

Oral Public Meeting Comments Received on the
Scope of the Environmental Assessment for the
Northern Crescent Solar Project
Docket Nos. GS-22-57, ESS-24-238

Public Meetings

1. October 8, 2024 – Blue Earth, Minn., 6:00 p.m.
 - One oral comment.
2. October 9, 2024 – Virtual, On-Line Meeting, 6:00 p.m.
 - No oral comments.

1 SCOPING AND INFORMATIONAL MEETING - 22-57 & 24-238

2 Blue Earth - October 8, 2024 - 6:00 p.m.

3 BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

4 AND DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

5
6 In the Matter of the Joint Application of Northern
7 Crescent Solar, LLC, for a Solar Energy Generating System
8 Site Permit and a Battery Energy Storage System Site
9 Permit for the up to 150 MW Northern Crescent Solar and
10 50 MW Storage Project in Faribault County, Minnesota

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15 MPUC DOCKET NOS. IP-7135/GS-22-57
16 IP-7135/ESS-24-238

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18 Meeting held in
19 Blue Earth, Minnesota

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22 October 8, 2024

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25 COURT REPORTER: Janet Shaddix Elling, RPR

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1 MR. SAM LOBBY: Good evening, folks. Can
2 you hear me all right? All right. Sounds good.

3 Well, we'll go ahead and get started
4 here. We may have a few more stragglers come in,
5 but thank you all very much for coming tonight. I
6 just want to make a real point to let you know we
7 really, really appreciate all of you taking your
8 time out of your night to come here. We know you've
9 got other stuff going on, but we really appreciate
10 you coming here.

11 My name is Sam Lobby, I'm with the Public
12 Utilities Commission. This is my counterpart with
13 the Department of Commerce, this is Logan, and so
14 we're both working for the state.

15 We'll get into some of this here in the
16 presentation, but tonight is about letting you all
17 know about this project that's being considered to
18 be built in this area and provide some information
19 on that. And then we also want to get some feedback
20 from you all as we look into an environmental study
21 for the area, what stuff should we be looking at.
22 You all on the ground know the area better than any
23 of us and so there's things that you can tell us
24 that might be helpful if we can't find it on a map
25 or from a different state agency or that kind of

1 thing.

2 So the Public Utilities Commission
3 consists of five Commissioners and they are the ones
4 who will make a permitting decision about this. So
5 the Public Utilities Commission is neutral, we're
6 not for or against any projects. What we're here
7 for is to receive input from you all, from the
8 public.

9 So we're here to take your feedback about
10 this project and then anything that you tell us, our
11 Commissioners do go in and read that, that's one of
12 the most important pieces of their decision-making,
13 is seeing what you all who all live in the area and
14 are affected by the project, what you all think
15 about it, and if you have any ideas on what you can
16 do to make the project better, that kind of thing.
17 So they take that very seriously.

18 So, with that said, I just wanted to
19 thank you again for taking the time to come here
20 tonight.

21 So tonight we're discussing the Northern
22 Crescent Solar Project. You'll see up here, if you
23 go online you can look up all the information on
24 this project. And the numbers that are important
25 here for you are going to be this 22-57 and 24-238,

1 and there's information about how to access all of
2 that online in the meeting notice that was provided
3 as well as in this presentation. So, if you picked
4 up the handouts up front, you should have everything
5 you need.

6 So the agenda here for tonight.

7 First, I'm Sam with the Public Utilities
8 Commission. I'll just give you kind of an
9 introduction to the permit application review
10 process. Then after that we're going to have
11 Primergy talk about the project itself. And then
12 Logan with Environmental Review is going to talk
13 about the study, the environmental assessment. So
14 if that term is unfamiliar to you, that's kind of a
15 technical jargon term.

16 So environmental assessment, essentially
17 what we're looking at is before a project can be
18 done, the state wants to know, you know, to mitigate
19 any environmental issues as much as possible so it
20 doesn't have an impact on the landowner or as little
21 as possible. So that study, what we're looking at a
22 big part of tonight is getting feedback from you all
23 about what we should be studying. So tonight is
24 about what we should be studying, and then that
25 study will take place.

1 Logan will do that study. It takes a
2 couple of months. And then once that study is done,
3 the study will be released so you all get a chance
4 to look at it. And then about a month after it's
5 released, we'll all come back here again and then
6 you're welcome to come back again. And having read
7 the document, then you can provide us feedback again
8 once the study is over to let us know did we miss
9 anything, did we do a good or bad job on certain
10 things. So we want to create a lot of opportunities
11 for you all to provide your input for this project.

12 So this is the first part here, it
13 shouldn't take too long to get through all the
14 presentation pieces, and then the whole rest of the
15 meeting will be an opportunity for you all to ask
16 questions and comments. You don't have to. If
17 you're not a public speaker, you don't like to do
18 that, don't feel any pressure. We love to hear from
19 you if you want to, but this it not your only
20 opportunity to submit comments.

21 So you can have verbal comments or you
22 can provide us written comments through
23 October 25th, and there's information about that in
24 the meeting notice. And just as a head's up, there
25 isn't a higher weight for speaking in person versus

1 written comments, they're looked at the same, so if
2 you don't like public speaking, don't feel any
3 pressure.

4 All right. So I won't get too deep into
5 this because we're going to have someone from the
6 company explain the project, but this is the
7 Northern Crescent Solar Project. It is a proposed
8 150 megawatt solar energy generating system with an
9 associated 50 megawatt battery energy storage
10 system.

11 The project would be located on
12 approximately 1,179 acres in Verona and Prescott
13 Townships in Faribault County, and the project would
14 also include a project substation and
15 interconnection facilities that would connect to the
16 existing Xcel switch yard, which would then connect
17 to the existing Huntley-Blue Earth 161-kV
18 transmission line. So this is a little bit more
19 jargon here, but I'll hopefully be able to explain
20 it so it's understandable.

21 So this solar project is considered under
22 statute as a large electric power generating plant.
23 So in order for the company to build a project like
24 this, there's two things that -- well, in this case
25 there's one thing, two of the same thing that they

1 need to get from the Public Utilities Commission for
2 this project and that is a site permit. So there's
3 a process, a very specific process that it has to go
4 through.

5 So the site permit for the solar facility
6 is because it's a large enough solar facility, it's
7 greater than 50 megawatts so it's required to go
8 through this permitting process. Then there's a
9 second site permit that's also needed for the
10 battery energy storage system. There isn't a
11 transmission line associated with this, so it's just
12 within the relatively, you know, the general project
13 area, it's not a long project or anything.

14 Solar projects of this size are exempted
15 from a certificate of need requirement due to recent
16 legislation, so that was another permit that used to
17 be required that very recently due to legislation is
18 no longer required.

19 So just a summary of the permit
20 considerations. Tonight the main thing that we're
21 going to be looking at is Minnesota Rule 7850.4100,
22 and that's for the environmental assessment piece.
23 So in making our decision, or as the Commissioners
24 make their decision to grant the site permit yes or
25 no, the Commission will have to consider the

1 following: The potential human and environmental
2 impacts of the project, such as noise, aesthetics,
3 public health and safety, land use conflicts,
4 cultural and historic resources, air and water
5 quality, and plants and wildlife. And so before
6 when I said you all are the experts in this area,
7 you know this area better than any of us, this is
8 the sort of thing where you all can provide
9 information that we may not know from talking to
10 other state agencies or looking at maps or that kind
11 of thing. So, again, your input is highly valuable
12 for the decision-making. And then, also, along with
13 that, is do you have any suggestions to minimize,
14 mitigate, or avoid potential impacts.

15 So this one, this slide here, I'll put it
16 back up at some point because this is a really
17 useful slide with information. It is also in the
18 meeting presentation that I left up front and the
19 same information is also in the meeting notice, but
20 this kind of has everything that you need as far as
21 how to comment and submit comments to the
22 Commission.

23 So -- excuse me.

24 So, as I mentioned, written comments will
25 be submitted through October 25th, so if you either

1 don't feel like speaking tonight or you hear our
2 presentation and tomorrow morning or a week from now
3 you wake up and you think, oh, why didn't I ask that
4 question or why didn't I tell them about this?
5 That's just fine, you have plenty of time to submit
6 a written comment.

7 So there is a website online up there
8 where you can send that to, or go to that website
9 and send us a comment. You can email. That has
10 Rich Davis, who is over there, Logan is the other
11 contact, so either of those contacts will be fine.
12 The U.S. Mail, that's a good address for either of
13 them.

14 And then if you're commenting, and also
15 for tonight, just the general kind of focus for the
16 sort of questions we're looking for is what are the
17 potential human and environmental impacts of the
18 proposed project that should be considered in the
19 environmental assessment. Are there any methods to
20 minimize, mitigate, or avoid potential impacts of
21 the proposed project. And are there any unique
22 characteristics of the proposed project site that
23 should be considered.

24 There's also a project website through
25 the Department of Commerce. There's information for

1 the full case record, so the docket, anything that
2 gets submitted on this project goes into the docket,
3 it's publicly available, everybody can see it, that
4 way we make sure everything is transparent,
5 everybody is looking at the same thing so we all
6 know what's going on. And you can even subscribe to
7 the docket so that will let you know when there are
8 new filings coming in. I will warn you that you
9 will receive a lot of emails, but that's --
10 sometimes it's better to get too much than not
11 enough. Then at the bottom here are the state
12 agency contacts.

13 So just another thing I'd like to say is
14 the comment period goes through October 25th for
15 this part of the process, but even if it's outside
16 of a comment period, you're always more than welcome
17 to reach out to myself, to Logan, to Rich and we
18 will help you with any questions you have. We work
19 for the state, we represent you, so if you have any
20 questions, feel free to reach out any time.

21 With that said, I will pass this on to
22 Primergy for the project.

23 MS. HELEN ROACH: Hello, everyone. Oop.
24 Can you hear me okay?

25 MR. SAM LOBBY: Yep.

1 MS. HELEN ROACH: Okay. I wanted to
2 restate what Sam said and thank you all for being
3 here tonight to learn a little bit more about our
4 Northern Crescent Solar Project as well as our
5 company, Primergy.

6 My name is Ellen Roach, I am a project
7 development manager, and I'm here with my colleague,
8 Evan Hughard, who is a senior project manager.
9 We're here to answer any and all questions you may
10 have and look forward to speaking with you tonight.

11 A little bit of background about our
12 company. We were founded in 2020 and have since
13 grown to a company of over 90 professionals with a
14 pipeline of over 22,000 megawatts of solar and
15 storage projects.

16 As a company, we develop, own, operate
17 and construct utility-scale solar and battery
18 storage projects throughout North America. Our
19 development process is to lead projects throughout
20 the entirety of their lifecycle through site
21 identification and signed land leases, through
22 construction and operation, and finally
23 decommissioning and removing solar facilities from
24 the project site area.

25 We aim to maximize the benefits that we

1 bring to the community where we are developing solar
2 projects as well as minimize the impact to the
3 farmland while we are here. We are a project with a
4 partnership with the communities that are hosting us
5 and so we design our site projects with these people
6 in mind.

7 Here is a map of our current assets. The
8 black dots are projects that are currently operating
9 or under construction, and the golden dots are
10 projects that we anticipate will begin construction
11 in the near term.

12 We are happy to answer any questions you
13 have about our reputation with our projects in other
14 areas of the country as well as the project here in
15 Minnesota.

16 Here is a high level map of our site
17 plan. It's located over -- just over 1,100 acres
18 where solar panels will be put on the project, but
19 we have 1,300 acres signed. And the reason why the
20 1,100 acres is less than our project site area, is
21 less than the area that we have signed, is to
22 account for exclusions for wetlands and other areas
23 that we aren't using for project development.

24 The project size will be 150 megawatts of
25 solar and 50 megawatts of battery storage throughout

1 the Verona and Prescott Townships, and we anticipate
2 that the project will go live in 2027 and power
3 about 35,000 homes each year.

4 Here is a closer view of our project site
5 plan. The gray area is where we plan for solar
6 panels to go into the ground. The solar panels are
7 located in the north-south orientation, so -- or
8 east-west orientation, so they will follow the sun
9 when it rises in the morning and then track it
10 during the day throughout and then through sunset.

11 We had a question earlier about what the
12 panels will do in the winter. If we anticipate snow
13 or weather events, the panels will be oriented in an
14 upright position to avoid too much load bearing
15 weight due to snow.

16 The solar panels will collect energy from
17 the sun and then transported via cables over to the
18 northwest area of the site footprint where a battery
19 storage and project substation will be located. We
20 are anticipating about 40 units for the battery
21 storage project, which will be 50 megawatts.

22 I just wanted to highlight some of the
23 benefits that we anticipate this project will bring
24 into the county. There will be over 200 jobs
25 created during construction, and we hope to hire

1 locally and partner with local unions for our
2 project construction as well as two to four
3 permanent jobs through the operations and
4 maintenance of the project.

5 We hope to have low impact on the
6 farmland once the project is installed. We will
7 plant a cover crop during the 30-year lifetime of
8 the project as well as have a vegetation management
9 plan in place for the crops while they're there.

10 The landowners will maintain ownership of
11 their land throughout the life of the project, so at
12 the end of the 30-year lifetime, the solar panels
13 are removed, the land will go back to the original
14 landowners and their family.

15 As I mentioned earlier, this project will
16 power up to 35,000 homes annually and bring over \$16
17 million in tax revenue over the 30-year lifespan of
18 the project.

19 Thank you again to everyone who came out
20 tonight. Please find us afterwards if you have any
21 questions, or contact us. There is our contact
22 information. Contact us via email if you have any
23 questions following the meeting.

24 Thank you.

25 MR. LOGAN HICKS: All right. To

1 reiterate, I'm Logan Hicks, I work with the
2 Department of Commerce, the Environmental Energy
3 Review and Analysis. Essentially what I do is, as
4 Sam said earlier, I take the environment -- so I do
5 the environmental review. I take all of you guyses
6 input on things that we should be looking at. You
7 know, if there's, say, you know, like a well or a
8 stream running through a property that isn't on a
9 map and that's something that we should be aware of,
10 that's where we need you guys to bring that up so we
11 can be aware of it and so we can include that in the
12 review. And that's why we're doing this tonight, is
13 so we can get input.

14 You've heard this once or twice and I
15 will say it again. Thank you so much for coming out
16 tonight, it is very important that we get you guys
17 in play.

18 So I'm going to go down this list here
19 starting with EERA and what we do. We're going to
20 talk about the environmental review process, the
21 timeline, and different impacts and mitigations we
22 can do for that. I'm going to discuss different
23 ways you guys can comment today. And then we'll
24 talk about, you know, the questions and comments,
25 and I'll give you guys a, you know, a rundown of the

1 rules for that.

2 So the Department of Commerce hires us
3 and my counterpart Rich over there to do these
4 environmental reviews. So there is a stable of
5 ideas that are basic in these environmental reviews,
6 these assessments. There's a draft on the table
7 back there that you can look at that's kind of a
8 table of contents of different things that we like
9 to look at in standard environmental assessments.
10 But say there's something that, like I said, that
11 needs to be brought to our attention, it's important
12 that you guys do so as well so we can take a look at
13 that. The standard environmental assessments are
14 going to evaluate the potential human and
15 environmental impacts. We look at different ways
16 that, you know, they mentioned wetlands in their
17 thing, and they're avoiding them, that's stuff we
18 look at as well, right. So we look at avoidance,
19 mitigation, and minimization of impacts, right.

20 It's very stressed here that we are a
21 neutral third party. We don't work for the Public
22 Utilities Commission and we don't work for Primergy,
23 we are a stand-alone entity that just provides the
24 details to the Public Utilities Commission so they
25 can make a good decision based on this knowledge

1 that is unbiased. So the goal of our environmental
2 assessment is just to provide the documentation for
3 informed decision-making.

4 Yeah. So this kind of goes back to what
5 I was saying earlier about the public input. That
6 is the best -- the best information we can get is
7 from you folks, right. You know, there's a bunch of
8 different impacts that we -- that are very standard
9 that we utilize, but say there's something that we
10 need to hear from you. Like, hey, I have -- you
11 know, I use this patch of land for something, you
12 know, and whatever it is, it's something that we
13 need to know so we can look at it, analyze it, and
14 understand it, right.

15 So the important thing, too, is that we
16 also put these into the specific permit conditions
17 when they are actually permitted, if they are,
18 right. So it's important that we have all this
19 right at the get-go so we can take a look at it now
20 and understand it all the way through the process.

21 So to kind of give you a little process
22 here. The timeline. Right now we're under step two
23 there, right. So the site permit application was
24 filed and accepted by the Public Utilities
25 Commission. And right now we're in the info and

1 scoping meeting section, so this is where we get all
2 the information from the folks on the ground, you
3 know, out in the field, you know, that you provide
4 us, we look at it all. We put that environmental
5 assessment together and then we send it out. And
6 then as Sam said earlier, you guys can take a look
7 at it, read it, and after a month or so after that
8 comes out we'll come back and meet again and you
9 guys can tell us if we did a good job, did we do a
10 bad job. We're all for your guys' opinion on that
11 assessment. So this is important to note, that this
12 is a tentative timeline, this is by no means set in
13 stone, it's just a visualization.

14 Yeah, so this isn't the last you'll see
15 of us, you know, and you can always call or email
16 us. You can mail me, I'll take snail mail, it's no
17 problem. In fact, right here is this is the best
18 way to get ahold of me. So you can go to this, that
19 website, mn.gov/commerce/energyfacilities and you
20 can put a comment in that way. You can come up
21 tonight and have a verbal comment, if that is your
22 wish. You can complete that comment sheet that is
23 by Rich in the back and leave it here or you can
24 mail it to me. There's endless ways that you guys
25 can comment on this because we really want your

1 input, you know, and we try to make it as easiest as
2 possible for you.

3 I have two contacts up there. I have
4 Rich Davis and myself. Rich is the one that was on
5 the public notice, as you saw. However, I'm taking
6 that project over for him. But you can mail either
7 of us and it will, you know, be put into the record.
8 So just, you know, we're just doubling down on
9 different ways you guys can get in a comment.

10 So the comment period ends October 25th
11 at 4:30 p.m. That 4:30 is a little loose. Say you
12 get it to me by 6:00 because you had some work to do
13 that day, I'm not going to be terribly upset by
14 that, you know. Just email me and explain and I'll
15 do my best to get it in there, guys.

16 So those are the best ways to get
17 comments in, but the reason we're here tonight is
18 to, you know, actually get some verbal input. You
19 know, besides giving you guys information, if
20 there's information you'd like to give us as well,
21 feel free to come up afterwards and we'll hear what
22 have to say, it will go into the public record.

23 We do ask that if you do come up that you
24 state your full name and spell it, so Ms. Janet can
25 have it in the record over there. So other things

1 here. You know, only one speaker at a time, right.
2 Limit the comments to just a few minutes. This
3 isn't, you know, we're not like going off on, you
4 know, different tangents for whatever reason, right,
5 filibustering, as it were. So maintain respect for
6 others, no heckling, no rudeness, no rude gestures.
7 And direct your comments and questions to the scope
8 of the environmental assessment, like I said, to
9 avoid any filibustering or anything, try to keep it,
10 you know, pertinent.

11 So here's some topics for comments if
12 anybody has anything they would like to discuss.
13 Maybe about the table of contents of the
14 environmental assessment that we'll be making, any
15 impacts to human and environmental strategies.
16 Anything like that.

17 MR. SAM LOBBY: We only have one person
18 on the list, Nate Runke. If you didn't sign up and
19 you still want to speak, though, after this
20 gentleman is finished, you're more than welcome to.

21 MR. NATE RUNKE: All right. I'll keep it
22 short.

23 My name is Nate Runke, N-A-T-E,
24 R-U-N-K-E. I'm with the International Union of
25 Operating Engineers Local 49. We have 15,000

1 members across Minnesota and both of the Dakotas.

2 I'm just here to bring up the fact that
3 projects like this have become a bigger and bigger
4 part of hundreds of our members' ability to make a
5 living. We understand that projects, you know, the
6 construction jobs might not go on forever in this
7 area, but that is how members like ours do make
8 their living. So a collection of projects like
9 these over the years is how they put food in their
10 families' homes or on the tables. And so we would
11 ask that the environmental assessment just include
12 that part, the job creation, the benefits it will
13 create that way.

14 So thank you.

15 MR. SAM LOBBY: Thank you very much.

16 MR. NATE RUNKE: Thank you.

17 MR. LOGAN HICKS: Anybody else who has
18 anything to say? Any comments, any questions?

19 Okay. Well, I mean, we're not going to
20 be immediately out of here, so if you guys would
21 like to say anything off the record, feel free to
22 ask anybody here. Ask us. Like I said, you can
23 always give us a call, an email, anything like that.

24 Thank you guys once again for coming out
25 tonight. We really appreciate your time and your

1 attention to this matter.

2 MR. SAM LOBBY: Thank you so much for
3 coming. And we still want to give you an
4 opportunity if there's anybody in the crowd who is
5 just waiting to see if someone else was going first.
6 But, again, don't feel any pressure to come up. You
7 do have the written comment period. And the written
8 comment period, like I said, is weighted the same as
9 speaking publicly, if that's how you prefer to do
10 it. And if you just have general questions for the
11 company that you don't want to ask publicly, that's
12 also just fine. Thank you again very much for
13 coming.

14 Are we getting anybody itching to come
15 speak? It doesn't look like it. That's just fine.

16 MR. JEREMY DUEHR: We will hangout here
17 by the posters if people have questions.

18 MR. SAM LOBBY: The company will be
19 hanging out by the posters if you have questions
20 specific to the project area.

21 And I would also like to say thank you to
22 our court reporter, Janet Shaddix. We have court
23 reporters to make sure we're getting a good
24 transcript, a good record, so everybody can see
25 that.

1 And, also, I think I forgot to mention
2 this when I was originally talking. When we come
3 back several months from now after the environmental
4 assessment is finished and you've had a chance to
5 read that, we'll come right back here, presumably in
6 the same location. However, that meeting will be
7 run by an administrative law judge, so that judge
8 is -- they run the whole show. And when you bring a
9 judge in you know it's getting serious. So they
10 make sure everything in the record is straight and
11 they make sure that all of your comments are
12 represented appropriately and they make sure that
13 the process is being done in a legal manner. So
14 it's a very formal process, but it's -- we want to
15 make sure that we're doing things right, get it
16 right the first time.

17 All right. It's not looking like we have
18 anybody who wants to get up and speak publicly. So,
19 with that, we'll just say thank you again very much
20 for taking your time to come here. And we will hang
21 out for a little bit if you want to ask more
22 questions individually.

23 And make sure you take lots of cookies.
24 Take some home with you. We have more than I think
25 anybody could eat here.

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(Proceedings concluded at 6:31 p.m.)

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1 SCOPING AND INFORMATIONAL MEETING - 22-57 & 24-238

2 Webex - October 9, 2024 - 6:00 p.m.

3 BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

4 AND DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

5
6 In the Matter of the Joint Application of Northern
7 Crescent Solar, LLC, for a Solar Energy Generating System
8 Site Permit and a Battery Energy Storage System Site
9 Permit for the up to 150 MW Northern Crescent Solar and
10 50 MW Storage Project in Faribault County, Minnesota

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14
15 MPUC DOCKET NOS. IP-7135/GS-22-57
16 IP-7135/ESS-24-238

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18 Meeting held remotely via:

19 Webex and Telephone

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22 October 9, 2024

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25 COURT REPORTER: Christine Simons, RPR, RMR

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I N D E X

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1 MR. SAM LOBBY: All right. So thank you
2 very much for coming tonight. My name is Sam Lobby.
3 I'm with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission.
4 I'm an energy facilities planner, and we are here
5 tonight to talk about the Northern Crescent Solar
6 project. The purpose of the meeting tonight is to
7 provide information to the public and to discuss the
8 environmental assessment scoping for this project.

9 So I just, first, want to start by
10 thanking you for coming tonight, the members of the
11 public in particular. We had an in-person meeting
12 last night, and then we have our virtual meeting
13 right now. So we really appreciate members of the
14 public coming to participate and to share any input
15 that you may have.

16 I know that this is extra time for you to
17 have to take out of your evening to come here, so I
18 just want folks to know that your input is highly
19 valued, and it really does make a decision -- or
20 really does make a difference in the decision-making
21 process.

22 So just a quick little background on who
23 we are. So I'm with the Public Utilities
24 Commission, and Logan Hicks is with the Department
25 of Commerce. So we are the two state agencies that

1 are going to be the main agencies. The PUC is who
2 will actually do the permitting, and the Department
3 of Commerce is who will do the study, the
4 environmental assessment.

5 So as a little more background, neither
6 of our agencies are directly associated with the
7 project. So we're a neutral party. We're not for
8 or against, but we're here to basically try to get
9 as much information from all the different parties
10 as we can so that our Commissioners can make a
11 decision on permitting. And some of the most
12 important folks we want to hear from are the folks
13 that live on the ground near the project.

14 So there's things that you all know that
15 none of -- that we're not going to know, that we may
16 not be able to see on a map, or from different state
17 agencies that we talk to. So we do really rely on
18 folks on the ground who know the area the best and
19 who are the real experts. So we very much
20 appreciate you coming tonight.

21 So with that, I will go ahead and dig
22 into the presentation here. So what you can expect
23 for the meeting tonight is -- starting here is the
24 introduction, and then I will talk about the permit
25 application review process. And that's the Public

1 Utilities Commission that does the permit
2 application review process.

3 Then, next, Helen with Primergy Solar is
4 going to talk about the Northern Crescent Solar
5 project. She'll talk kind of more specifically
6 about what that will entail. Then, next, Logan with
7 the Department of Commerce will talk about the
8 environmental study and all of that, how that all
9 works.

10 So one, just, piece of information just
11 so you're aware -- and Logan will talk more about
12 this -- but tonight's meeting is -- we want to
13 solicit comments from the public about the
14 environmental assessment, which is the study of the
15 environment, of the human and environmental impacts
16 that the project would have. And so before we do
17 that study, we want to get input from the public so
18 you can help us shape the direction of that study.
19 So that's what tonight is about.

20 And, then, Logan will go and do that
21 study. It takes several months. And then after
22 that process is done, then we will have another
23 meeting just like this. We'll go back to the
24 in-person meeting in the same location, and then
25 we'll also do another virtual meeting just like

1 this.

2 And at that meeting, the -- we will have
3 made the study -- the completed study, we will have
4 made that public about a month before that second
5 meeting, so you have time to review it. And then at
6 that meeting, you can tell us, did we do what you
7 expected? Are there things we missed? That kind of
8 thing, you can give us feedback. So there's a lot
9 of opportunities for the public to comment, and so
10 we definitely appreciate and encourage you to
11 comment.

12 So that was longwinded, but after Logan
13 is done speaking, then the rest of the meeting is
14 open for questions and comments. So it won't take
15 too long to get through the presentation, and then
16 the rest of the meeting is open for you all to ask
17 questions.

18 So I won't get too deep into this because
19 Helen will cover more, but the proposed project is
20 the Northern Crescent Solar project, which is a
21 proposed 150-megawatt solar energy generating system
22 with an associated 50-megawatt battery energy
23 storage.

24 The project would be located on
25 approximately 1,179 acres in Verona and Prescott

1 Townships in Faribault County, Minnesota. The
2 project would also include a project substation and
3 interconnection facilities that would connect to the
4 existing Xcel switchyard, which would then connect
5 to the existing Huntley-Blue Earth 161-kV
6 transmission line.

7 So in order for a project like this to
8 move forward, the Public Utilities Commission is the
9 main agency that will go through that regulatory
10 process. We have five Commissioners that are
11 appointed by the Governor, and those five
12 Commissioners will vote to -- you know, yes or no if
13 a permit will be granted.

14 So in this case, this project is defined
15 as a large electric power generating plant, and so
16 before the project can be constructed, the PUC has
17 to issue a site permit for this type of a solar
18 facility. In this case, we're issuing two site
19 permits. One is for the solar facility itself
20 because it is greater than 50 megawatts, and the
21 other is for the battery energy storage system.

22 The associated transmission line is less
23 than 1,500 feet in length so a route permit is not
24 necessary. There isn't going to be any long
25 distance transmission line that is associated with

1 this project, and not anything new.

2 Previously, these types of projects
3 required what was called a certificate of need, but
4 the -- there's recent legislation that the
5 legislature exempted this particular type of project
6 from certificate of need; other projects do still
7 require it.

8 So just a quick summary of the permit
9 considerations. So when the Commission is making a
10 decision to grant a site permit, the main things
11 that we're considering are in Minnesota
12 Rule 7850.4100, and so the abbreviation of what
13 that's looking at is we're most concerned and
14 interested in the potential human and environmental
15 impacts of the project. And so this is where
16 members of the public can be really, really helpful
17 for helping us to clue in on things that we might
18 not see on a map or hear from a state agency or even
19 other agencies.

20 So, for example, if there's issues such
21 as noise; aesthetics; public health and safety;
22 land-use conflicts; cultural and historic resources;
23 air and water quality; plants and wildlife; or
24 any -- potentially other things. If there are other
25 things that you can think of that you think this

1 project -- any impact this project may cause that
2 you're concerned about, if you can let Logan know
3 about those concerns, and that's something that he
4 can study/include in the environmental study. And
5 then along with that, if you also have suggestions
6 of suitable ways to minimize, mitigate, or avoid
7 identified impacts. So those are kind of the things
8 that are being considered.

9 So this is a really useful slide here.
10 I -- the slides are going to be available online,
11 and if you got a meeting notice in the mail, there's
12 all sorts of information on there. But if you
13 didn't get that, you can take a picture of this or a
14 screenshot of this page right here. This has a lot
15 of very useful information about how to get your
16 comments to us.

17 You can comment tonight once we're done
18 with the presentation. If you want to speak
19 publicly, you're more than welcome to. If you do
20 not want to speak publicly, or even if you do speak
21 publicly but later you think of something else,
22 you're also more than welcome to submit written
23 comments as much as you want.

24 Those -- the written comment period for
25 this part of the process will go through

1 October 25th, 2024, at 4:30 p.m., and you can submit
2 comments online at that website that is shown. You
3 can also e-mail Logan directly and let him know, or
4 you can mail it to Logan, which you can see both his
5 e-mail and his mailing address there.

6 And if you can focus your comments --
7 either tonight or your written comments -- in
8 particular, we're concerned about what you think
9 about what are the potential human and environmental
10 impacts of the proposed project that should be
11 considered in the environmental assessment. Are
12 there any methods to minimize, mitigate, or avoid
13 potential impacts of the proposed project? And are
14 there any unique characteristics of the proposed
15 project site that should be considered?

16 For additional information, there is a
17 Department of Commerce website that talks about the
18 project itself, so you can get information there.
19 The full case record is available online at
20 eDockets. You can go to MN.gov/PUC and select
21 "eDockets." And then for this project, you would
22 enter the docket -- the year, which is 24, and then
23 the docket number, which is 238 for the solar
24 facility; or for the battery facility, the year 22
25 and the docket number 57. Both dockets will have

1 the same information for the most part. So if you
2 visit one of them, you'll be good. You can also
3 subscribe to the docket so that it will give you
4 updates when there's anything new that gets put into
5 the record.

6 And then at the bottom there are the
7 state agency contacts. So I have Rich Davis' name
8 there. I forgot to change that out. You can e-mail
9 Rich as well. He is also another Department of
10 Commerce staff person who is on the project. So if
11 you e-mail it to him, it will get to Logan. Then,
12 next is my contact information and another Public
13 Utilities staff member's contact information.

14 So with that, I will hand it off to
15 Helen, and, Helen, just a heads-up, I have to
16 control the slides. So just let me know when you
17 want me to move to the next one.

18 MS. HELEN ROACH: Awesome. Thanks so
19 much.

20 Thank you to everyone who has tuned in
21 today, and I'll provide a little bit of background
22 information about our company. My name is Helen
23 Roach. I'm a project development manager with
24 Primergy, the company developing the 150-megawatt
25 solar project that's going in in Faribault County,

1 Minnesota. I am here online with my colleague, Evan
2 Hughard, who is a senior project development
3 manager. And we are happy to answer any and all
4 questions that you may have about the project here
5 or later if questions come in later.

6 And with that, we can get to the next
7 slide. So our company, Primergy Solar, was founded
8 at the beginning of 2020, and has since grown to a
9 company of over 90 professionals with a development
10 pipeline of over 22,000 megawatts. We develop,
11 construct, own, and operate all of our utility-scale
12 solar and battery storage projects that we have
13 throughout North America.

14 Our development model is to lead projects
15 throughout the entirety of their development
16 lifecycle. So we start with site identification and
17 signing land leases, and then bring it through
18 construction and operations, and, finally, through
19 decommissioning at the end of the project life.

20 We aim to maximize the benefits that
21 we're bringing to the local communities, as well as
22 minimize impacts to the farmland. We view ourselves
23 as stewards of the land that we are developing this
24 project on, and we really hope to have a partnership
25 with the community where we're developing projects.

1 We can go to the next slide.

2 A little bit of information about our
3 portfolio. We have quite a few assets that are
4 operating or under construction. So if you see this
5 map and you look at the black dots, those are assets
6 that we have that are either operating or under
7 construction. And the golden dots are projects that
8 we expect to -- or enter construction in the near
9 term. So that's a bit of our recitation across
10 North America.

11 And with that, we can get to the next
12 slide about the specific project. So this project
13 is a 150-megawatt solar project. We have about
14 1,300 acres signed and are within the project
15 boundary, but as you saw on the slide earlier,
16 there's just over 1,100 that are actually going to
17 be hosting solar panels. We are excluding some
18 areas due to wetland restrictions and setbacks. So
19 there's just over 1,100 acres that will actually
20 host solar projects.

21 And, then, we will -- as I mentioned,
22 there's 150 megawatts of solar and 50 megawatts of
23 battery storage, which will be located in the --
24 western, kind of, northwestern in the project
25 footprint. You'll see that on the next slide, but

1 this land is located in Verona and Prescott
2 Townships, and we're expecting to go live with the
3 project in 2027. And this 150-megawatt solar
4 project will power 35,000 homes each year.

5 And we can go to the next slide.

6 Here is a more detailed view of the site
7 plan. So as you can see, the pink, purple, and
8 cream area, that is the area that's going to host
9 the specific project substation, as well as the
10 battery storage area. It might be a little bit hard
11 to see online, but if you request a project map,
12 Evan and I will be happy to send one.

13 There's a transmission line, a 161-kV
14 line, that's going through the project, which is
15 what we are going to be tapping into to build the
16 substation. The transmission -- the transmission
17 line is why we sited this project here in Faribault
18 County. We sought to build a project next to
19 existing transmission line that had a capacity to
20 host the project, and this line fit the bill.

21 The gray area that you see is the
22 1,100 acres that will be hosting the solar panels.
23 And we will be taking into account county drain tile
24 and any drain tile that could affect neighbors. So
25 we'll do -- we're going to study it and make sure

1 that our design won't impact the drain tile for the
2 neighbors around the project.

3 The solar panels are oriented in a
4 north/south orientation -- or east/west orientation.
5 So they follow the sun when it rises in the morning
6 and then track it during the day until the sun goes
7 down in the evening.

8 And the electricity that's generated from
9 all the solar panels is collected via cables, and
10 then brought to the substation, injected into the
11 power line that's next to the substation, and then
12 dispersed out into the grid and out to power your
13 home.

14 Okay. Go to the next slide.

15 I just wanted to highlight some of the
16 benefits that this project will bring to the county.
17 We expect around 200 jobs during the construction
18 period, and Primergy prioritizes hiring local labor
19 and unions to do the work for project construction.
20 And we will -- this project will create two to four
21 permanent jobs for operations and maintenance of the
22 project. So we will have some people whose
23 full-time job it is to monitor the project and take
24 care of anything. If any panels break or any stuff
25 needs to be cleared off or any snow needs to be

1 moved or anything like that. Although, the panels
2 are -- there are plans in place for if it is
3 snowing, we can take care of that without
4 operations, but it's helpful to have them there
5 anyways.

6 As I mentioned earlier, we view ourselves
7 as just borrowing the land. We're leasing the land
8 from the landowners. So they will maintain
9 ownership of their farmland throughout the entirety
10 of the project. And then at the end of the 30-year
11 lifecycle when the project is complete and we remove
12 all of the solar facilities from the site, the land
13 will go back to the farmers and their families and
14 will be good to go for farming after laying fallow
15 for 30 years. Another thing that I didn't mention
16 earlier, but we do plant cover crops to go
17 underneath the solar panels that will help enrich
18 the farmland.

19 And this project is expected to bring
20 over \$60 million in tax revenue over its 30-year
21 lifespan. So that will go to local schools and the
22 rest of the county.

23 And with that, I just want to thank
24 everyone, again, who tuned in. We really appreciate
25 it. We take your comments to heart, and we look

1 forward to speaking with you. So thanks for the
2 time tonight.

3 Contact -- oh, here's our contact
4 information. So feel free to reach out to myself or
5 Evan directly if you have any questions that you'd
6 like to be answered off the record.

7 MR. LOGAN HICKS: All right. With that,
8 I'll take the lead here. I'd like to thank everyone
9 once again. You know, third time for coming out.
10 You know, it's very important that we do get public
11 involvement for these projects, so thank you very
12 much for that.

13 As he said before, my name is Logan. I
14 work with the Department of Commerce. I am the
15 environmental review manager for this project.

16 And so next slide, please.

17 Today we're going to -- I'm going to talk
18 about -- specifically about what the EERA is. That
19 is the Energy Environmental Review Analysis team --
20 that is the team I am on -- and what we do
21 specifically. We'll talk a little bit about the
22 environmental review process and the timeline and,
23 you know, the impacts and mitigations and
24 alternatives that we can discuss.

25 I'm also going to talk about how to

1 comment or topics for comment, and also we're going
2 to go over the end of the -- end of the meeting
3 today, we're going to go over the rules and
4 etiquette of how to comment. And, you know, if you
5 would like to verbally say anything at today's
6 meeting, that you can do so.

7 So next slide, please.

8 So as I said before, I work with the
9 Department of Commerce in the EERA unit, and my job
10 specifically is to prepare a technical environmental
11 assessment, you know, as an advisory document to the
12 Public Utilities Commission.

13 So the EERA provides this information to
14 the PUC as, sort of, a neutral third party. It's
15 about to be -- we do not endorse or, you know,
16 condone anything. It is strictly a technical
17 document with just the facts. We do not advocate.
18 You know, the idea is that we provide an informed --
19 a document with all the information that can help
20 make an informed decision to both the Commissioners
21 and also it helps you folks as well.

22 So the EA, the environmental assessment
23 that I'll be making -- you'll see later -- I'll talk
24 about once it's complete, it will be out for you
25 guys to review and check. And then we'll meet again

1 later, and you guys can, you know, talk about if
2 anything on there was addressed, was not addressed,
3 anything like that, but we're here today to sort of
4 make the scoping decision.

5 And so with that, next slide, please.

6 So the EA, the environmental assessment,
7 there's a very rubric and standard, sort of, you
8 know, table of contents we review. However, it is
9 not, you know, so direct for your guys' specific
10 environment, right? There's no -- there's no one
11 form takes all, right?

12 So we want to make sure that we get as
13 much public opinion as possible for your specific
14 area and your specific project and your specific
15 site so we can understand the environmental factors
16 that we need to analyze and, you know, put into the
17 report.

18 Some of the things are the human and
19 environmental impacts, strategies to mitigate those
20 impacts. We talk about alternatives that can
21 mitigate impacts. That's also, kind of, where we
22 are looking for you guys, for those unique
23 characteristics in the project area. Like, for
24 example, say you're more familiar with a parcel of
25 land, that we can't view something on a desktop for

1 that particular thing. Say that, hey, this area is
2 restored prairie or is a historic site that's
3 something that isn't recorded elsewhere. If you
4 guys know about that, you can tell us, and then we
5 can include that in the environmental assessment.

6 Next slide, please.

7 So this is just a very rough timeline.
8 This is an approximation. Things may change, of
9 course, but right now we're kind of under that
10 number two step where we're talking about info and
11 scoping meetings. So eventually we will get -- the
12 scoping decision will be made after we get all the
13 public input. We'll draft it up and send it to the
14 PUC, and they will decide on what the scope of the
15 environmental assessment will be.

16 And, then, once that -- I'll take a whack
17 at it, you know, get it done, and once it's drafted
18 up and complete, we'll bring it back out to the
19 public. So you guys can review that environmental
20 assessment, let us know, did we do a good job, did
21 we not, what did we miss, things like that. So this
22 isn't the last time you'll be seeing us, and, you
23 know, we're definitely wanting to make sure that
24 you're a part of this process the entire way.

25 Next slide, please.

1 So to get your guys' input, you know,
2 there's a few different ways you guys can comment.
3 So at the end of the meeting, there will be time for
4 verbal comments, should you like those. You can
5 also comment online if you go to that website, or
6 the one that Sam had -- also did earlier.

7 So there you also see Rich Davis and
8 myself. You can either -- you can e-mail either of
9 us or mail either of us, and it will get put into
10 the record. So just make sure that you send all of
11 your comments in before the deadline, which is
12 October 25th. It says 4:30 p.m. You know what, if
13 you send me something at 6:00 in an e-mail, I'm not
14 going to be too upset. Just, you know, get it to me
15 as soon as possible. Sooner rather than later,
16 please.

17 Next slide.

18 So for commenting etiquette for the
19 meeting at the end of presentation, we'll say one
20 speaker at a time. That's going to be convenient
21 for us because we have the power to mute or unmute
22 people. But when you do speak, please make sure you
23 state and spell your name for our court reporter so
24 they can get that taken down.

25 Please limit your comments to just a few

1 minutes. You know, we don't want anything, you
2 know, ten minutes long or, you know, anything like
3 that. Please keep it as succinct as possible.
4 Maintain respect for others. You know, no name
5 calling, anything like that. And, also, direct your
6 comments towards -- you know, towards the scope of
7 the environmental assessment. You know, try to keep
8 it as pertinent to just the scoping as much as
9 possible and to this project.

10 Next slide, please.

11 So you can see here that here's some
12 more -- like, a reminder of what the different
13 things we can talk about: Human and environmental
14 impacts, strategies to mitigate these impacts, or if
15 you have any alternatives to the project that could
16 mitigate those impacts, please let us -- feel free
17 to let us know.

18 And so with that, if you would like to
19 speak and make any verbal comments today, just hit
20 that chat button in the bottom right and say that
21 you would like to speak. And we can get you
22 unmuted, and then you could make your -- make your
23 piece.

24 MR. SAM LOBBY: You can also use the
25 raise hand function, either way. If you wanted

1 to -- if you do type in the chat, just let me know
2 that you want to speak. We -- the court reporter
3 can't keep track of anything written in the chat.
4 So if you would like to speak, just either let me
5 know in the chat or raise your hand using the raise
6 hand function. Or if you've called in on the phone,
7 you can press *3 and that will alert me that you
8 want to speak.

9 So I'm not seeing anybody currently who
10 wants to speak, but you're more than welcome to
11 right now. If you'd like to talk publicly or ask
12 any of us questions or ask the company any specific
13 questions about the project or the State about the
14 permitting process. If you are not interested in
15 speaking, that is just fine. You are more -- if you
16 would like to submit a written comment, that is
17 weighted equally as verbal comments.

18 So if, you know, you don't feel like
19 speaking tonight, but tonight at midnight you wake
20 up and you think of something you wish you would
21 have said, you have until October 25th at 4:30 p.m.
22 to submit that comment.

23 I'm still not seeing any hands raised.
24 If we don't have any questions, then we'll just end
25 the meeting early, but I'll wait another minute here

1 just to see if any folks from -- that are attending
2 would be interested in speaking.

3 And just to reiterate, we really
4 appreciate folks from the public coming and
5 participating. Even if you're just listening in
6 just to know more about the project, we appreciate
7 you coming. And, also, I may have said this before,
8 but just to reiterate, the Commissioners, the five
9 appointed Commissioners, one of the most important
10 things to them is reviewing what members of the
11 public in the project area have to say. So if you
12 do submit a comment, just know that the
13 Commissioners will review that. It actually is
14 taken seriously. So your time is not being wasted
15 by coming here tonight. We very much appreciate and
16 value your input.

17 I'm still not seeing any hands raised or
18 anybody wanting to speak. So I think, with that, we
19 will go ahead and end the meeting, but I just want
20 to reiterate, again, there is a -- I'll put the
21 slide back up real quick here, how to comment. So
22 if you want to take a picture of that or hold on --
23 write anything down, that is the best way to get
24 ahold of us.

25 So, with that, I think we will go ahead

1 and end the meeting. Thank you all very much for
2 coming. We really appreciate your time. Have a
3 great night.

4 (Public comment concluded.)

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