

ENERGY PLANNING COMMISSION



2022 SUMMARY

Adopted by the EPC on 1/18/2023

The Energy Planning Commission was created in November of 2019. The commission's mandate was described to us by the Mayor of Duluth, Emily Larson, to advise and recommend methods to help the city meet its aggressive greenhouse gas reduction goals of 80% by 2050. In March 2022 during the State of the City address, Mayor Larson announced an increased greenhouse gas reduction goal of 100% by 2050.

Since the Commission's inception, we have covered many topics including electric vehicles, renewable energy, building electrification, municipal utilities, City sustainability documents, local utility planning documents, City building updates, and more. Throughout these conversations, the Commission greatly appreciates the direction and guidance of City employees Mindy Granley (Sustainability Officer), Mike LeBeau (Construction Project Supervisor), and Alex Jackson (Energy Coordinator).

Most notably in 2022, the Commission:

- Provided suggestions and support for the City of Duluth Fleet Vehicle Replacement Policy document
- Initiated a discussion with Comfort Systems on the future of the utility and possibility of expanded services as a thermal utility instead of dedicated natural gas utility
- Had multiple conversations on geo-grids and viability of a pilot project within the City

As the energy landscape changes rapidly, we will work to assist the City's implementation of the Climate Action Work Plan ensuring that Duluth is proactive in its fight against climate change. A more detailed list of the commission's work and plans for the future are broken out on the next page.

The EPC is happy to see:

- During the State of the City address, Mayor Larson:
 - o Announced 32% reduction in GHG emissions since taking office
 - o Increased GHG reduction goal of 100% by 2050
 - o Asked ComfortSystems to prioritize energy efficiency and look for long-term solutions for renewable fuel
- Finalization of the City of Duluth Climate Action Work Plan (CAWP).
- Significant and consistent reductions in the carbon emissions from the Duluth Energy Systems Plant (including a 10% reduction from 2021 to 2022) as well as considerable interest and effort in renewable fuel integration.
- Significant reductions in annual municipal greenhouse gas emissions during 2020 and 2021.
- Construction of the 1.6 MW solar development on City-owned land through partnership with Minnesota Power.
- Administration and Fleet Manager's focus on adding more EV's to the City's fleet.
- Highly efficient closed loop water source heat pump system being installed at City Hall.
- City funding:
 - o \$200k of gap funding for departments purchasing hybrid/electric vehicles over traditional gas vehicles
 - o \$400k for City building projects and planning including prioritization of Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant funds
- Adoption of Fleet Vehicle Replacement Policy.
- Acquisition of multiple grants related to energy efficiency, renewables, and equity including:
 - o \$7.8M water plant resiliency improvements
 - o \$977k RACER grant for UMD, Eco3, and City to gather community feedback, assess sites, and find economic pathways to improve resiliency through solar and storage.

The EPC desires to see in the future:

- Continued utilization of grants promoting electrification, renewable energy, and equity including funds made available through the Inflation Reduction Act.
- Discussions within City Administration and City Staff on the long-term plans for the municipal natural gas facility, Comfort Systems, and the consideration of expanded services as a thermal utility as opposed to a dedicated natural gas utility.
- Continued exploration of pathways for adoption of electric vehicles and charging infrastructure throughout the City.
- Focused implementation of the Climate Action Work Plan.
- Collaboration with Duluth Energy Systems to promote decarbonization and customers' transition from steam to the more efficient hot water alternative.
- Encourage the adequate funding and staffing levels for each appropriate City Department to be able to incorporate GHG reductions in all future projects and to pursue new Federal and State funding opportunities.
- Continue to investigate the energy design assistance programs of the utilities serving the residents and businesses of Duluth and encourage state of the art assistance that address GHG reductions.