



# City of Duluth

411 West First Street  
Duluth, Minnesota 55802

## Minutes - Final

### Duluth Public Utilities Commission.

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Tuesday, November 16, 2021

5:15 PM

Council Chambers, City Hall, 411 West First Street

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*NOTICE: The Duluth Public Utilities Commission will hold the November 16, 2021 meeting by other electronic means pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Section 13D.021 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some members of the Commission will be participating through video conference. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, 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](mailto:jbenning@duluthmn.gov) prior to the meeting. Please include "November 2021 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, Andrea Crouse, Councilor Derek Medved, Carrie Ryan, Councilor Joel Sipress; Councilor Terese Tomanek arrived at 5:16 p.m.

Members Absent: Steve Lipinski

Staff Present: Bob Asleson, Jim Benning, Kim Ellsworth, Leanna Gilbert, Greg Guerrero, Carrie Lustig, Chris Ostern, Eric Shaffer, Pete Upton, Kerry Venier

#### PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

No citizens were present to comment.

#### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

[DPUC067](#) October 19, 2021 DPUC meeting minutes draft

**Indexes:**

**Attachments:** [10192021 DPUC meeting minutes draft](#)

Commissioner Crouse motioned to approve the minutes, and the motion was approved by all present.

#### NEW BUSINESS

[DPUC068](#) 2022 DPUC meeting schedule

Indexes:Attachments: [2022 DPUC Meeting Schedule](#)

Commissioner Sipress motioned to approve the 2022 meeting schedule, and the motion was approved by all present.

[DPUC069](#) Duluth Citizens' Climate Action Plan

Indexes:Attachments: [Duluth Citizens' Climate Action Plan hyperlink](#)

Lora Wedge, COO of Ecolibrium3, gave a brief presentation about the Duluth Citizens' Climate Action Plan and received comments and questions from commissioners.

## MN Power rate case

Jim Benning mentioned the 18% rate increase requested by MN Power and the impact that this would have on the utilities, especially the water utility. He proposed making the MN Power rates a pass-through similar to the WLSSD treatment charges. After some discussion, the Commission decided against an automatic rate adjustment for MN Power rates. Commissioner Sipress suggested that the Commission draft a statement to submit to the State PUC about the impact of rate increases on the City of Duluth utilities.

**UPDATES FROM STAFF**

Jim Benning mentioned the need to tweak the equation for the WLSSD treatment charges rate adjustments. Kerry Venier explained how the calculation is currently made compared to what staff is recommending. Staff will bring a resolution for review at the next meeting. Staff will also provide information showing the differences in calculation.

Pete Upton reported that natural gas prices are up to \$5.90 per MCF from \$2.50 in February. We have some long-term contracts for a percentage of our gas that will help this winter, and storage gas will help too. Daily gas prices are totally dependent on the weather. We are doing our best to keep the volatility out.

Kim Ellsworth gave an update on lead removal and answered questions from commissioners. Staff is exploring a filter program, funding assistance for residents, requirement of lead service replacement for rental properties, and methods of lead line replacement with minimal excavation.

**COMMISSIONER QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS**

President Ryan asked if the Commission wanted to meet in December. Commissioner Tomanek suggested we wait until January, and Vice President Adatte agreed. The December meeting was cancelled.

President Ryan thanked Commissioner Sipress for his time on the Commission, since this is his last meeting. Commissioner Sipress has been on the Commission for eight years. He thanked the other commissioners and staff for their work.

### **UPCOMING COUNCIL ACTIONS**

Jim Benning mentioned an ordinance clarifying driveway culvert ownership and maintenance responsibilities.

### **PREVIEW OF UPCOMING BUSINESS**

The Commission will not meet in December. The next regular meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 18, 2022 at 5:15 p.m. The Commission will review a WLSSD adjustment resolution. Staff will give a lead service program update.

### **KNOWN ABSENCES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

No absences were mentioned.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:32 p.m.