

AMENDED
7-28-2020

RESOLUTION

A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF KNOXVILLE ENDORSING EXECUTIVE ACTION BY THE MAYOR AND THE KNOXVILLE UTILITES BOARD TO PROMOTE GREATER COLLABORATION, TRANSPARENCY, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN PUBLIC UTILITY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.

RESOLUTION NO: R-208-2020

REQUESTED BY: Administration

PREPARED BY: Law

APPROVED: 7-28-2020

APPROVED AS AN EMERGENCY
MEASURE: _____

MINUTE BOOK: 84 PAGE _____

WHEREAS, the Knoxville Utilities Board is charged with providing safe, reliable and affordable electric, natural gas, water and wastewater services to more than 460,000 customers in Knox and parts of seven surrounding counties; and

WHEREAS, City Council members are concerned about how local public utility policies impact lower-income customers; and

WHEREAS, City Council members desire to advance the City's sustainability goals; and

WHEREAS, a coalition of Knoxville residents and community groups, including Southern Alliance for Clean Energy, One Knox Legacy Project, Appalachian Voices, Community Voices' Affordable Utilities Council, Sierra Club - Harvey Broome Group, Statewide Organizing for Community Empowerment, and Tennessee American Promise, has raised important issues related to public utility policies and procedures in Knoxville; and

WHEREAS, this coalition has proposed a Charter amendment impacting the appointments and ratemaking processes of the Knoxville Utilities Board (KUB); and

WHEREAS, many of the goals of the proposal can be achieved through executive actions by the City of Knoxville Mayor and KUB without the need for a Charter amendment; and

WHEREAS, Knoxville Mayor Indya Kincannon desires to ensure that mayoral appointees to the KUB Board of Commissioners represent a diverse slate of community members, including appointees who deeply understand the needs and perspectives of lower-income families and who support the City's sustainability goals; and

WHEREAS, Knoxville Mayor Indya Kincannon proposes to implement the following strategies when recommending the appointment of new KUB Commissioners: 1) Requesting from KUB all Commissioner applications completed within the twelve (12) months prior to an appointment; 2) Requesting that KUB modify its Commissioner Application to include question(s) about an applicant's perspective, knowledge, and experience related to the critical issues of low-income energy burden and environmental protection; 3) Limiting new appointments to one full seven (7)-year term; and 4) Publicizing board openings and encouraging diverse applicants through City media channels and partnership networks; and

WHEREAS, KUB executive leadership supports and will assist the Mayor in implementing aforementioned strategies when appointing new KUB Commissioners; and

WHEREAS, KUB executive leadership is already working to establish a Community Advisory Panel that would gather input from KUB customers, including but not limited to customers with lower incomes and environmental protection interests, to inform specific areas of operations, help build stronger community relationships, and to address specific issues raised by the coalition with regard to accessibility and transparency of KUB's policy decisions; and

WHEREAS, KUB executive leadership has agreed to propose a resolution codifying KUB's commitment to freezing residential basic service charges for a period of five (5) years, and requiring a cost of service study be performed prior to any increase in residential basic service charges after that period, such resolution to be submitted for consideration by the KUB Board of Commissioners at its August meeting; and

WHEREAS, these administrative solutions offer meaningful opportunities to address the issues raised by the community with regard to KUB, without the need for a Charter amendment; and

WHEREAS, at its meeting on July 28, 2020, the City Council of the City of Knoxville amended this resolution to strike from Section 5 a nullification clause.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF KNOXVILLE:

SECTION 1: The Council of the City of Knoxville hereby endorses strategies proposed herein by Knoxville Mayor Indya Kincannon and KUB executive leadership to promote greater accountability and transparency through executive action.

SECTION 2: The Mayor is respectfully requested to work with Knoxville Utilities Board executive leadership to implement proposed strategies described herein prior to appointing the next KUB Commissioner, whose term begins January 2021.

SECTION 3: KUB executive leadership is respectfully requested to present to Council a workshop, or series of workshops, prior to December 31, 2020 to discuss in detail KUB's cost of service study and rate structures, and to discuss current and potential strategies to address the needs of lower-income utility customers.

SECTION 4: Upon adoption, the City Recorder is hereby respectfully requested and directed to forward a true and correct copy this Resolution to the City of Knoxville Mayor's Office and Knoxville Utilities Board Chief Executive's Office to make both Offices aware of Council's action with regard to this matter.

SECTION 5: This Resolution shall take effect from and after its passage, the public welfare requiring it.

Presiding Officer of the Council

City Recorder