

Utility Commission

MINUTES

Tuesday, June 20, 2023

Queensborough Community Centre - Royal Room

PRESENT

Mayor Patrick Johnstone	Commissioner
Sally Bhullar-Gill	Commissioner
Maya Chorobik	Commissioner
Councillor Paul Minhas	Commissioner
Lino Siracusa	Commissioner
Lisa Spitale	Commissioner

STAFF PRESENT

Ronald Au	Senior Financial Services Analyst
Leya Behra	Manager, Climate Action
Rod Carle	General Manager, Electrical Operations
Jacqueline Dairon	Chief Financial Officer / Director of Finance
Cory Hansen	Emergency Management Coordinator
Phil Kotyk	Fibre Networks Operations Manager
Katie Stobbart	Committee Clerk

1. CALL TO ORDER AND LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Lino Siracusa opened the meeting at 2:03 p.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. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the Utility Commission add item 5.1 Temporary Low-Income Energy Assistance Program to the agenda, and address item 3 after all other items.

Carried.

All Commissioners voted in favour of the motion.

3. MOTION TO MOVE INTO CLOSED MEETING

This item was deferred to the next regular Utility Commission meeting.

4. ADOPTION OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

4.1 May 9, 2023 Minutes

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the Minutes of the May 9, 2023 Utility Commission meeting be adopted.

Carried.

All Commissioners voted in favour of the motion.

5. REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

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

Rod Carle, General Manager, Electrical Operations, shared the motion referred from City Council on June 12, 2023. Staff then provided the Commission with an overview of work happening in the wake of the 2022 Heat Dome for their information.

Leya Behra, Manager, Climate Action, reviewed work from the Climate Action team, including identifying ways in which Energy Save New West can be better used to deliver targeted programs to residents.

Cory Hansen, Emergency Management Coordinator, reviewed work from Emergency Management and Fire and Rescue Services, noting that they are working with non-profit agencies and residences to supply air conditioners and other cooling measures, as well as doing outreach in vulnerable buildings.

In response to questions from the Commission, Mr. Carle, Ms. Behra, and Ms. Hansen advised:

- To address potential language barriers to accessing preparedness information, staff are having the cooling information pamphlets and other preparedness materials translated;
- There are challenges reaching socially isolated or vulnerable individuals, primarily involving data sharing and respecting people's privacy;
- As demand load is still low in the summer, it is not anticipated that giving air conditioners to vulnerable people would have a major impact on electricity capacity;
- A decision-making framework is currently being developed with KPMG to allocate Climate Action funds; and
- In some buildings where it is less feasible to have air conditioning units in each home, staff and partners are working to have air conditioning in a common room for tenants to access.

The Commission had the following comments arising from discussion:

- There needs to be more effective advocacy to address landlords who are not permitting air conditioners and other cooling measures;
- There are administrative and staffing needs that should be considered;
- The biggest priority is likely seniors and isolated individuals with mobility issues;
- Allocating funding to the organizations working on these programs would relieve staff burden on the City and allows those organizations to scale up their work;
- There is an immediate need to do something this summer, but also need to consider that this will be a continuous issue as temperatures rise and to plan for that; and
- Staff need to have capacity to complete work around climate risks (not just extreme heat), whether an individual or team is responsible.

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the Utility Commission recommends Council not implement the Council motion at this time so that staff can undertake work and permit a more completed investigation for equitable access to funding for those most in need, targeting the most vulnerable seniors living in New Westminster, and continue all of our other work with staff's current program for 2023, and to more fully understand the cost implications for

implementing this program along with identifying partners to support the program; and

THAT staff provide Council with a budget and a work plan at the June 26, 2023 Regular Council meeting, with the source of funding being the Climate Action Reserve Fund.

Carried.

All Commissioners present voted in favour of the motion.

5.1 CNW Building Code Acceleration Proposal

Leya Behra provided a presentation titled “CNW Building Code Acceleration Proposal.”

In response to questions from the Commission, Ms. Behra advised:

- Staff have engaged with developers on what is being proposed for the January 1, 2025 implementation stage, when there is the biggest and newest change;
- Planning works with builders and establishes memoranda of understanding;
- New Westminster’s recommendations are more accelerated than some communities with regards to the envelope: most governments are focused on the zero-carbon piece, while our approach has to recognize that we own the distribution system and want to ensure efficiency; and
- There is no mechanism for the City to require new builds to include air conditioning, though there is advocacy happening at many levels to ask the Province to require a standard for cooling.

The Commission had the following comments arising from discussion:

- Commissioners are in support of an accelerated timeline, and moving directly to the zero carbon step;
- Suggest the City engage on higher tiers faster and potentially scale back if the development community has challenges; and
- Recommend engaging with the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and BC Housing to ensure we are not putting barriers in place for affordable housing.

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT the Utility Commission endorse the following recommendations from staff to Council and endorse regional alignment on the timeline for implementation:

- **THAT** Council direct staff to amend Building Bylaw No. 8125, 2019 to require a two-option framework for Part 9 Buildings requiring Step 5 of the Energy Step Code or Step 4 with a Strong Carbon Performance of the Zero Carbon Step Code beginning January 1, 2024;
- **THAT** Council direct staff to require a Measure Only Carbon Performance for Part 3 Buildings beginning January 1, 2024;
- **THAT** Council direct staff to engage with interested parties on the proposed timeline to reach the highest steps of the Energy Step Code and Zero Carbon Step Code; and
- **THAT** Council direct staff to explore policy, regulatory and incentive options to require electric heat pumps over electric resistive baseboard in new construction.

Carried.

All Commissioners present voted in favour of the motion.

5.2 Fleet, Home, and Public EV Charging Projections

Leya Behra, Manager, Climate Action, provided a presentation titled “Fleet, Home and Public EV Charging Projections.”

In response to questions from the Commission, Ms. Behra advised:

- Current EV chargers are barely breaking even as there is more maintenance required than was anticipated; and
- The Province has changed the rules on who can apply for carbon fuel credits: the entity that pays for the electricity.

The Commission had the following comments:

- There needs to be a sustainable funding model for any EV charging program;
- There is a need to understand not just city-wide but neighbourhood-scale EV charging opportunities;
- This might be a good opportunity for the Climate Action Reserve Fund and low carbon fuel credits; and
- The private sector will also likely begin to provide EV charging, though locations they choose may be different than those identified by the City.

Procedural note: Sally Bhullar-Gill left the meeting at 3:59 p.m.

Ms. Behra will continue to report to the Utility Commission approximately twice a year on the progress of this project.

6. CONSENT AGENDA

6.1 New Westminster Electric 2023 Customer Satisfaction Survey (Information Only)

6.2 Purchases and Sales

6.3 Financial Report

MOVED and SECONDED

THAT items 6.2 and 6.3 be adopted on Consent, and that item 6.1 be discussed at the next regular meeting of the Utility Commission.

Carried.

All Commissioners voted in favour of the motion.

7. NEW BUSINESS

There were no items.

8. END OF MEETING

The meeting ended at 4:06 p.m.

9. UPCOMING MEETINGS

The remaining meetings for 2023 are scheduled on July 11, September 19, and November 21.