

Energy Plan Commission

Meeting Minutes 16 November 2022

Regular Meeting (City Hall Room 330)

Attendance: Commissioners: Alison Hoxie, Brian Hinderliter, Gary Olson, Robert Reichert, Tari Rayala. **Absent:** Cassandra Theisen, Scott Wishart

City Staff: Mindy Granley, Sustainability Officer; Mike LeBeau, Construction Project Supervisor; Alex Jackson, Energy Coordinator; Parker Angelos, AmeriCorps VISTA Energy & Sustainability Assistant. **Absent:** Jennifer Ondrik, Administrative Specialist (excused); Jim Filby Williams, Director – Property, Parks, & Libraries (excused)

Call to Order:

The meeting started at 4:04pm.

Approval of September 21st 2022 Meeting Minutes.

Approved by Commissioner Rayala and seconded by Commissioner Reichert.

Approval of 16 November 2022 Agenda.

Approved by Commissioner Hoxie and seconded by Commissioner Hinderliter.

Mindy Granley: Brought up suggestion from Commissioner Theisen regarding annual report discussion

Old Business:

Any follow up questions from September's Energy transition and City Utilities Discussion?

- Commissioner Reichert: Concerned we are not doing much to encourage large new buildings to decrease GHG emissions, Xcel Energy and CenterPoint both have robust and detailed services to design new buildings, if buildings built to certain standards there is a rebate. Are our electric/gas utilities doing anything like that? We should invite them to our next meeting and talk to us about these potential possibilities.
 - Agenda item for next time for MN Power and Comfort Systems to come and talk
 - Mike LeBeau Question: Would it be helpful for someone to get more details from the Twin Cities? Reichert Answer: Yes, would be very helpful
- Commissioner Olson: Remembered Minnesota Power offered design services, doesn't know if they are still doing that.
- Mindy Granley: Offered to the commission that she has a conservation meeting on Friday with Minnesota Power for CIP, building design questions will be asked at the meeting, will give

Minnesota Power a chance to come and talk to EPC about CIP programs for commercial and residential construction.

- Commissioner Olson: Comfort Systems doesn't seem to have the staff/resources to take a broader look into energy supply in next 10-20 years but it's important to look into, ON Duluth Energy Systems: it is great that Duluth Energy Systems has reduced coal usage but would like to see more in the future to reduce use of fossil fuels.
- Mike LeBeau: There are limited city staff to do this research, so we encourage conversation amongst this Commission: Commissioner Reichert's ideas are good but question is who does this research and fact finding, who are you asking?
 - Commissioner Reichert's Response: Ask MN Power to investigate on these energy design services, look into what Xcel is doing? Mike LeBeau: Can you send your info so they don't have start from scratch? Commissioner Reichert will send email to Mindy Granley.
- Mike LeBeau: Does the commission want to form sub-committee?
- Commissioner Hoxie: YES! Would love to do research to help the Commission. We'd like to be proactive as a group but we aren't always sure how to be helpful. Commissioner Reichert: agreed. We need to better understand our role and authority.
- Mindy Granley: We appreciate that you are here and pushing energy conversations and energy transition ideas. City is thankful the commission is here, (thanked them)

Minnesota Power Self-Declaration Benefit Outreach (Parker Angelos, AmeriCorps VISTA member serving as Energy & Sustainability Assistant, City of Duluth.

- Within the City and City Authorities
 - Email to leadership sent by Mindy Granley on October 5th
 - Carl Crawford shared it within his circle
 - Mayor Larson's Facebook page and MN Power reposted Mayor Larson's post on their page
 - Parks & Rec (Abigail Proulx) on October 10th
 - Flyers put up in Senior Centers
 - Duluth Public Library (Laura Selden) on October 12th
 - Flyers sent to each branch
 - Main library flyers near circulation desk and Partnership Center near the Computer Center on the top floor
 - Duluth HRA (Sarah Saucedo, Property Manager for scattered site, family housing) on October 26th
 - Info sent in rent statements to all 296 tenants
- Non-profits:
 - Ecolibirum3 (Lora Wedge):
 - Shared on social media and most recent newsletter
 - On website
 - Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light (Bret Pence):
 - Shared within their circle and to 1Roof
- Utility update: According to Angela Fulghum (Affordability Programs | Customer Programs and Services Representative) at MN Power around 13,600 people have already self-declared!

New Business:

Commission Communications & Protocol – Ian Johnson, City Clerk

- Gave review of open meeting laws and communications
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- Commissioner Olson Question: Concerned about email, are we able to email other commissioners?
 - Ian Johnson Response: Yes. Never reply all, Send email to self and blind carbon copy everyone. Try to channel it more into an official open meeting if possible.
- Alex Jackson: What is the protocol to follow for sub-committee meeting?
 - Ian Johnson Response: If possible, do them publicly. Just a few meetings on some small business that's fine, but bring updates to public meetings.
- Commissioner Hinderliter: Can we use google docs to prepare something and then share later?
 - Ian Johnson Response: Generally okay, all materials created are public materials
 - General rule is be careful! Try to do as much as you can in the open and have everything recorded in minutes
- Commissioner Hinderliter: In terms of doing research? How does that work if intent to eventually share but compiling and collecting data? Open google directory? Is there a directive?
 - Ian Johnson Response: No formal requirement for working documents to be uploaded at a certain time and way. Do work as you need to, compile as necessary
- Mike LeBeau: Staff liaison is Jen Ondrik – copy her on all emails so she can keep track and archive the information
- Commissioner Hinderliter: Get all documents and share with her via google drive?
 - Mike LeBeau: Might help but some tech issues potentially
- Ian Johnson: Keep sub-committee less than majority of members, three or fewer
- Mindy Granley: three or fewer copied on email too?
 - Ian Johnson Response: Yes, everything is more problematic when quorum involved
- Subcommittee can incorporate findings into next meeting
- Commissioner Olson: How should we vote as a commission? We should vote on any kind of resolution.
- Mike LeBeau: Is voting protocol in the charter?
- Commissioner Hoxie: Yes, we chose to keep Robert's Rules
- Ian Johnson: Yes, majority vote, acceptable to do unanimous but if more controversial then roll call vote

RACER update – Mindy Granley

- City of Duluth applied for and revived notice two weeks ago we got the nearly \$1M grant
 - Non-profit Ecolibrium3 is a partner.
 - Faculty support from UMD, and UMN
- Grant will allow addition of city staff member, two-year position
 - Community Resilience Coordinator to be hired ASAP

- Gather: community feedback, de-risk solar citing, find economic pathways (how we can pay for solar? Who should benefit?)
- Commissioner Olson Question: How did this get started?
 - Mindy Granley Response: I've been part of discussions about how/where to place solar, but more detail and research is needed, including community input. MN Power wrote letter of support and will be a part of the conversation about generation and interconnection
- Mike LeBeau: The outcome is not construction?
 - Mindy Granley Response: No, this is for planning. First, we need agreement and alignment in where and why we will place solar + storage before any construction. Plus some technical aspects looked into further.
 - Roughly: 200k for technical consulting, 200k or so for University and Eco3, and 350k for City staff time. GridCatalyst is a technical partner that will do research into how we use solar storage (~10k)

Rochester District Geothermal Energy System Planning – Scot Ramsey, Manager of Facilities & Property, City of Rochester

- Scot Ramsey: Relation to Duluth – he worked for Essentia for 4 years
- Presentation (see slides):
 - Five city buildings are heated and cooled by a steam line
 - Next year the steam system will be decommissioned in Oct (2023)
 - NetGeo system: connected buildings together, newest term to describe what we want to do (Network Geothermal)
 - Goal to be 100% renewable energy by 2030
 - One district energy started with development next to civic center
 - City went with another option since bonding didn't work for funding
- Questions?
 - Commissioner Hoxie: With these district energy systems, when you have vastly different loads from different buildings, how do you handle the flow?
 - Scot Ramsey Response: By rejecting heat into system that other buildings can use, efficiency coefficient of 5 or 6, put in one unit of energy and get 5 to 6 out
 - Load profiles are not the same for most buildings
 - Commissioner Olson: Are natural gas boilers part of project?
 - Scot Ramsey Response: Approved project puts natural gas boilers in convention center and library, will use them if district energy not approved but boilers will be able to be converted to district energy. Heat pumps designed for 30% of peak load, which is 70% of yearly load, boilers to supplement
 - Commissioner Olson: Going back to legislature for bonding or not?
 - Scot Ramsey Response: Special type of bond because serving private entities. They might go back to legislature.
 - Mindy Granley: Congressionally directed spending for this was received?
 - Scot Ramsey Response: There was \$2 million, has not been decided to directed toward city hall project or geothermal phase one district energy

- Mike LeBeau: When building out a system that will serve both private and municipal buildings what do you meter?
 - BTU meters, how many went in and came out
 - If developer has excess capacity they could sell back to the system
- Mike LeBeau: Would you entertain a Duluth contingent to visit?
 - Scot Ramsey Response: Yes, definitely, we want to position ourselves to help others with this
- Alex: Audience have questions?
 - One audience member: Relationship between decision makers in the city and technical work?
 - Covered in slides on history of sustainability in the city
 - All started with Energy Commission (Rochester) in 2009!

Sustainability Officer Updates – Mindy Granley

- See slides attached
- Commissioner Olson Question: Is there anything we can do to encourage the city to add staff in the area of federal funding?
 - Mike LeBeau: Our staffing level is determined by our work load, chicken and the egg, the need is there for growth, we would have to find projects and funding to get more staff
 - Mindy Granley: could see a need for more support for grant management services and processes
 - Mike LeBeau: Also a huge deferred maintenance need before doing innovative things
 - Mike and Mindy: The city has three grant writers, but no central staff member to serve everyone

Energy Coordinator Updates – Alex Jackson

- 85-90% of time right now going to city hall project
 - Project paid for mostly with American Rescue Plan funding
 - At beginning stages of the \$12 million mechanical and electrical upgrade, VRF system that will utilize the steam coming in and convert it to hot water, convert perimeter heating to water
 - Work has begun, first phase of work so far has been asbestos and lead abatement in utility room on ground floor and penthouse above 4th floor
 - Will be asbestos abatement underneath tunnels
 - 90% of VRF system components in building and ready to be installed
 - Received two air source heat pumps and other units here as well
 - DOAS units, allow us to continually bring in fresh air rather than air recycling environment, will be here in early February or early March
 - Commissioner Hinderliter- is that a heat exchange system?
 - Alex Jackson Response: There is heat recovery (pretty significant percentage)

Future Meeting Topics

- January Agenda
 - Annual Report

- Vote on Chair and Vice Chair
- Alex Jackson: Scheduling meetings should be on agenda. Possibly we move from this room to find a microphone system that will be easier for everyone to hear. It might cause us to adjust schedules.

Public Comment: None

Adjournment:

There was a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:41pm by Commissioner Olson and seconded by Commissioner Rayala.