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MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
PUBLIC INFORMATION AND
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
SCOPING MEETING

In the Matter of the Application of Odell Wind Farm, LLC
for a Route Permit for a High Voltage Transmission Line
for the Odell Wind Farm Project in Martin, Jackson and
Cottonwood Counties, Minnesota

PUC Docket Number: IP-6914/TL-13-591

Windom Community Center
1750 Cottonwood Lake Drive
Windom, MN 56101

Met, pursuant to notice, at 6:00 in the
evening on February 10, 2014.

COURT REPORTER: Angie D. Threlkeld

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1 MR. KALUZNIAK: Hello. If it's okay I'd
2 like to get started. I realize this is rather
3 formal, given the turnout here. So hopefully we can
4 be more conversational and turn off the microphone
5 here in a bit.

6 Thank you for coming this evening. My
7 name is Michael Kaluzniak. I'm a staff member with
8 the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission. The PUC
9 issues wind farm site permits and transmission line
10 permits in this case, as well as many other things.

11 We're here tonight to discuss the high
12 voltage transmission line proposal by Odell for the
13 Odell Wind Farm project nearby. You're probably all
14 well aware of it.

15 I'm going to be very brief here. There's
16 some presentation materials in the back. Of course
17 we're here to answer any questions that you may
18 have. The take-away from my piece that I want to be
19 sure you're aware of is that there are orange cards
20 in the back that you can use to sign up for the
21 project notification list. If you'd like emails or
22 other mailings, we can send those out to you. Take
23 a PUC pen. There's several of them back there.

24 Briefly, the route permit application
25 process in this case is what is known as an

1 alternate route proceeding application Odell has
2 filed with the PUC. The PUC found the application
3 complete. That means we're saying the materials'
4 there. We haven't made a determination on the
5 materials themselves.

6 Basically the DOC, Rich Davis here, will
7 be up next and explain what he's working on with
8 regard to the environmental assessment. The
9 environmental assessment looks at the impacts of the
10 project and potential mitigation measures that could
11 be taken.

12 After the environmental assessment is
13 complete, there's still a comments period, and then
14 we'll be back here yet again with more cookies and
15 soda and such for a public hearing tentatively
16 sometime around early July, with an additional
17 public comment period. We'll again have a court
18 reporter and in that case an administrative law
19 judge who will provide a summary of the discussion
20 that we have.

21 This is Angelia Threlkeld over here,
22 who's taking notes for us. If you don't like to
23 comment on the record or shy about talking in
24 microphones or whatever, feel free to fill out a
25 card. You can contact us via phone or email.

1 After Rich is done talking about the
2 scoping process and what he'll be doing to develop
3 the environmental assessment, Patrick will be here
4 from Odell to discuss the project in some details.

5 Then, most importantly, we're here for
6 your comments. So I'm not going to take any more of
7 your time. Feel free to ask any questions, and
8 thank you for coming.

9 MR. DAVIS: All right. Well, thanks,
10 Mike. Welcome, everybody. Mike pretty much -- he
11 pretty much summed up the majority of even the
12 portion of my conversation tonight.

13 So, again, we're here for the Odell Wind
14 Farm 115 kV high voltage transmission line public
15 information, and this is the environmental review
16 scoping meeting for the project.

17 Part of it, the Applicant, Odell Wind
18 Farm, and this process is part of the state's review
19 process. And we're obviously interested in getting
20 public participation and hearing the voice of the
21 locals that might have concerns or any particular
22 issues that they want us to look at.

23 Again, my name is Rich Davis. I'm with
24 the Department of Commerce, in the environmental --
25 energy environmental review analysis. And we'll be

1 completing the environmental review for the project,
2 and in the end we'll complete an environmental
3 assessment report. It goes on to the Public
4 Utilities Commission for them to make their decision
5 on the issues of route permit.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Maybe you can use
7 your microphone. Kind of hard to hear.

8 MR. DAVIS: Oh, okay. All right. Is
9 that a little better?

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

11 MR. DAVIS: Okay. This is the project,
12 the Odell transmission line, basically located
13 southeast of town here. It covers Martin,
14 Cottonwood, and Jackson Counties. It's 9.5 miles
15 long in total. It's a 115 kV line. As Mike
16 mentioned, it's alternative review process for this.

17 The Applicant contact for Geronimo or for
18 the Odell Wind Farm is Patrick Smith, sitting right
19 over here. This is his contact information. I
20 don't --

21 Patrick, do you have cards in the back?

22 MR. SMITH: I have cards with me, if you
23 guys want them.

24 MR. DAVIS: Okay. I should note that, as
25 Mike had mentioned, we are here to get public

1 comments. If I can get this out of here, in the
 2 back if you do want to speak, I would like you to
 3 fill out one of these green cards (indicating) and
 4 give it to me as you come up. There's some located
 5 back there on the table. If you don't feel like
 6 talking or if you decide after this meeting that you
 7 have a comment that you'd like to submit in writing,
 8 there's a white sheet back there that you fill out
 9 your information on the front and your question or
 10 concern; and then if you flip it over, you can
 11 actually just fold it in half, tape it, and it's got
 12 my name and address right on the back.

13 This is the alternative -- alternative
 14 permitting process for a high voltage transmission
 15 line routing permit. As you can see, as you roll
 16 down there, application submittal, application
 17 acceptance, which has been completed. We are at the
 18 third step there, public information and scoping
 19 meeting.

20 As I mentioned, we are looking for your
 21 input in developing the scope for the environmental
 22 assessment, which is the report that will -- that my
 23 office will complete as part of the environmental
 24 review for the project.

25 As we go on, the EA, or environmental

1 assessment, is developed and issued; the public
2 hearing, as Mike stated; and then we have a permit
3 decision by the Commission and judicial review,
4 if -- as we go on.

5 This is the schedule for the project.
6 The ones at the top in the kind of light
7 bluish-green here, up to here (indicating) is where
8 we're at tonight, the informational meeting, scoping
9 meeting. The comment period for what I'm looking
10 for in any comments or issues that you would like
11 included in the scope of the environmental review,
12 that comment period ends on February 24th. And
13 those dates are wrong. They're listed as 2013.
14 They should be 2014.

15 And then below is kind of a rough time
16 frame as we move forward. As Mike had mentioned,
17 the public hearing in July. Those are right, 2014.
18 And a potential route permit decision from the --
19 from the Commission in September.

20 Public participation. You'll have a
21 couple shots at getting your comments in and getting
22 your thoughts out there. The scoping and
23 information meeting tonight, the public hearing down
24 here again, more than likely in July, and commission
25 hearings up in St. Paul.

1 These are some of the things that we're
2 looking for up at the top there. Environmental
3 review, or ER, scoping comments or suggestions that
4 my office, or Department of Commerce, my unit would
5 appreciate are comments specific to human and
6 environmental impacts of the proposed transmission
7 line that should be studied in the environmental
8 assessment for this project, and if you know of any
9 specific methods that you would like us to -- to
10 look at and assess those impacts as we're developing
11 our EA or different forms of study that would be
12 appropriate for those impacts, and also if there's
13 alternative routes or route segments that should be
14 considered.

15 With that, alternative routes. I put
16 this in here so that everybody understands what we
17 would need to see as you're bringing forward
18 alternative routes or alternative route segments. A
19 person desiring that a particular alternative route
20 be evaluated shall submit to the commissioner an
21 explanation of why the alternative route should be
22 included in the environmental assessment and all
23 supporting information the person wants the
24 commissioner to consider.

25 Again -- again, the deadline for

1 comments, February 24th, for what I'm developing for
2 the scope of the environmental review and the
3 environmental assessment. Again, this sheet will
4 mail them to me. Also in the back on that table by
5 those green cards and those white sheets are my
6 business card. You can email them to me, mail them,
7 give me a phone call, whatever works for you.

8 This is the project website. And that's
9 my contact information right there. Again, it's on
10 the business cards in the back. Contact information
11 for Mike is right there. Tracy is our public
12 advisor, and she's going to be the one you contact
13 if you want to get on the mailing list or learn how
14 you can participate in the review process and the
15 comments and whatnot.

16 This is actually for -- specific to
17 comments and questions as they come up. I know
18 Patrick's got a presentation, so I will let him do
19 that before we start taking comments.

20 MR. SMITH: Thanks, Rich, and thanks,
21 Mike.

22 My name is Patrick Smith. I'm the
23 director of the environmental planning for Geronimo
24 Energy. We're the developer of the Odell project,
25 which includes the Odell Wind Farm and the thing

1 that we're here to talk about today, the
2 transmission line, to get that energy from the wind
3 farm to the grid.

4 I'm going to try and not cover too many
5 of the things that were already covered. Obviously
6 here's the counties, Cottonwood, Jackson, and
7 Martin, that we're passing through. So the line is
8 about nine miles in lengths. Our current estimate
9 is that it will cost about five-and-a-half million
10 dollars to construct. On average our spans are
11 400 feet, which means that there's a 400-foot space
12 between each pole. There's going to be -- the poles
13 are going to be between 65 and 70 feet tall on
14 average. We might need to go a little higher or
15 lower to go over something or to deal with terrain
16 variation. And then we're going to add a new 115 to
17 345 kV substation. It's going to be called Woad
18 Hill, which is actually the translation of Odell in
19 Old English, and that will be located at the end of
20 the line connecting to the 345 line that connects to
21 the natural gas plant south of the wind farm.

22 And lastly, but most importantly, the
23 project has a power purchase agreement with Xcel
24 Energy. So that means that there's somebody out
25 there, Xcel, that's committed to purchasing the

1 energy from the project, and they will be -- begin
2 taking that at the end of 2015, which means that our
3 project needs to be built by the end of 2015.

4 So from a high level, this is what most
5 of the structures are going to look like
6 (indicating). This is called the delta
7 configuration. There's two conductors, two wires on
8 one side and one wire on the other. The way that
9 the wires are attached are through the insulators
10 that are directly mounted onto the pole, and they
11 have a little brace to help hold them up. We call
12 it brace post insulators. Right now we're
13 evaluating both wood and steel structures for the
14 project, and they can vary in availability over
15 time, depending on -- you know, a lot of times wood
16 is used for replacement during storms. Also there
17 could be wood scarcities or steel can take a long
18 time to manufacture. It's something that we're just
19 going to keep open in the process.

20 There's one other configuration, and this
21 is for when there's an issue on one side or the
22 other of the structure. This is the vertical
23 configuration (indicating) where all the conductors
24 are stacked vertically. This requires a slightly
25 taller structure, but all of the wires are just on

1 one side of the pole.

2 Quick -- quick overview of the economics
3 here. There's landowner payments of around \$900,000
4 over 20 years. We're going to -- it's going to
5 require about 30 jobs during construction and then,
6 you know, all of the jobs that would be associated
7 with the Odell Wind Farm because that would not be
8 possible without this transmission line.

9 Then there's -- you know, we're -- we've
10 given some idea of what the revenue is. That's
11 total for both the wind farm and the transmission
12 line. As well as for our projects for what Geronimo
13 does, we set up a community fund when the project
14 goes into operation. After the first year we fund
15 it, and for this project we expect it will fund
16 about \$40,000 per year. This is a totally separate
17 fund than -- and totally separate entity than what
18 Geronimo is, and it will be run by a board of local
19 community members.

20 So where we're at, you know, what we
21 provided as part of our application was a pretty
22 extensive environmental review. We've been working
23 on this project for quite sometime. Done avian and
24 bat surveys, been coordinating with the United
25 States Fish & Wildlife Services and the Minnesota

1 Department of Natural Resources on the project.
2 We've also been working with the State Historic
3 Preservation office. And we'll be working on
4 wetland delineations here coming this spring, as
5 well as some cultural surveys.

6 This is as a quick map of some of the
7 environmental resources around the project that was
8 taken from the site permit application, for which
9 there's two copies of in the back there, if you want
10 to take a look at it after the meeting.

11 Really quick I wanted to go through some
12 of the key parts of construction of the transmission
13 line. It's a pretty straightforward process
14 installing posts. And so you start by clearing the
15 -- clearing the route, digging holes. If you need
16 to, you put in foundations. Most of the time
17 structures will not have foundations. They might
18 have gravel backfill instead of -- instead of just
19 soil that got augered out. It will depend a little
20 bit. And they'll set the structures next to the
21 holes, and then they'll tip the poles up and drop
22 them into the hole. And once the structures are up,
23 they'll start stringing cable. There is the
24 substation that I mentioned, and then there's just
25 restoration and cleanup.

1 So to start, you know, you try and find a
2 route that has as few trees or other vegetation that
3 needs to be cleared. There will be a little bit of
4 tree clearing associated with this project. So you
5 start by clearing out what absolutely needs to be
6 cleared to get it installed and operated safely.
7 And then you get these things that have big augers
8 on the end, and you auger out a little hole. It
9 will probably be about four-and-a-half, five feet
10 wide.

11 And then they'll go through and determine
12 what needs to happen at that site, at that
13 particular structure, because each structure has
14 slightly different soil characteristics. They'll
15 likely drop in a culvert, which is what you see
16 there on the right side. And if need be, they'll
17 backfill it with gravel, which is what you can see
18 is happening there. They might use a little cement
19 if it's really sloppy soil. Then they'll bring the
20 poles to each of those locations. They'll set them
21 out probably in the ditch, maybe just slightly off
22 the ditch, because the line is entirely along a
23 road. And it will be a small crane that will pick
24 them up, just set them. There might be small boxes
25 of hardware, those brace post insulators that will

1 sit next to them too. And somebody will come along
2 and assemble all those bits and pieces on the
3 ground. And then you get a small crane and a couple
4 of guys that drop that structure into the ground.

5 Once enough of those structures are up,
6 what happens is they go through and they -- they
7 clip -- well, they start by running a -- the line
8 through a pulley system, first with a pilot line
9 that pulls it through and then the actual wire
10 afterwards. And what they'll have, these big spool
11 trucks, right, would reel the conductor, and then
12 they'll have pullers on this end (indicating) that
13 pull that wire really tight. Once that wire is up,
14 the guys get in these little carts, they go up and
15 down the conductors and they clip it in, they'll
16 weld it onto the posts.

17 So that's basically the transmission
18 line, the physical installation of the transmission
19 line.

20 The other thing out there is the
21 substation. And for that there will be a lot of
22 grading and leveling of the surface. There'll be an
23 installation of underground grid to absorb any
24 lightning strikes. And then they'll bring in some
25 of the electrical equipment, the switches, the

1 transformer, and there will be wiring that goes
2 through the substation as well. And they'll
3 probably set -- some of those things will be
4 foundation. They'll place those on their
5 appropriate foundation. And eventually, once Xcel
6 Energy, who needs to interconnect -- we are
7 interconnecting with is ready, we will then energize
8 that substation.

9 Last but most important step is
10 restoration. So cleaning up the site, revegetating,
11 people that come along and probably use a little
12 hydromulching, you know, that spray-on green stuff
13 that allows the seed to come back for anywhere that
14 the trucks have torn up the ground or where there
15 might be extra soil, they'll probably remove that
16 soil and find a way to dispose of it. And that is
17 about it.

18 So, with that, thank you all. And I will
19 turn it back over to Rich and Mike. And if there's
20 comments or questions, I'm happy to answer them.

21 Jordan Burmeister from our office is
22 here, as is Ingrid Schwingler who works with me, and
23 Christy Brusven, who has provided legal support. So
24 we can answer as many questions as you guys have
25 tonight.

1 MR. DAVIS: Thanks, Patrick.

2 This (indicating) is kind of the standard
3 of being nice and polite here when you're giving
4 comments and questions. One speaker at a time. I
5 don't think we'll have a problem with that. Or five
6 minutes per speaker. I think we can allot a bit
7 more time if we really need to. I realize it's a
8 packed house and all, but...

9 And when you come up, for the court
10 reporter's sake, please state and spell your name.
11 Please maintain respect. So no yelling at the other
12 two people in here. And please focus the comments
13 on the environmental review scoping for me, and make
14 sure you have one of these green cards filled out.

15 And, for that, I'll turn it over to
16 anybody that's got comments or wants to come up and
17 say something.

18 MR. WILSON: You want me up there?

19 MR. DAVIS: Yeah.

20 MR. WILSON: My name is Gary Wilson.
21 G-A-R-Y. W-I-L-S-O-N. This transmission line is
22 going to run right in front of my house, and the
23 first thing that I -- my wife and I says no. But
24 when we got to thinking about it and we talked with
25 Jordan, he directed us over to Brandon,

1 South Dakota. And we went over and took a look at
2 that, and there was a home that the transmission
3 line went right in front of their home. And on our
4 way back we got to thinking that this isn't so bad.
5 The poles are on -- they're not right out in front
6 of the house. So we -- we signed the easement so
7 that -- it was a situation where we already have an
8 existing wind farm across the road from us. We've
9 already got an easement with them. And they have
10 the right to not allow Geronimo to go on that land.
11 So, therefore, we signed the easement so that they
12 could go on our side of the -- of our farm. Either
13 way it's going to be on our land, but Geronimo made
14 it -- we made that extra easement for going in front
15 of our home.

16 So we're fine with that. We're looking
17 forward to going forward with this project.

18 MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Gary.

19 Anybody else?

20 Mike, any additional info to add, or
21 you're good?

22 MR. KALUZNIAK: Yeah.

23 MR. DAVIS: Patrick?

24 MR. SMITH: I'm good.

25 MR. DAVIS: All right. Then I will tell

1 everybody thank you for coming out. Grab some pop,
2 water, cookies, or coffee or one of each, whatever
3 you want to do, back there.

4 Geronimo has brought some maps of the
5 project, if you'd like to go back and take a look at
6 that back in the corner of the room. And, again,
7 thank you for coming out.

8 (Proceedings concluded at 6:26 p.m.)

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1 STATE OF MINNESOTA)
2 COUNTY OF DAKOTA) ss.
3)
4)

5 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE
6
7

8 I, Angie D. Threlkeld, do hereby
9 certify that the above and foregoing transcript,
10 consisting of the preceding 20 pages is a
11 correct transcript of my stenographic notes, and is
12 a full, true and complete transcript of the
13 proceedings to the best of my ability.

14 Dated February 26, 2014.
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19 _____
20 ANGIE D. THRELKELD
21 Court Reporter
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23
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25