

NEW DECISION OPTION
Proposed by Commissioner Tuma
December 18, 2025

DOCKET NUMBER IP7115/GS-23-423, ESS-24-283, TL-23-425

ANALYST Cezar Panait

DATE/TIME SUBMITTED 12/16/25 11:00 AM

TITLE Tuma Alternative 5

ATTACHMENT No

SUBJECT “In the Matter of the Application of Benton Solar, LLC for a Site Permit for the 100 MW Solar Energy Generating System for the Benton Solar Project in Benton County, Minnesota

In the Matter of the Application of Benton Solar, LLC for a Site Permit for the 100 MW Battery Energy Storage System for the Benton Solar Project in Benton County, Minnesota

In the Matter of the Application of Benton Solar, LLC for a Route Permit for a 0.5-mile 115 kV High-Voltage Transmission Line Associated with the Benton Solar Project in Benton County, Minnesota”

Tuma Alternative 5. Adopt the following modifications to the ALJ Report:

Finding 149. On August 20, 2025, Benton County filed a public comment regarding visual impacts on the residents at Rua Mitchel Court requesting urging the applicant and the Commission “to consider enhanced screening measures—such as the proposed earthen berm—in this particular location.” Benton County suggested that Benton Solar develop a visual screening plan with an earthen berm approximately six feet high to screen the visual impacts of the Solar Facility from the residents in Rua Mitchel Court NE citing a similar 6 feet high berm at a nearby community solar garden. Benton County requested the earthen berm due to the high concentration of residences in the area around Rua Mitchel Court NE and the fact that the soil quality is not sufficient to support the long-term survival of trees and other vegetation. Benton County acknowledged that the Applicant’s screening proposal of two staggered rows of evergreen trees planted no more than 8 feet apart “is one of several options allowed under the Benton County Development Code, which is intentionally flexible to allow for the most appropriate solution to visual buffering.” However, the County encouraged a berm as an additional mitigation in this area.

Finding 365. Based on the record and the legitimate concerns expressed at the public hearings by residents of Rua Mitchel Court, the Visual Screening Plan for residences adjacent to the project should include an earthen berm and/or vegetation sufficient to ensure eight feet of screening reasonably mitigate visual impacts at all times throughout the year, include including winter months.