City of
New Westminster

Minutes

Utility Commission

Wednesday, September 18, 2025
2:00 p.m.

Committee Room 2, Second Floor & Zoom
New Westminster City Hall, 511 Royal Avenue

Present: Lino Siracusa, Chair
Councillor Paul Minhas
Sally Bhullar-Gill
Maya Chorobik*
Elizabeth Fletcher
Lisa Spitale

Absent: Mayor Patrick Johnstone

**Attendance by electronic means*

1. CALL TO ORDER AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Chair called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. and recognized with respect that New Westminster is on the unceded and unsurrendered land of the Halkomelem speaking peoples. It was acknowledged that colonialism has made invisible their histories and connections to the land. It was recognized that, as a City, we are learning and building relationships with the people whose lands we are on.

2. AGENDA ADDITIONS & DELETIONS

MOVED and SECONDED
THAT the Agenda of the Utility Commission meeting held on September 18, 2025 be approved as circulated.

CARRIED

3. MINUTES

MOVED and SECONDED
THAT the Minutes of the Utility Commission meeting held on June 19, 2025 be adopted as circulated.

CARRIED

4. REPORT

4.1 Climate Action Levy Overview and Impacts

Leya Behra, Deputy Director, Climate Action, provided background information on the Climate Action Levy (CAL) of 3.5%, noting that it was introduced in January 2020 to support the City's climate emergency response, and advised that funds collected total approximately $2M annually. L. Behra remarked that a portion of the CAL is transferred to the Climate Action Reserve Fund (CARF), with the remainder of the funding allocated to the Climate Action team and its initiatives.

In response to questions from the Commission, staff advised:

- the original 5% rate rider was reduced to 2.5% and incorporated into the CAL, which was set at 2.5%;following discussion, it was determined that an additional 1% would be required to support funding initiatives, bringing the CAL to 3.5%;
- deferral accounts to record revenue or expenses that are postponed for recognition are not currently a tool available but could be explored for potential future implementation;
- the CARF balance is currently $47.6M, with carbon credits comprising the majority of funds;
- the creation of the CARF stemmed from a recommendation from the Commission to Council, which advised that funds from the sale of carbon credits be reserved for climate action initiatives;
- climate action initiatives enable the City to access grants and incentive programs that help offset infrastructure improvement costs;
- year-end audits are conducted by external auditors who review the Utility's financial statements, which encompass the CAL; reporting standards are being developed and expanded, particularly for Energy Save New West;
- participation in the provincial Low-Carbon Fuel Standard program is ongoing and the 2024 credit report has been completed and is currently submitted to the provincial government for approval; and
- there is currently no sunset clause associated with the CAL.

Discussion ensued on the potential to review efficiencies in funding the Climate Action team as a number of changes are anticipated in relation to the federal consumer carbon tax. In particular, it was noted that removing the additional 1%, exploring alternative funding sources, or removing the CAL could be examined. The Commission further expressed interest in increasing public-facing reporting on emissions reductions and outcomes, revisiting the naming convention of the CAL or incorporating it into standard rates, along with exploring distribution of the utility through an equity lens.

MOVED and SECONDED
THAT the 3.5% Climate Action Levy be maintained as designed to support energy conservation and emission reduction programs which provide incentives and results in utility bill savings for customers, aligns with utility load planning and provides resources dedicated to building a climate change resilient community.

The question on the motion was not called as discussion took place comparing the City's Climate Action initiatives with provincial and federal programs, exploring opportunities to access existing grants, and considering a review next year following a more comprehensive analysis.

The question on the motion was then called and it was **CARRIED** with Cllr. Minhas and Sally Bhullar-Gill opposed.

Discussion ensued and the Commission directed staff to provide a detailed breakdown of costs for the various climate action initiatives, noting the need for a more fulsome discussion on the CAL rate structure at the next meeting scheduled for October 16, 2025. Discussion about the use of the dividend paid from the Utility to the City took place.

L. Spitale left the meeting (3:44 p.m.) and returned (3:47 p.m.).

5. STAFF UPDATE

5.1 Draft Utility Commission Strategic Plan [Verbal Report]

Dave Bains, Director, Energy and Climate Action, distributed a copy of the draft Utility Commission Strategic Plan on table (attached to and forming part of these Minutes as Schedule 1).

6. NEW BUSINESS

None.

7. ADJOURNMENT

MOVED and SECONDED
THAT the meeting adjourn (3:57 p.m.).

CARRIED

Certified a true and correct copy of the Minutes of the Utility Commission meeting held on September 18, 2025.

Lino Siracusa
CHAIR

Kristin Unger
COMMITTEE CLERK