



City of Duluth

411 West First Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802

Minutes - Final

Duluth Public Utilities Commission.

Tuesday, May 19, 2020

5:15 PM

Council Chambers, City Hall, 411 West First Street

NOTICE: The Duluth Public Utilities Commission will be holding its May 19, 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 "May 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 5:17 p.m.

ROLL CALL

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

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

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

No citizens were present for comment.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[DPUC018](#) March 17, 2020 DPUC meeting minutes draft

Indexes:

Attachments: [03172020 DPUC meeting minutes draft](#)

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Stormwater system discussion

Tom Johnson, Senior Engineer for the City, gave a draft presentation to be used

for the public education phase. Commissioners asked staff to add to the presentation an example of a catastrophic system failure resulting in major costs that could have been avoided if we had invested in the utility infrastructure at an appropriate rate over the years. They also requested adding an example of a simple neighborhood issue to the presentation. There was some discussion about the timing of this rate increase, but commissioners agreed on the need to move forward with this process to avoid larger problems in the future. Staff will resend the proposed timeline to commissioners for their reference and start planning for public meetings. Staff will also add a slide with approximate timing for the public hearing and the vote on the rate resolution to the presentation.

NEW BUSINESS

Vacant PUC commissioner seat

There are currently no applicants for the vacant PUC commissioner position. If anyone knows anyone who would be a good candidate, please contact them. Commissioner Medved asked if it would be possible to have someone from outside city limits on the Commission. The current bylaws do not allow for this, so there would probably need to be a Council ordinance to change the requirements. This topic will be added to the next agenda.

UPDATES FROM STAFF

Eric Shaffer reported that construction season is taking off. We are extremely busy this year. Projects include Superior Street, Fourth Avenue East 20-inch water main, and Second Street 20-inch water main. Commissioner Anderson asked if layoffs have affected Public Works & Utilities. There has been some trickle down due to employees coming over from other departments, but we have not lost any positions. Commissioner Sipress asked if that was because the loss of revenues did not affect the utilities as much. Staff would need to have a couple more months of revenues and delinquencies data in order to compare them to the previous year. In general, the utilities are in better shape than the general fund. Jim Benning stated that Glenn Strid will be retiring soon, and Christina Ostern will be filling his position provisionally. Commissioner Medved asked about street sweeping. They are making progress similar to previous years. Commissioner Prusak asked about the Park Point lining project. Eric Shaffer reported that all of the sanitary mains across the bridge have been lined. They are finishing up lining in Canal Park this week.

UPCOMING COUNCIL ACTIONS

Jim Benning mentioned resolutions regarding steam and hot water conversion, and a resolution awarding the construction of East Superior Street. Commissioner Prusak mentioned the effects of the current economic situation on the street improvement funds. Jim Benning responded that the list of streets would be adjusted accordingly.

COMMISSIONER QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS

There were no questions or comments at this time.

PREVIEW OF UPCOMING BUSINESS

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 16, 2020 at 5:15 p.m. in City Council Chambers. Commissioners will continue to discuss the vacant PUC position. Commissioners and staff will continue to plan for the stormwater public education phase.

KNOWN ABSENCES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

No absences were mentioned at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:37 p.m.