



**ELECTRIC UTILITY COMMISSION
MINUTES**

**Tuesday, October 3, 2023, 10:00 a.m.
Meeting held electronically and open to public attendance
Council Chamber, City Hall**

PRESENT

Lino Siracusa*	Commissioner, Chair
Mayor Patrick Johnstone	Commissioner
Councillor Paul Minhas	Commissioner
Sally Bhullar-Gill*	Commissioner
Maya Chorobik	Commissioner
Lisa Spitale	Commissioner
Katie Stobbart	Committee Clerk

*Denotes electronic attendance

1. CALL TO ORDER AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Lino Siracusa opened the meeting at 10:01 a.m. and recognized with respect that New Westminster is on the unceded and unsurrendered land of the Halkomelem speaking peoples. He acknowledged that colonialism has made invisible their histories and connections to the land. He recognized that, as a City, we are learning and building relationships with the people whose lands we are on.

2. INTRODUCTIONS AND ICEBREAKERS

There were no new members or guests to introduce.

3. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

There were no changes to the agenda.

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the July 11, 2023 Minutes of the Utility Commission be adopted.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

5. CONSENT AGENDA

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the Utility Commission adopt items 5.1 and 5.2 on consent.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

5.1 Financial Report

5.2 Purchases and Sales Report

6. CORRESPONDENCE

6.1 BCUC Welcomes New Chair and Chief Executive Officer

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the Utility Commission receive all correspondence for information.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

7. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

7.1 2024 Budget – Electrical Rates and Fees Charges

Rod Carle, General Manager, Electrical Operations, provided an update on the fees and rates review, noting the following:

- It was agreed in conjunction with the Finance department to increase fees and charges per CPI, which is rated at 3%;
- Given the work that may be underway on the current state of the electrical utility, a hybrid rate increase is a possibility;
- A hybrid rate would see the Utility continuing with a 2.8% increase in 2024, 3.3% in 2025, 3.8% in 2026, then half a point increase per year over the next five years.

In response to questions from the Commission, Mr. Carle advised:

- While BC Hydro did not have a specific indication of their rates following 2026, they advised that using CPI in our model is likely the closest New West's electric utility can get to them;
- If the Sapperton Substation and reinforcement for Queensborough Substation were not a factor, the utility could stay at a 2.8% increase for the next five years, but those costs are approaching.

7.2 Implementation of a Temporary Low-Income Energy Assistance Program in 2023

Rod Carle, General Manager, Electrical Operations, reviewed the resolution passed by Council that referred the discussion of piloting a low-income rate or two-tiered fee structure to the Utility Commission.

In response to questions from the Commission, Mr. Carle and Steven Faltas, Business Process Manager, Electrical Operations, advised:

- The Commission has a policy of being revenue-neutral; unless that policy were changed, moving forward with a lower rate for some would mean a higher rate for others;
- It would be advisable to wait until 2025 to avoid the change happening at the same time as installing new meters; and
- There is no precedent in BC for a low-income rate.

The Commission had the following comments arising from discussion:

- The crisis fund pilot demonstrated that the model of just getting over one month did not work long-term for helping people get ahead of paying their bills;
- There is concern of adding to staff workload and increasing fees for people who would not qualify as low-income;
- There is an opportunity to differentiate ourselves as a utility to respond to the struggles of seniors and people with low or fixed income in the community; and
- A new subsidy program helping people purchase air conditioners could be a start to responding to the community's needs while giving the utility time to explore a tiered rate.

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT staff report back to the Utility Commission outlining the options, a legal review, and financial models for a low-income assistance program.

CARRIED

Sally Bhullar-Gill and Paul Minhas opposed

7.3 Explore Implementing a Two-Tiered Residential Fee Structure Based on Usage

Rod Carle, General Manager, Electrical Operations, advised that a two-tiered residential fee structure based on usage would be similar to that currently in use by BC Hydro.

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the Utility Commission wait until there is more clarity on BC Hydro's direction before exploring and implementing a two-tiered residential fee structure based on usage.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

7.4 BridgeNet Status Report

Phil Kotyk, Fibre Networks Operations Manager, reviewed the status of BridgeNet, noting that so far there are six residential connections, four small business connections, and two new sites on which construction started this week, along with four more buildings in the design phase.

7.5 Updated Meeting Schedule

Rod Carle, General Manager, Electrical Operations, updated the meeting schedule to add a meeting on October 24, 2023 at 2:00 p.m.

8. NEW BUSINESS

There were no items.

9. MOTION TO GO INTO CLOSED MEETING

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the Utility Commission will now go into a meeting which is closed to the public in accordance with Section 90 of the Community Charter, on the basis that the subject matter for all agenda items relates to matters listed under sections:

(1)(a) personal information about an identifiable individual who holds or is being considered for a position as an officer, employee, or agent of the municipality or another person appointed by the municipality;

(1)(c) labour relations or other employee relations;

(1)(k) negotiations and related discussions respecting the proposed provision of a municipal service that are at the preliminary stages and that, in the view of the council, could reasonably be expected to harm the interests of the municipality if they were held in public.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

10. END OF MEETING

The meeting ended at 11:01 a.m.

11. UPCOMING MEETINGS

Remaining scheduled meetings for 2023:

- October 24, 2023
- December 4, 2023 (with Council)