Minutes for the City of Lansing Charter Commission

Regular Meeting | Tuesday, March 18, 2025, 6:30 PM
Tony Benavides City Council Chambers,
Lansing City Hall, 10th floor, 124 W. Michigan Ave.

Present: Commissioners Adams Simon, Anderson (6:37), Bauer, Boyd, Dowd, Jeffries, Lopez, Qawwee (6:32), Washington

Absent: None.

Staff Present: City Clerk Swope, Deputy Clerk Drever, Attorney Rewa

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Jeffries at 6:30 PM.

Roll Call

Clerk Swope called the roll of the Commission. A quorum was present.

Adopt the Agenda

Moved by Commissioner Bauer to adopt the agenda as presented.

Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Moved by Commissioner Dowd to approve the March 4, 2025, minutes as presented.

Motion carried.

Public Comment

Derrick Quinney spoke about the importance of the BWL as a public utility.

Jan Simpson, a retiree of BWL, spoke about the BWL as an employer and the BWL Board of Commissioners.

Lillian Speers, a BWL employee, spoke about the importance of the BWL.

Linda Keefe spoke on behalf of the customers of BWL who are struggling to pay their bills.

Katie Abraham, Executive Director of the Michigan Municipal Electric Association, spoke about the importance of the BWL as a public utility.

Loretta Stanaway spoke about increasing transparency, implementing term limits for all appointments to boards and commissions, the effects of rate increases.

Surae Eaton spoke about the importance of the BWL as a public utility.

Calvin Jones spoke about the importance of the BWL as a public utility.

Randy Dykhuis talked about effective governance regarding the BWL.

Stan Shuck spoke about experiences as a BWL customer.

Steven Perry, business manager for IBEW Local 352, spoke about the importance of the BWL as a public utility.

Tammie Arend, a BWL customer, spoke about the effects of rate increases.

Al Maywood spoke about the downtown Lansing boundary.

Officer Reports

Chair

No report.

Vice-Chair

No report.

Clerk

Clerk Swope acknowledged written communications and late additions in the packet.

Old Business

A. Article 5: Line-by-line Review

Commissioners discussed Article 5 Chapter 2, about the Board of Water and Light. Dick Peffley, general manager, and Mark Matus, general counsel, from the Board of Water and Light, sat before the commission to answer questions.

Moved by Commissioner Boyd to amend 5-201 to read … "exclusive management of the water, **chilled water, thermal energy, including** heat **or hot water and** steam"…
Motion carried.

Moved by Vice-Chair Adams Simon to amend 5-202.1 to replace "Director" with "**General Manager**"
Motion carried.

5-202.2 and 5-202.3 approved as presented by unanimous consent.

5-203.1 and 5-203.2 approved as presented by unanimous consent.

GM Peffley and Counsel Matus confirmed the Board follows City procedure for real property.

Moved by Commissioner Washington to amend 5-203.3 to read "a majority of Council Members elected"

> Moved by Commissioner Bauer to amend the motion to require 2/3 vote to approve.
>
> Motion carried 8-1 by the following roll call vote:
> YEAS: Commissioners Anderson Bauer, Boyd, Dowd, Jeffries, Lopez, Qawwee, Adams Simon
> NAYS: Commissioner Washington

Motion carried.

5-203.4 and 5-203.5 approved as presented by unanimous consent.

GM Peffley confirmed the six-year cycle for capital improvement plan is industry standard.

5-203.6, 5-203.7, and 5-203.8 approved as presented by unanimous consent.

Moved by Commissioner Boyd to amend 5-203.9 to read "The Board may conduct whatever audits of **Board of Water and Light** activities it deems appropriate and shall **be responsible for the cost of such audits.**"

Motion carried.

5-203.10 and 5-203.11 approved as presented by unanimous consent.

5-204

Vice-Chair Adams Simon asked for clarification on proposed changes.

Counsel Matus explained that the proposal aligns with current practice that dates back to 1988.

5-204.1 adopted as amended by unanimous consent. 5-204.1 now reads "The funds and revenues of the Board of Water and Light shall be deposited in the ~~City Treasury and shall be credited only to the funds and~~ accounts of the Board of Water and Light. ~~They shall not be withdrawn or used for any other purpose whatsoever.~~ The Board shall have and exercise full control over all of the funds of the Board of Water and Light ~~in the City Treasury.~~

Moved by Commissioner Qawwee to amend 5-204.2 to read "All warrants drawn for the payment of money under the authority of the Board shall be signed by the **General Manager and countersigned by the** Secretary of the Board. ~~and countersigned by the City Controller."~~
Motion carried.

5-204.3 adopted as amended by unanimous consent; the amendment replaces "City Treasurer" with "Board" to align with current practice.

5-204.4 approved as presented by unanimous consent.

Commissioners discussed with GM Peffley and Counsel Matus potential language for return on equity, the functionality of smart meters, and rate increases.

Commissioner Washington suggested adding language to the charter to require the GM to meet with the public to increase transparency in communications.

5-205.1 approved as presented by unanimous consent.

Commissioner Qawwee suggested for 5-205.2 that the board shall conduct multiple hearings including day and evening and weekend and increase the 30 days' notice to 45 and the 45 days' notice to 60. Additionally, multiple announcements about upcoming meetings shall be sent to all aspects of the community.

Commissioner Anderson suggested aligning 5-205.2 with the current definition of publish.

No action taken, pending further proposed language to review.

5-206.1 and 5-206.2 approved as presented by unanimous consent.

Proposed language for 5-206.3 will be brought forth at a subsequent meeting.

5-207 approved as presented by unanimous consent.

Commissioners discussed the Board of Commissioners seats and training for members of the Board.

The Commission took a brief recess.

B. Article 2: Line-by-Line Review

Attorney Rewa overviewed the legal opinion that addresses 2-104 Compensation of Officers.

Commissioners discussed the aspects of a per diem payment structure, including the logistics of equitable committee assignments.

Commissioner Boyd expressed opposition for a per diem structure for Council.

Vice-Chair Adams Simon expressed support for a per diem structure for Council, for accountability.

Commissioner Lopez expressed he required more information regarding a per diem structure for Council.

Commissioner Bauer expressed opposition for a per diem structure for Council.

Commissioner Anderson expressed support for a per diem structure for Council.

Commissioners will decide on 2-104 at the April 1 meeting.

C. Article 4: Line-by-Line Review

Business suspended.

Public Comment

Linda Appling spoke about right to counsel provided by the city for people facing evictions. Then, she spoke about the BWL rate increases.

Loretta Stanaway spoke about the BWL; the role of legal counsel for the City and City Council.

Randy Dykhuis spoke about auditing the BWL, and timelines for rate increases.

Commissioner Remarks

None.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Jeffries at 9:18 PM.