



Lowell City Council

Michael Q. Geary
City Clerk

Finance SC Joint With Technology & Utilities SC Minutes

Date: February 21, 2023
Time: 5:30 PM
Location: City Council Chamber, City Hall / Zoom(Hybrid)

PRESENT:

Present on Roll Call for Finance SC - C. Scott, C. Gitschier and C. Robinson; for Technology & Utilities SC – C. Jenness C. Mercier and C. Nuon. Also present Conor Baldwin (CFO); C. Yem; Helene Thomlison (City Solicitor); Katherine Moses (DPD-Energy); and Victor Vargus (Energy Advocate).

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER:

C. Jenness called the meeting to order noting those in attendance and agenda items.

ORDER OF BUSINESS:

C. Jenness introduced the first item and Ms. Moses provided presentation entitled “Rising Utility Costs”. Ms. Moses noted rates have remained steady due to aggregation but demand is increasing so issue will present in the future. Ms. Moses noted increase in gas costs in FY25 so there is a need for cost saving measures to be in place, which could include audits, net metering, solar and efficiencies. C. Nuon questioned residential costs. Ms. Moses commented on those cost and the many savings programs available. Ms. Moses noted department had an energy advocate who is engaged in the community responding to their concerns and providing resources. C. Scott recognized the probable energy increase in FY25 and questioned programs to reduce them. Ms. Moses commented on Amerisco contract for energy efficiency and noted the many savings programs and how they are funded. C. Mercier noted increase in her home energy bills. Ms. Moses noted that many factors may be involved with increase energy costs and that the City aggregate program have kept cost lower. C. Gitschier reviewed cost savings in Phase I projects. C. Gitschier noted that there must be a harder stance against Department of Public Utilities to produce more favorable results. C. Scott requested status of gas aggregation plans. Ms. Moses indicated there have been meetings with no status to report at this point.



Ms. Moses provided presentation entitled “Behind-the-Meter Solar for Rising Utility Costs”. Ms. Moses provided history of solar in Lowell and developing it through request for information process (RFI). Ms. Moses reviewed the findings of the RFI and the phasing plan developed as a result of that information; phases include MSBA projects; roof grant; and canopies. Ms. Moses noted procurement recommendation would be through Power Option Program and SMART Program. C. Gitschier noted areas which need attention. Ms. Moses noted Lowell High School is difficult site as it is under construction. Ms. Moses noted conservative approach in site selection. C. Jenness commented on the age of the Roy Garage for any type of solar construction. Ms. Moses noted age is a factor in decision making due to structural analysis needed. C. Nuon noted any approach must be accelerated. C. Scott noted procurement pathways. **Motion** by C. Scott, seconded by C. Gitschier to request City Manager develop procurement pathway through the Power Options Program and present before the full Council. Adopted per Roll Call vote 5 yeas, 1 absent (C. Robinson). So voted.

Ms. Moses made final presentation entitled “Energy Efficiency and Solar through the Inflation Reduction Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act”. Ms. Moses provided background to the legislation and the benefits provide in the acts. Ms. Moses noted the number of grants available and that there is an organized aggressive approach.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion to Adjourn by C. Gitschier, seconded by C. Nuon. So voted.

Meeting adjourned at 6:29 PM.

Michael Q. Geary, City Clerk