would be coming up soon. It is currently a pipe inside a pipe. Also, the Hidden Valley water main replacement will occur sometime this year. This is in the area of 36th Ave E above 4th Street.

Commissioner questions or comments

President Prusak said that it was nice to see a full board here. He also asked if we are done with frozen lines. Jim Benning said that there were a couple of refreezes. The residents probably thought that it was safe to shut off their bleeders. The most recent estimate of related expenses is approximately \$200,000. There were between 340-350 frozen services. We also had many frozen water mains.

Commissioner Julsrud stated that she is hoping to have Jodi Slick with Equilibrium3 on the agenda in the next couple of months. They will be going to D.C. next week to learn about best practices for energy efficiency in municipalities.

Commissioner Julsrud is interested in rethinking our City grid. Minnesota Sea Grant has started a study on the Chester Creek watershed, how that relates to stormwater, and how we can come up with some more innovative ways to capture that water. She thinks that this commission can participate in that discussion with stormwater planning and possibly updating the UDC. Maybe we can discuss stormwater planning and green infrastructure in future months. Eric Shaffer stated that we do have an update for the UDC based on the City's new MS4 permit. Engineering would like to do a couple trial runs first before taking it to City Council this fall. Shaffer is willing to share it with this commission.

Commissioner Thorsell inquired about compaction procedures for spot repairs in streets. Many appear to have settled badly. Jim Benning stated that some projects are done by City crews and some are done by private contractors. Contractors are required to go back and redo it if there is bad compaction. Street Maintenance usually fixes the ones done by City crews. This year we are hiring a contractor to do patching, since Street Maintenance has been busy with other projects. Commissioner Sellner said she had read that the City was going to hire temporary workers to do patching. Jim Benning said that the temps would supplement full time staff. They want to have 7 crews working on pothole patching and crack sealing.

Commissioner Sellner mentioned the resolution recently passed that automatically increases or decreases sanitary sewer rates to reflect charges from WLSSD. We recently received a letter stating that the charges were less than what was budgeted. Jodi Amundson stated that the volume rate has been decreased. This will continue until the next adjustment from WLSSD.

Commissioner Sellner asked about the \$3.6M received from the Board of Water & Soil Resources for stormwater work. The paper reported that it was to be used at the zoo, at Chambers Grove Park, and at the Atlas site in Gary. Jim Benning said that it was all for stream work and that he is not aware of anything for Atlas. The creeks involved are the one at the zoo and Mission Creek in Fond du Lac. Eric Shaffer stated that the money was for stream restoration projects due to the flood. The paper also reported that the City received \$250,000 from the EPA for green infrastructure. Jim Benning was not aware of that. Commissioner Sellner mentioned the need for green infrastructure for a cleaner St. Louis River estuary and for the development of the western waterfront area. She stated that trees are part of green infrastructure and mentioned some of the benefits provided by trees. She would like to have stormwater personnel and the DPUC make liaisons with the Tree Commission and possible the City's tree management to emphasize the importance of trees in preventing stormwater runoff. President Prusak suggested City staff report on how the grant money was used in future months. Eric Shaffer stated that the first wave of grant money was strictly to repair flood damage, not for habitat restoration. The original grants were not enough to fix all of the damage to the major streams. Additional grants came through to finish fixing the damage. Once those are fixed, we will continue to pursue money for habitat restoration.

Preview of upcoming business

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 20, 2014, at 5:15 p.m. in City Council Chambers. The commission will continue to review the utility cash projections. Commissioner Julsrud will invite Jodi Slick to attend a future meeting. The commission may meet at the water plant sometime this summer.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 6:21 p.m.