

1 SCOPING AND INFORMATIONAL MEETING - 23-200 08-1474

2 MARSHALL - DECEMBER 12, 2023 - 6:00 P.M.

3 BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

4 AND DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

5
6 In the Matter of the Application for a Certificate of
7 Need for the Proposed 345 kV Brookings County, Lyon
County and Helena County Hampton Second Circuit Project

8 In the Matter of the Application for a Minor Alteration
9 of the CapX2020 Brookings - Hampton Route Permit to Add
the Brookings County - Lyon County and Helena - Hampton
Second Circuit Project

10 MPUC DOCKET NOS. E-002/CN-23-200
11 E-002/TI-08-1474

12
13 Everspring Inn & Suites
14 1500 E College Drive
15 Marshall, Minnesota

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18 DECEMBER 12, 2023

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25 STENOGRAPHIC COURT REPORTER: Jolene Carrow

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1 MR. MICHAEL KAUZNIAK: Good evening. My
2 name is Mike Kaluzniak. I'm a staff person with the
3 Minnesota Public Utilities Commission. Thank you
4 for coming out today.

5 We are here for the public information
6 and the environmental report scoping meeting for the
7 Second Circuit Project for the Brookings to Hampton
8 line, which most of you are obviously familiar with.

9 We are here in Marshall and we do
10 appreciate you coming out.

11 The purpose of the meeting is to provide
12 more information about the proposed project, as well
13 as the review for the certificate of need
14 application for the two applications that the
15 applicants have before the Commission; and one is
16 the certificate of need, which speaks to whether the
17 project is needed and in the best interests of the
18 ratepayers and consumers; and, secondly, a minor
19 alteration process to amend a permit that was issued
20 in 2012.

21 In fact, we were out here with the
22 original routing and siting out here a few years
23 ago. I think many of us were here.

24 Oh, come on in. We are just getting
25 started.

1 So again we are here to ask your
2 participation in developing a record for the
3 development of the scoping report, which is an
4 analysis of the environmental impacts of the project
5 itself. We would also appreciate any comments you
6 might have on the need for the project or whether
7 there is potential impacts from the project and
8 commenting about any methods you can think of that
9 might minimize, mitigate or avoid any of those
10 potential impacts.

11 Again, I'm Michael Kaluzniak, a staff
12 person with the Commission. The Commission, as you
13 know, regulates utilities. And as part of that, we
14 approve and analyze -- not always approve -- but we
15 analyze and consider permits for transmission lines,
16 pipelines, energy facilities, nuclear, solar, wind,
17 and the like.

18 Also with us is Tim Rogers here from Xcel
19 Energy. He will be speaking next about the project
20 information, so going through what the project looks
21 like and the timeframes.

22 Suzanne Steinhauer is here from the
23 Department of Commerce. The Department of Commerce
24 is a sibling agency of ours that helps develop the
25 record for the Commissioner's decisions on these

1 things -- typically through an environmental
2 document and an environmental assessment record, an
3 environmental impact statement.

4 Tonight we have an environmental review
5 and I know this is assertoric to a lot of people but
6 the environmental review document is directed
7 towards the certificate of need portion of the
8 application.

9 But, again, we are a small group here so
10 we will be very casual about comments and questions.
11 Suzanne will be moderating that portion of the
12 evening.

13 Again, the certificate of need for this
14 line is a large energy facility.

15 And the next bullet down shows the
16 statutes and rules that are mandating and regulating
17 this process as the Commission goes through these
18 processes.

19 And the second part, as I mentioned, is
20 the minor alteration to the existing transmission
21 line permit that has been effective from the
22 Commission that was ordered and was approved in
23 December of 2012. And so I will talk a bit about
24 the process of how we are reviewing those as well.

25 We are here for the environmental

1 scoping. The Department of Commerce will write a
2 formal report after we take your comments and say
3 this is what we are going to look at and then write
4 the report that comes back. We will probably be
5 back out here in the March timeframe -- something
6 like that -- March - April to have a public hearing
7 with an Administrative Law Judge that is similar to
8 this.

9 You can see, by the way, we have a court
10 reporter here, Jolene, who is taking notes for us
11 tonight.

12 If you have questions or wish to speak,
13 please introduce yourself with your name and
14 spelling and that helps her out to make the record.

15 Anyhow, we will be out here with a public
16 hearing with an administrative law judge. A similar
17 sort of process: We will be evaluating more of the
18 record retrospectively because there is an
19 environmental report that looks to these things.
20 There will some filings, additional filings by the
21 applicants about the need for the project, and those
22 sort of things.

23 If you did not get a copy of the notice
24 here, please take one with you. There is also
25 copies of this presentation tonight that are over

1 here.

2 There is also a QR code for a survey
3 that I will talk good but, yeah, that should help
4 you.

5 And if you have any information you would
6 like to find on the project, you can go to our
7 website any time. All of our documents and
8 everything the Commission uses to make its decision
9 is online at our website and available. And if you
10 have any questions, feel free to contact us any
11 time.

12 And with that, I would just note, again
13 there is a survey. Our communications people have
14 us doing a survey of these meetings to see if you
15 appreciate or do not like the format and content of
16 the meetings. Feel free to do that. There is a QR
17 code that you can scan. There is a copy of the
18 papers over there as well, or you can take a copy of
19 the survey home with you or drop it off here and
20 just respond directly and we will take those back to
21 our people. But we are not looking for those
22 comments to be about the line and where it goes or
23 the impacts of the line. Just this is for purposes
24 of organizing these meetings.

25 So with that, I think I will turn it over

1 to Tim Rogers.

2 If you have any questions, we are happy
3 to talk about this so, thank you once again.

4 MR. TIM ROGERS: Good evening. I'm Tim
5 Rogers, I'm a manager of the site line rights group
6 at Xcel Energy. My group does a lot of the
7 permitting and kind of the land control. We have
8 land agents that work with the landowners on these
9 type of projects.

10 I have Tony Wendland with me, who is the
11 project manager with me on this project, and other
12 associates that can help out with any type of
13 questions that we can't handle.

14 Xcel is the utility that we are the lead
15 applicant on this project but there are other --
16 there are other owners of the line that I need you
17 all to be aware of. They are co-owners of this line
18 so we need to knowledge them.

19 So I will describe the project here a
20 bit.

21 So we are asking the Commission for
22 approval to put on a second circuit on the existing
23 lines that you are all pretty aware of. You can see
24 that the structures have been up for, you know, 12
25 years or so.

1 And there is two segments of the line on
2 the east and the west that have the davit arms
3 already for the second circuit.

4 The two segments are 98 miles in length
5 in total. The Western Segment goes from White,
6 South Dakota, to Milroy, Minnesota. That's this
7 Western Segment. And then there is an Eastern
8 Segment that goes from a substation in New Prague,
9 Minnesota, to Hampton, Minnesota.

10 A little background on this. When we
11 first got approval to build this line, the
12 Commission asked us, they said, you know, you can
13 build it double circuit capable but when you are
14 ready to put that second line on, why don't you come
15 back before us to make sure that the project makes
16 sense, it is economical, and there is a need for it.

17 So that's kind of where we are at right
18 now is we are finding that the existing line has
19 congestion on it so it's kind of inhibiting us from
20 delivering renewable energy. So now is the time to
21 put on this second circuit.

22 The two segments, the east and west
23 there, I could get into the details. On the west
24 side here, we only have one structure I believe that
25 is going to be new, and that's to cut in to Chub

1 Lake -- Steep Bank Substation. So we will have one
2 new structure.

3 All the activities on both segments are
4 going to be within existing easements so we won't
5 need any new land rights.

6 Most of the project will be helicopter
7 use so we will string that second circuit using a
8 helicopter. There will be like dead-end structures,
9 corner structures where the helicopter can't put on
10 that second circuit and so we need to get approval
11 up on the structure with a bucket truck or we need
12 to do kind of a pulling staging area.

13 So there are a few spots on each segment
14 where we will have some access roads and staging
15 areas around a few structures but all still within
16 the existing easements.

17 The Eastern Segment is pretty much the
18 same. We do have more structures that need to go in
19 on this segment and that's due to the Airlake
20 Airport. We have to have a low profile, you know,
21 for the airplane -- or the airport approach. We
22 have got to put some structures in that keep the
23 profile low. We can't have taller structures.

24 And then once again, we have another
25 substation where we have to cut in the lines to the

1 substation that will require two new structures at
2 Chub Lake. And we can see where the green is,
3 that's where we will need some new structures.

4 On the Western Segment -- I forgot to
5 mention -- our construction is expected to start
6 2024 of quarter 2 and the Eastern Segment, our
7 construction is going to start in quarter 2 of 2025.

8 I think that's about it. Yeah, okay. If
9 you have any questions or need to contact us, here
10 is some information on how to do that.

11 And with that, I will turn it over to
12 Suzanne.

13 MS. SUZANNE STEINHAUER: Thank you.
14 Thanks for coming. My name is Suzanne Steinhauer.
15 I'm with the Minnesota Department of Commerce,
16 Energy Environmental Review and Analysis Division.
17 The Department of Commerce has a number of
18 responsibilities. Most of those are sort of in that
19 area of consumer protection. We have an insurance
20 fraud investigation unit. We do weights and
21 measures.

22 And my unit, Energy Environmental Review
23 Analysis or EERA, serves as technical advisors to
24 the Commission. We provide neutral third-party
25 analysis of potential human and environmental

1 impacts on large energy facilities that are seeking
2 permit permission from the Commission.

3 We don't advocate for a particular
4 outcome. We try to focus on the facts. The goal is
5 an informed decision by the Public Utilities
6 Commission; and information for anybody who is
7 participating in the project, to advocate for their
8 desired outcome.

9 So we talked a little bit that it needs
10 two approvals: A certificate of need and the minor
11 alteration of the existing permit.

12 So the difference -- From my perspective,
13 the difference is that the certificate of need
14 requires an environmental report, which is sort of a
15 high level look at what are the potential human
16 environmental impacts for the project as proposed;
17 and the other is what we call system alternatives,
18 other ways of meeting that need.

19 The minor alteration, we are taking
20 comments on that also. That doesn't have a separate
21 environmental review documents but those comments
22 get kind of incorporated into what our
23 recommendations would be and the Commission's
24 decision on any permit conditions.

25 So as I mentioned, the environmental

1 report describes the proposed project and system
2 alternatives. It looks at the potential human
3 impacts and identifies strategies to avoid and
4 minimize and mitigate those impacts.

5 So by law, there are certain categories
6 of impacts that we need to look at. We look at
7 impacts to natural resources that are air, soils,
8 geology, vegetation, wildlife, human settlements,
9 aesthetics, noise, socioeconomics, cultural
10 resources, public services, and then land based
11 economics which are agriculture, forestry, mining,
12 recreation and tourism.

13 So those are -- that's sort of the
14 background. Those are things we know we are going
15 to have to look at.

16 One of the reasons we come out to the
17 public for scoping is we want to try to move from
18 the general categories to specific categories: What
19 are the impacts of the particular project in the
20 particular place.

21 So we are looking for help identifying
22 particular human and environmental impacts that
23 people may be concerned about that they have local
24 knowledge of, and then how ideas for how the
25 project can avoid, minimize or mitigate those

1 impacts that may wind their way into specific permit
2 conditions.

3 So with that general background, these
4 are the comments that are most helpful to us: What
5 impacts are you concerned about, strategies to avoid
6 them, minimize or mitigate, other ways to meet the
7 stated need for the project, unique characteristics
8 of the proposed route of the project, items that are
9 mischaracterized or missing from the applications --
10 I think there are a couple of applications in the
11 back if people had an opportunity to look at them --
12 and other project-related issues or concerns.

13 So we are going to open it up in just a
14 minute for comments and questions. I encourage you
15 to ask questions tonight. We will try to answer
16 them. We have a lot of people who know about the
17 project and can answer them hopefully. That feeds
18 into what their court will address.

19 So this is the last opportunity to take
20 verbal comments.

21 We have a court reporter. Jolene is here
22 and she is taking a record of that.

23 You are free to contact me, call me or
24 email me. If you email me, I will keep that comment
25 and that goes in the record. If you call me, I'm

1 happy to talk to you but I don't keep a record of
2 those conversations. So that in order to get it in
3 the record and make sure the decision makers can see
4 it, that after tonight, it needs to be in writing.

5 There are comment sheets available. You
6 don't have to use that but it has all my contact
7 information. So if you wanted to bring some to
8 neighbors, you are certainly welcome to pick one up.
9 If you have a comment, you can just drop it in and I
10 will collect them tonight.

11 I do want to make clear we have a written
12 comment period that is open until January 3rd. You
13 can have a comment tonight and then if you think of
14 something later, as long as I get them by January
15 3rd, they will be part of the record.

16 So I'm going to open it up for comments
17 and questions in just a minute.

18 I'm going to go real briefly over sort of
19 the rules of engagement here.

20 One speaker at a time. As Mike
21 mentioned, we have a court reporter. She is keeping
22 an accurate record. We can only hear from one
23 person at a time. Please state and spell your name
24 for the court reporter. Please keep and direct your
25 comments and questions to the scope of the ER that

1 is useful to us.

2 As I mentioned, we are also here to try
3 to answer questions you have.

4 Please limit your comments, your initial
5 comments, to five minutes. I think it is a small
6 enough group here that we can get to everybody but I
7 just do want to make sure that everybody has an
8 opportunity.

9 And then finally, maintain respect for
10 others. People can have reasonable differences of
11 opinion on a particular project.

12 I don't think there is anybody who signed
13 up so I'm going to open it for comments and
14 questions and I would ask you to come up and take
15 the mic and then just state and spell your name,
16 please. So we will go by show of hands.

17 I am opening it up for public comments
18 and questions. Does anybody have any?

19 So comments, questions? Going once.
20 Going twice. I do want to respect your time but I
21 want to make sure everybody has an opportunity. So
22 going three times.

23 Thank you for coming out tonight. I
24 appreciate it. We are going to close the formal
25 part of the meeting but we will be around for a

1 while if you have questions or comments. Thanks.
2 Bye.

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4 * * * 6:22 p.m. * * *
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