

As the Public Utilities Commission weighs the options presented in Minnesota Power's plan, we would urge the Commission to allow Minnesota Power to operate Units 3 & 4 for as long as possible. That would give our members a long enough horizon to train for and transition to new jobs and, in some cases, new careers. We would strongly oppose any efforts to move up the closures, which already reflect compromise positions.

The longer timeframe will also help local governments in the area adjust to the new economic reality that will come with the closure of the Boswell facility. That new reality likely means drastic cuts in government services and higher property taxes that will be shouldered by area residents and businesses.

The timing of the closures is so important for the economy in the region. The bulk of Minnesota Power's electricity goes to large industrial facilities which need energy 24 hours a day, seven days a week. A more aggressive timeline could be devastating to those industries and further reduce jobs and career opportunities in the area.

We also urge the Commission to require Minnesota Power to prioritize investments in new energy sources in and around Cohasset. In addition to investments in wind, solar and storage, we believe there will be more clean energy options available within the next decade that could represent a viable option to replace the energy produced at Boswell.

Establishing a realistic timeline for the Boswell closures will also help our members in this transition by providing certainty. There was a time when a job at power plant meant a stable career with good pay, health care and a pension. It was a job that once you got, you kept. Today, our members wonder day-to-day how long they'll be able to continue to work and where they will find another job with similar pay and benefits to what they earned while working at Boswell.

The approaching closure dates create unique challenges for workers nearing retirement age, but not yet able to retire. In many cases, these workers will not have earned enough retirement benefits to retire outright, but they may also be limited in the types of jobs they could transition to, particularly if they require significant retraining.

In 2021, the Minnesota Legislature passed a law (First Special Session 2021, HF6, Art. 8, Sec. 19) requiring the utilities in the state to include a plan in subsequent IRPs that will "minimize the negative financial impact on workers at the plan, protect pensions and other benefits, maximize movement to other jobs within the utility for workers at plants that are closing, provide training for those moving to other jobs at the utility or for those who are forced to or choose to leave the utility and allow for reasonable costs not covered by new or existing federal and state programs for displaced workers to be included in the utility's rate base."

Minnesota Power has begun talks with IBEW Local 31 about that plan, but we are far from a comprehensive plan that addresses our key issues in the transition. Creating a plan that works