

DULUTH PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
March 15, 2016

Members Present: Councilor Zack Filipovich, Rob Prusak, Jim Ramnes, Linda Sellner, Councilor Joel Sipress, Councilor Em Westerlund

Members Absent: Jason Thorsell

Staff Present: Bob Asleson, Jim Benning, 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.

Public hearing:

16PUC-004 - RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING WATER RATES EFFECTIVE WITH METER READINGS AFTER APRIL 30, 2016; SUPERSEDING ALL PRIOR INCONSISTENT OR CONFLICTING RATES AS OF MAY 1, 2016.

The Commission held a public hearing on water rate resolution 16PUC-004. Comments were heard from the public. The hearing was adjourned and the Commission moved on to the regular meeting.

Approval of previous meeting minutes

New business:

16PUC-004 - RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING WATER RATES EFFECTIVE WITH METER READINGS AFTER APRIL 30, 2016; SUPERSEDING ALL PRIOR INCONSISTENT OR CONFLICTING RATES AS OF MAY 1, 2016.

Commissioner Sipress motioned to approve resolution 16PUC-004 and the motion was seconded. Commissioners Sipress, Filipovich, Westerlund and President Prusak agreed that, while they would prefer to have smaller increases with more notice, they would be supporting this resolution because of the current state of the water system which would only get worse in the future if nothing is done now. Commissioner Sellner said that she is torn on voting in favor of this resolution after listening to the comments from the public and for a couple of other reasons, including government transparency issues, inconsistency in follow-up by the utility regarding resolutions sent to City Council by the Commission, and the 4th Street project. Commissioner Ramnes said that supporting this resolution is the proper thing to do, because one of the primary responsibilities of the municipal utility is to provide a safe, clean water supply to residents and visitors. Resolution 16PUC-004 passed 5-1 (Sellner).

Commissioner Sipress left at this time as he had another meeting to attend.

Updates from staff

There were no updates from staff.

Upcoming Council actions

No upcoming actions were noted.

Commissioner questions or comments

Commissioner Ramnes stated that this is his last meeting. He would like to thank everyone, especially President Prusak, for the hard work that they have put in. He has learned a lot while on the Commission. He compliments City staff for trying to anticipate upcoming problems and find ways to manage the resulting challenges.

Commissioner Sellner stated that she is the longest standing commissioner presently on the PUC. During her time on the Commission she has learned protocol for drafting and presenting resolutions and recently submitted her third resolution regarding the stormwater utility. She reflected on the relationship between past Commission presidents and City staff and mentioned uneasiness over the way things were done and a desire for more transparency. She mentioned the bylaws and parliamentary procedure and her concern due to other PUC resolutions going directly to City Council while her recent stormwater resolution is held up to be rewritten without her inclusion. She hopes that present and future commissioners will act with the highest level of conduct committed to serving the public. Eric Shaffer later stated that Commissioner Sipress had requested a map of the areas noted in Commissioner Sellner's recent resolution. The map was finished Friday, but has not been sent on to anyone yet because the size of the file causes Mr. Shaffer's computer to crash. He will forward it on as soon as he can.

President Prusak thanked Commissioner Ramnes and Commissioner Sellner for their service on the Commission.

Commissioner Filipovich thanked outgoing commissioners for their dedicated service.

Preview of upcoming business

The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 19, 2016, at 5:15 p.m. in City Council Chambers.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 6:14 p.m.