



Oral Public Meeting Comments Received on the Scope of the Environmental Assessment for the Summit Lake
Project

Docket Nos. ESS 25-88 and GS-25-89

Public Meetings

- May 21, 2025 – Virtual, online Meeting, 6:00 p.m.
 - o No oral comments
- March 22, 2025 – Worthington, Minnesota, 6:00 p.m.

1 **SCOPING AND INFORMATIONAL MEETING - 25-89 & 25-88**

2 **Webex - May 21, 2025 - 6:00 p.m.**

3 **BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

4 **AND DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

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8 **In the Matter of the Joint Application of Summit Lake**
9 **Solar, LLC, for a Solar Energy Generating System Site**
10 **Permit and a Battery Energy Storage System Site Permit**
11 **for the up to 200 MW Summit Lake Solar Facility and the**
12 **up to 200 MW Battery Energy Storage System in Nobles**
13 **County, Minnesota.**

14 **MPUC DOCKET NOS. IP-7153/GS-25-89**
15 **IP-7153/ESS-25-88**

16
17 **Meeting held remotely via:**

18 **Webex and Telephone**

19
20 **May 21, 2025**

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25 **COURT REPORTER: Christine Simons, RMR, RPR**

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1 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: I'll get started,
2 it's 6:00 p.m. Good evening. I'm Craig Janezich,
3 and I work for the Minnesota Public Utilities
4 Commission. We're set to begin the presentation
5 concerning Summit Lake Solar's -- or LLC's solar and
6 battery storage application. I want to note we will
7 hold a public meeting in person in Worthington
8 tomorrow evening where we'll present the same
9 information provided tonight.

10 I just want to provide a quick overview
11 of the meeting. First, we'll give an overview of
12 the PUC's role in the permitting process. Then, the
13 applicants will present information on their
14 project. Following that, the Department of Commerce
15 will provide -- provide information on the
16 environmental review process, and then, finally,
17 we'll have opportunities for attendees to ask
18 questions or make comments pertaining to the project
19 and the scope of the environmental review.

20 Again, my name is Craig Janezich, and I
21 work for the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission.
22 This slide has my contact information on it. It's
23 also available on the Internet through the Minnesota
24 Public Utilities website.

25 The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission

1 is responsible for regulating investor-owned
2 utilities to ensure Minnesotans are charged
3 reasonable rates for power. The Commission also
4 permits energy generation facilities and
5 transmission lines for construction, and it
6 regulates the routing of petroleum and gas pipelines
7 in the state.

8 For the permitting process, Commission
9 staff will review the evidence in the record,
10 they'll analyze the information, and they'll make
11 recommendations to the five Commissioners who have
12 final say about giving a permit for this project.
13 Commissioners, after conducting a public process,
14 including -- like I said, making a public hearing,
15 will make a final decision. Apologies for that.

16 When the Public Utilities Commission
17 makes a decision on a site permit, there are several
18 factors they look at in rule and statute. For those
19 not seeing it, it's Minnesota Rule 7850 and it's in
20 Minnesota Statute 216E.

21 General factors considered include to
22 conserve resources and minimize environmental
23 impacts; minimize human settlement and other
24 land-use conflicts; ensure efficient,
25 cost-effective, and secure power supply and electric

1 transmission.

2 This is a general slide about the
3 proposed timeline of the project. As you can see,
4 we anticipate the environmental review to be
5 completed on September 19th. After that, we'll hold
6 a set of public meetings to allow people to make
7 further comments once we know what the contents of
8 the environmental review are. That meeting will be
9 hosted by an Administrative Law Judge who will use
10 the record to make a recommendation to the
11 Commission, and that report will be issued in
12 December 2025. We anticipate the public hearings
13 with the Administrative Law Judge to occur in
14 October 2025, and a final decision by the PUC in
15 January of 2026.

16 If you want to see the applicant's
17 proposal and any comments to date, you can do that
18 through the Minnesota Public Utilities eDockets
19 website. All you have to do when you get to
20 eDockets is you enter in the code or the number
21 25-88 or 25-89, and you hit search. And every
22 comment, application, everything that is in the
23 record that the Commissioners use to make a
24 decision -- and for that matter, the ALJ -- will be
25 included on that website.

1 You're also able to sign up for the
2 project mailing list. Through the project mailing
3 list you'll get notices of future meetings and
4 project milestones. There's an e-mail address on
5 the slide that you can use to sign up. Also, you
6 could call 651-201-2246. And you'd provide the
7 Docket Number 25-89 or 25-88, your name, mailing
8 address and e-mail address, and they'll get you
9 signed up.

10 Last, your other option is to subscribe
11 to the docket, and you would do that also through
12 the eDockets website. The difference between the
13 subscription and the project mailing list is anytime
14 anybody files something into the record, you'll get
15 notification in your e-mail box. So whether it's a
16 future meeting or a comment from someone in the
17 community or a comment from the applicants
18 themselves, that will be on the website. It will go
19 to your mailbox and prompt you, too, so you can
20 review it.

21 Now, I'll hand it off to the applicants
22 to make their presentation.

23 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: Thank you, Craig.
24 Yeah, I'll introduce myself. So I am Alia Mohammad.
25 I'm a permitting specialist with National Grid

1 Renewables. I've been on the permitting team for
2 two years now. I have with me online today is Tom
3 Karas, he is a senior developer. I also have our
4 attorney, Jeremy Duehr, as well from Fredrikson &
5 Byron. I also have Monika Davis, who is from
6 Merjent, and I have several of my other teammates on
7 here as well to help support.

8 Next slide, please.

9 National Grid Renewables and who we are:
10 So we are headquartered in Bloomington, Minnesota.
11 We develop, construct, own, and operate renewable
12 energy projects, and this ranges from solar
13 facilities, wind facilities, and energy storage
14 facilities.

15 We operate utility-scale projects in
16 Minnesota, and this includes projects such as Louise
17 Solar, Fillmore Solar, and also our Nordic
18 Portfolio. We do have operational battery storage
19 projects as well. Currently we have about
20 2,900 megawatts of solar, wind, and energy storage
21 projects. We also have a multi-gigawatt development
22 pipeline, and just for reference, there's about
23 1,000 -- 1,000 megawatts in a gigawatt. We are also
24 farmer friendly and community driven, and we have
25 been in rural communities since 2004.

1 Next slide, please.

2 So we have two -- two different systems
3 here: We have our 200-megawatt solar energy
4 conversion facilities system and then we have our
5 200-megawatt battery energy storage system. We did
6 file a joint application for both back in February
7 of 2025, so this year.

8 So this project is sited in Nobles County
9 on approximately 1,400 acres. The total acreage is
10 approximately 1,900. There is an interconnection
11 from our substation to Nobles substation, and that
12 is about 1,100 feet in length. We do target an
13 operation date in 2028, and construction can begin
14 as early as fall of 2027.

15 Next slide, please.

16 So here is a figure, overall look at our
17 project site. You can see in that lime green area,
18 that is the solar facility, the PV panels. Just
19 south of the substation is our battery storage area,
20 and to the right of that is our substation. And
21 then it's really tiny, but you can see our
22 transmission line connecting to our substation to
23 the Nobles substation. And then that dotted line
24 surrounding the PV system is -- is our security
25 fence.

1 Next slide, please.

2 So how energy storage works: This is a
3 pretty simplified drawing of how it does work, but,
4 in summary, the battery system takes energy from the
5 PV panels. It has that optionality to put it -- to
6 take that energy from the panel, store it in the
7 battery, and then put it on the grid. It also has
8 that optionality of gaining energy from the grid,
9 and then discharging it back onto the grid. And
10 they are -- they are really there to complement one
11 another.

12 Next slide, please.

13 So there are several different
14 infrastructure components and procedures throughout
15 the project life cycle. So there will be access and
16 haul roads for equipment deliveries. The solar
17 array will include a racking system and the PV
18 panels. Batteries will be contained in enclosures.
19 There's an electrical collection system and
20 inverters. There's also our own project substation
21 and our own operations and maintenance building.
22 Then, after -- once construction is done, we will
23 restore the site to preexisting conditions.

24 Next slide, please.

25 And we included some pictures on what

1 this would look like. So we have access road
2 construction, the top left there; and then component
3 and equipment delivery on the bottom left on a
4 flatbed truck. And then we also have pile
5 installation, so you can see those steel piles are
6 driven right into the ground.

7 Next slide, please.

8 So here is just an overview of our
9 electrical collection process. The electrical
10 system could either be installed below-ground or it
11 can be a hybrid of both aboveground and below
12 ground. So below-ground, panels deliver DC power to
13 the inverters through cabling in a trench, and the
14 AC collection from the inverter skids to the
15 substation is trenched or plowed.

16 Aboveground, DC collection is strung
17 under panels on steel arm cables, which are attached
18 to the steel piles and routed to the inverters. And
19 then an AC collection from the inverter skids are
20 then transferred to the substation.

21 Next slide, please.

22 So here are some more pictures. We have
23 one in the top left showing construction. And then
24 on the top right there is a basin, and that is
25 within the fenced area. It's used for stormwater

1 controls and also access for vegetation.

2 Then, in the bottom right there, it's a
3 little bit more of an advanced project life of a
4 solar site since vegetation is established. The
5 fence there does show, I think, chain link and
6 barbed wire on top, which we won't have on our
7 facility. We will actually have a woven fence and
8 there'll be smooth wire at the top.

9 Next slide, please.

10 So this is a really good illustration of
11 how vegetation will just improve from year 1 to year
12 7 throughout the project lifecycle, and this will
13 include native species and pollinator species of
14 plants. And one thing to note, this is a fixed
15 panel system in this picture, which we will not be
16 using fixed. The panels will actually be able to
17 rotate, but I just thought this would be a good
18 picture to show how vegetation will be established.

19 Next slide. Thank you.

20 So we did a visual rendering from
21 Highway 266 looking south. We took the picture back
22 in, I think, January of this year, so during
23 wintertime, and just created a simulation of what
24 the panels would look like from the road.

25 Next slide, please.

1 So I did include a slide here about
2 vegetative screening. What that means is that we
3 would basically plant shrubs or trees that are
4 native to the area to basically minimize any visual
5 impacts from the public to our facility.

6 Any existing screening will be enhanced,
7 and we are also designed to -- our site was also
8 designed to avoid any tree clearing. But, yes, this
9 will be a case-by-case scenario, so please reach out
10 to me or Tom if you have any questions.

11 So we have coordinated with several
12 agencies. One main one to note is that we had our
13 agricultural impact mitigation plan. That was
14 developed and approved by the Minnesota Department
15 of Agriculture. And, yeah, this was -- this was
16 definitely coordinated over -- over the time last
17 year before our submission, and then our submission,
18 again, was completed back in February of 2025, this
19 year.

20 Next slide.

21 So just some economic and social benefits
22 that we ran. Again, we are committed to the
23 community and try to benefit our landowners and
24 local government and the community. A total
25 production and tax revenue to local governments

1 annually will be approximately \$500,000.

2 We'll also create jobs during
3 construction and after construction when the project
4 is in operation. So 250 jobs during peak
5 construction, and then three to four full-time jobs
6 for Summit Lake Solar and one to two full-time staff
7 for Summit Lake BESS.

8 Next slide.

9 And, yeah, if you have any questions at
10 all, please feel free to reach out to me or to Tom.
11 Our contact information is on the screen. We'd be
12 happy to talk with you.

13 MR. SAM WEAVER: All right. So thank
14 you, everyone. My name is Sam. I am with the EERA,
15 which is Environmental Review and Analysis, part of
16 the Department of Commerce. And I'm just going to
17 talk a little bit about, kind of, the purpose of
18 this meeting, which is to talk about the scope of
19 the environmental assessment.

20 Next slide.

21 So we, at the EERA, act as technical
22 advisors to the Commission. Our goal is to provide
23 a data-driven, objective analysis of the different
24 potential human and environmental impacts of
25 proposed projects. We do not advocate for the

1 project. We are not, you know, deciding whether or
2 not this project is going to be built. Our goal is
3 just to collect information that can inform the
4 Commission, who is making that decision.

5 Next slide.

6 And so the main part of that
7 environmental review process is preparing an
8 environmental assessment, which is a big
9 environmental document that analyzes the potential
10 impacts of the project and then identifies
11 strategies to avoid and mitigate any potential
12 impacts of the project.

13 Next slide, please.

14 So your comments today are what actually
15 help me to focus the EA on the most relevant
16 information that the Commission needs to know to
17 make an informed decision. So potential human and
18 environmental impacts to be studied, for example,
19 we've gotten comments on potential safety issues, if
20 the area were to flood; impacts on property values,
21 impacts on the aesthetics; things like noise, unique
22 characteristics within the project area that should
23 be considered, so that flooding one; and how the
24 project can avoid, minimize, or mitigate those
25 potential impacts. So once we've identified

1 potential impacts, how do we avoid those things from
2 happening or minimize the potential for them.

3 And next slide.

4 So this is, you know, the most important
5 part, how you actually get to comment on the scope
6 of the environmental assessment. So you can make
7 verbal comments at today's online meeting, you can
8 also make verbal comments at tomorrow's in-person
9 meeting. You can complete and submit comment sheets
10 at the in-person meeting tomorrow.

11 You can comment online. So if you follow
12 that link there, that will take you to the eDocket
13 system that Craig talked about earlier. You can
14 also leave a comment on our EERA webpage, which is
15 actually where this link takes you to. You can mail
16 or e-mail a comment directly to me instead of going
17 through that process.

18 And then the most important part here is
19 that this comment period ends on June 5th. So
20 whatever comments you have on impacts from this
21 project need to be submitted by then in order to
22 make it into the environmental assessment.

23 Next slide.

24 All right. And, then, the commenting
25 etiquette for this. So what we are going to do is

1 we are going to have one speaker at a time. When
2 you start speaking, please state and spell your name
3 for the court reporter. And I actually think that
4 we might have some more detailed instructions on how
5 to do this online. You'll have to raise your hand
6 in the Webex meeting.

7 And tonight, please limit your comments
8 to a few minutes in length. We do have a lot of
9 attendees. I'm seeing 14 members of the public
10 here, so we will probably have a lot of comments and
11 we only have about two and a half hours left. So
12 please limit your comments to a few minutes tonight.

13 Maintain respect for others. It's easier
14 to get through this and really dive down to the
15 heart of your question and find some actionable
16 items that we can work together to address if you
17 are, you know, being respectful of everyone involved
18 in this process.

19 And, again, please direct your comments
20 and questions to the scope of the environmental
21 assessment instead of -- right, you might be opposed
22 to the project, but if you're opposed to the
23 project, please give specific impacts that might
24 occur from the project, which helps us inform the
25 scope of the environmental assessment.

1 Next slide.

2 So, again, topics for comment tonight:
3 What potential human and environmental impacts of
4 the proposed project should be considered? Just
5 like I was talking about earlier, we've had
6 people -- and I've recognized a few names in the
7 attendees tonight who have commented about impacts
8 to the local economy, impacts to property values,
9 impacts to species potentially, impacts to wetlands,
10 things like that are all very useful. And then if
11 there are any methods you want to recommend to
12 minimize, mitigate, or avoid potential impacts of
13 the proposed project. And then, finally, are there
14 any unique characteristics of the project that
15 should be considered in the EA.

16 And so, again, that same etiquette as
17 before. So here are the directions for how to start
18 your comment. And I have not run one of these Q and
19 A sessions before, so my colleague from the EERA,
20 Jenna Ness, is going to run this open comment
21 period.

22 So you will kind of take the reins here,
23 the instructions are the screen, right? Press *3 if
24 you're on your phone to remove yourself from the
25 queue; *3 will add yourself to the queue. If you're

1 using online, right, raise your hand. Then, if
2 you're using the app, use the chat icon and send a
3 message saying you want to speak. And we will try
4 to work our way through the queue again. Be
5 respectful, limit your comments to, you know, three
6 minutes or less in length.

7 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: Okay. If anybody is
8 interested in speaking, again, via phone, press *3.
9 If you're using Webex, just go ahead and raise your
10 hand using the raise-your-hand function on the
11 bottom of the Webex, and we will unmute you so you
12 can go ahead and speak.

13 It looks like currently we don't have
14 anybody that is wanting to speak as far as I can
15 see, but we'll give folks a couple of minutes to
16 either figure out the technology or maybe develop
17 the courage to ask a question.

18 And I will say, again, tomorrow we will
19 be there in Worthington in person where people will
20 also have the opportunity to ask questions of the
21 applicant in person, maybe see some renderings of
22 the project themselves, or ask the Commission some
23 questions as well, as far as what to expect for the
24 process. And certainly you can always submit
25 comments in writing if you would -- if you'd prefer.

1 Why don't I give folks three or
2 four minutes here and give them an opportunity to
3 raise their hand and/or designate themselves as
4 wanting to speak, and we'll call on them.

5 Sam, why don't we go back to the slide so
6 we can fill some of that time here. Go back to the
7 slide about people submitting comments in writing
8 and how they can go ahead and do that, if you
9 wouldn't mind. I moved it back to the correct
10 slide.

11 MR. SAM WEAVER: Perfect. Yeah. So if
12 you would like to submit a comment in writing, you
13 can go to the EERA website on the Department of
14 Commerce's website. So that is that link there
15 where you can comment online, and that will go
16 straight to me. And it will be posted to the
17 project docket at some point, so that is one avenue
18 for commenting.

19 You can comment directly on the docket
20 through the eDockets system, and then you can also
21 mail or e-mail a comment straight to me. My address
22 is right there, and then at the bottom is my e-mail
23 address.

24 So, you know, you can send it through the
25 snail mail, you can send it to me straight through

1 e-mail. All of those methods will get to me one way
2 or the other. And like I said, I recognize a few
3 names here. I have had conversations and comments
4 from a couple attendees, so people are familiar with
5 how this works.

6 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: Yeah. And I'll just
7 add one more thing, too, for the Commissioners and
8 the ALJ to consider your opinion, it needs to be
9 part of the record.

10 MR. SAM WEAVER: Um-hmm.

11 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: So if you do have
12 questions or concerns, please, please submit them so
13 the Commissioners do see them and review them when
14 they are making a decision.

15 MR. SAM WEAVER: Yeah. And then again --

16 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: Go ahead.

17 MR. SAM WEAVER: I was just going to --
18 the importance at this stage of the project, right,
19 nothing has been accepted, nothing is set in stone.
20 This is really the best opportunity for you, as
21 members of the public, to make sure that we are
22 aware of the concerns of the community where this
23 project is going, right?

24 I don't personally live in the project
25 area. I get to swing by the project area tomorrow.

1 I can take a look, I can walk around, but I'm not
2 the one who lives in the area. I don't know what
3 the land is like, you know, really, really well.
4 You are the people who are familiar with the local
5 economy, the local culture, the local landscape, so
6 this is the best opportunity to hear from all of
7 you, and we do value your input.

8 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: Okay. I still don't
9 have anybody asking to speak, so I think we'll wrap
10 up here. And just to remind folks, if you want to
11 participate or see us in person, we will be there in
12 Worthington tomorrow, and that's all I have.

13 So I do appreciate your time and
14 consideration and maybe look forward to seeing you
15 tomorrow should you attend. Thank you everybody for
16 attending. I appreciate your time. Thank you.

17 (Public comment concluded.)
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1 SCOPING AND INFORMATIONAL MEETING - 25-89 & 25-88

2 May 22, 2025 - 6:00 P.M.

3 BEFORE THE OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS

4 FOR THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

5
6 In the Matter of the Joint Application of
7 Summit Lake Solar, LLC for a Solar Energy Generating
8 System Site Permit and a Battery Energy Storage
9 System Site Permit for the up to 200 MW
10 Summit Lake Solar Facility and the up to 200 MW
11 Battery Energy Storage System in Nobles
12 County, Minnesota

13
14 MPUC DOCKET NOS. IP-7153/GS-25-89

15 IP-7153/ESS-25-88

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19 Held at:
20 Worthington Event Center
21 1447 Prairie Drive
22 Worthington, Minnesota

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25 STENOGRAPHIC COURT REPORTER: Jonna Schrupp

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APPEARANCES :

ON BEHALF OF GREAT RIVER ENERGY:

Jeremy Duehr
FREDRIKSON & BYRON

Tom Karas
Alia Mohammad

ON BEHALF OF DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE:

Sam Weaver

ON BEHALF OF THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Craig Janezich

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22 WHEREUPON, the following proceedings
23 were duly had and entered of record, to wit:

24

25

1 MR. JANEZICH: Good evening. My name is
2 Craig Janezich, and I work with the Minnesota Public
3 Utilities Commission.

4 We're here obviously for the Summit Lakes
5 Solar and Battery Storage meeting. We had a virtual
6 meeting yesterday, today we're obviously having this
7 in person here.

8 Just to give you a quick overview of the
9 agenda today. First, I will take you through the
10 permitting process from the perspective of the
11 Public Utilities Commission.

12 Next we'll have a description of the
13 project from the Applicants, and the Department of
14 Commerce will talk about the environmental review
15 process, and then we'll get into questions and
16 comments.

17 Can everybody hear me okay?

18 Our role at the Commission is we regulate
19 rates of investor owned utilities. We also permit
20 solar, battery and transmission lines, as well as
21 some pipelines.

22 The permitting, as the Commission staff
23 we review evidence, build a record and we analyze
24 and make a recommendation to the Commissioners.

25 The Commissioners have the ultimate say

1 as to the permit decision. When the Commission
2 makes a decision or what the Applicant is coming to
3 the Commission for is what's called a site permit.

4 When the Commission reviews site
5 applications on the record we look at ways to
6 conserve resources and minimize environmental
7 impacts, minimize human settlement and other land
8 use conflicts and ensure efficient, effective and
9 secure power supply.

10 This slide is a general review of the
11 timeline. Expect the EA, the environmental review,
12 to be issued September 19th. The public hearing
13 before the ALJ we anticipate to be in October. The
14 ALJ report will be issued in December and we
15 anticipate a final decision from the PUC in January
16 of 2026. Again, that schedule is tentative, it can
17 change a little bit depending on the business of the
18 Commission and what happens during this process.

19 If you're interested in the full case
20 record of what the application and what maybe your
21 neighbors are saying, you can look at the full case
22 record, there's a website. What you do when you get
23 to the website is you put in the docket number,
24 that's what we call it, it's either 25-88 or 25-89.
25 Everything in there that the Commission uses to make

1 a decision is in that record, all right. So the
2 Commissioners can't meet with the Applicants, they
3 can't meet with anybody. The only thing they can
4 use to make a decision is what's in the record.

5 There is the project mailing list. If
6 you're interested in finding out when that next
7 meeting will be, that sort of thing, you would go
8 ahead and use the project mailing list and sign up.
9 You can also subscribe to the record. When you
10 subscribe to the record, any time anybody enters
11 anything in the record you get notice in your
12 e-mail, okay. I will warn you, though, typically we
13 get a lot of comments. So any time anyone submits
14 anything into the record you'll get an e-mail, so
15 just knowing that when you sign up.

16 Now I'll turn it over to the Applicants
17 to discuss their project.

18 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: Good evening,
19 everyone. My name is Alia Mohammad and up here with
20 me I have Tom Karas, who is a senior developer, and
21 Jeremy Duehr, who is our attorney from Fredrikson
22 and Byron.

23 I'm a permitting specialist. I've been
24 on the team for two years now, at National Grid
25 Renewables, and I have some of my wonderful

1 colleagues in the audience as well to help me with
2 the Q and A as needed.

3 So let's jump right in. Who are we,
4 National Grid Renewables, we're headquartered in
5 Bloomington, Minnesota. We develop, construct, own
6 and operate renewable energy projects nationwide.
7 We have several projects in Minnesota already and
8 that includes Louise Solar, Fillmore Solar and our
9 Nordic portfolio.

10 We also have operational battery storage
11 projects and they have been in operation since 2021.
12 We have 2,900 megawatts of solar, winds and energy
13 storage projects, and also a multi gigawatt
14 pipeline. Just for reference, one gigawatt equals
15 1,000 megawatts.

16 We're also farmer-friendly,
17 community-driven, and beneficial for rural
18 communities since 2004. Our founder of our company
19 was actually a farmer.

20 So we have two technologies that we
21 applied for with the joint application. One is for
22 a 200-megawatt utilities scale solar energy
23 conversion facility, and 200 megawatt battery energy
24 storage system.

25 So our project is sited in Nobles County

1 on approximately 1,400 acres. The total acreage
2 under land control is approximately 1,900.

3 We do have an interconnection from Power
4 substation to Nobles substation, which is
5 approximately 1,100 feet.

6 Our targeted commercial operation date is
7 in 2028 and then construction of our project can
8 begin as early as fall of 2027.

9 So I do have a picture of our site design
10 and layouts, and we also have some handouts up front
11 too if you want to take a better look. But I'm just
12 going to highlight some main components here, and
13 that includes our lime green area, which is our
14 solar PBRA, and then that blue section right under
15 Nobles substation, that will our battery energy
16 storage system, and then to the right of that in
17 dark blue is our substation, and it will connect
18 right to Nobles substation. That dotted line across
19 or around the facility is our security fence.

20 So how energy storage works. So both the
21 solar facility and the battery system operate
22 independently. There is an option of the power from
23 the solar facility to be stored within the batteries
24 and then put back on to the grid. The power from
25 the grid can also be stored in the batteries and

1 distributed back to the grid as needed, but these
2 two systems are really meant to complement one
3 another.

4 So I have some components and procedures
5 that are noted here, throughout the process of
6 building a solar facility. So that includes access
7 and haul roads, which involves equipment delivery,
8 and then we have our solar array with racking
9 systems and panels, and then we also have our
10 batteries, which are in battery enclosures. We also
11 have electrical collection systems and inverters.
12 Our substation, our operations and maintenance
13 building and then restoration at the end. Once
14 construction is complete we will restore the land to
15 pre-existing conditions.

16 So I have some pictures. In the upper
17 left hand corner is what access road construction
18 looks like and then the bottom left hand corner you
19 can see what equipment delivery looks like on flat
20 bed trucks. And then on the right is what piles
21 being driven into the ground look like.

22 So I'm going to explain a little bit
23 about the electrical collection process. So
24 electrical collection system can either be installed
25 below ground or a hybrid of both, above and below

1 ground. So below ground, the panels deliver DC
2 power to the inverters, they're cabling in a trench.
3 AC collection from an inverter is then transferred
4 to the substation, which is trenched or plowed. And
5 then above ground is the DC collection, strung under
6 panels on steel arms, which are attached to the
7 piles and routed to assigned inverters, and then the
8 AC collection from the inverters to the substation
9 on a distribution type pole.

10 Then I have some pictures here again, top
11 left is what construction would look like. On the
12 right it's a basin, that's within the area, the
13 fenced area of the project, and this is for storm
14 water controls and vegetation management access. On
15 the bottom here you can see some vegetation on the
16 side between the panels and the fence established.
17 I will note in this picture the fence is different
18 from what we're proposing. We're proposing an ag
19 woven fence that's approximately seven feet high and
20 then three to four strands of hued wire on top.

21 Then I have the picture here of what
22 re-vegetation looks like. So you can see from one
23 year to year seven it's established pretty well and
24 includes native plant and pollinator species. Again
25 I'm going to caveat, the panels show a fixed panel

1 and ours will actually rotate.

2 So this is a visual rendering that we've
3 created, the view from Highway 266 looking south.
4 So we took this picture in winter time, and as you
5 can see looking south, the highway is at an angle,
6 so you're looking down and you can see the panels,
7 that's how far away they are from the highway.

8 I did want to include a slide here about
9 vegetative screening, so what vegetative screening
10 is, it's basically like a buffer between our panels
11 and neighboring residences to help protect them.
12 This will be implemented on a case by case basis,
13 and any existing screening will also be enhanced.
14 So we did site this project, designed to avoid any
15 tree clearing and existing trees and windbreaks
16 around residences will be maintained.

17 So we did list several agency reviews and
18 coordinations that we've conducted, and this can
19 also be reviewed in our application that we
20 submitted in February 2025. We do have a couple
21 copies up front here, but one of the main ones that
22 are going to play out is agriculture impact
23 mitigation plan, which was developed and coordinated
24 with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

25 Some economic and social benefits that we

1 have, I'm going to highlight a few here. So
2 estimated \$500,000 total production tax revenue to
3 local governments annually.

4 Our project will also create construction
5 jobs during construction and also in operations, so
6 about three to four full-time jobs for Summit Lake
7 Solar and one to two full-time staff for Summit Lake
8 BESS.

9 Here is our contact information. So if
10 you have any questions at all please contact me or
11 Tom, we'll be happy to answer any of your questions
12 or provide any information that we can. Thank you.

13 MR. SAM WEAVER: Hello. So hi everybody,
14 my name is Sam Weaver, I am with the Department of
15 Commerce and so I'm going to talk a little bit about
16 the reason we're having this meeting, which is to
17 determine the scope of the environmental assessment
18 and just the overall environmental review process.

19 So I work for the EERA, which is the
20 Energy Environmental Review Analysis unit at
21 Commerce. We act as technical advisors to the
22 commission. We provide data-driven, objective
23 analysis of the potential impacts of the proposed
24 project.

25 We do not advocate for or against

1 projects. We aren't here to say, yep, this is a
2 great project, we should go forward. We are just
3 here to say this is what they are proposing, these
4 are the potential impacts.

5 Our goal is to inform the decision making
6 by the Commission. The Commission are the ones who
7 are deciding whether or not the project goes
8 forward. We want to give them all the information
9 that we possibly can so they can make an informed
10 decision.

11 So to do that we prepare an environmental
12 assessment, which is this big document, and some of
13 you have a document in front of you that says what
14 the scope of this project typically is. So it's an
15 objective analysis of the project, we discuss and
16 analyze potential impacts and then we identify
17 strategies to avoid or to mitigate those potential
18 impacts of the project.

19 So your comments, and I've already
20 received a number of really, really good comments
21 that are helpful to me when I'm preparing this
22 document, are really important for making -- for
23 figuring out what information should be included in
24 the EA.

25 So we want to hear from you all about the

1 potential human and environmental impacts that we
2 should study. We want to know about any unique
3 characters within the project area that should be
4 considered. For example, Mr. Pontos submitted a
5 really useful comment about seasonal flooding that
6 happens after large rain events in one portion of
7 the proposed area, and things like that are really
8 useful for us to consider, right?

9 Suzanne and I, my counterpart, drove
10 around the project area today, but we can't get that
11 type of long-term local knowledge that you all have,
12 and so that's where you all are really helpful.

13 Finally, we look at how the project can
14 avoid, minimize or mitigate those potential impacts.

15 So how can you comment on this project?
16 So you can do verbal comments at today's meeting.
17 We have a speaker sign up list that we will go
18 through, so for those of you who signed up, and some
19 of you put question marks and maybe you won't want
20 to come up, but we will run through that speaker
21 list, and then if you feel compelled after we have
22 gone through that list of you people you have every
23 right to come up and make your comments. Or you can
24 complete and submit a comment sheet, we have some
25 more of those on the table. I think pretty much

1 everyone here has one. You can just write it down
2 if you don't want to speak. You can turn it in to
3 me tonight, you can send it to me in the mail, you
4 can also e-mail me. All my contact information is
5 right up there. So you can e-mail me, you can mail
6 it to me, give it to me in person tonight. Those
7 are all ways you can comment. You can also comment
8 directly on the docket online. If you follow that
9 link it will take you to the project page for this
10 project on the Commerce website, you can post your
11 comments there too.

12 The most important part is that that
13 comment period ends on June 5th. So any comments
14 that you have, let's say you think of something two
15 days from now that you don't get in tonight, you
16 have until June 5th to get those comments in. If
17 you mail it by June 5th, it's still valid, as long
18 as it's in the mail.

19 So getting ready for kind of our Q and A
20 here, just general etiquette, we're going to have
21 one person speak at a time. When you get up to the
22 mike please state and spell your name for the court
23 reporter so we can accurately enter it into the
24 record. Please limit your comments to a few
25 minutes. We have a big room of people tonight,

1 we've got a substantial sign up list and we want you
2 to have time, but please be respectful of
3 everybody's time, we want everyone to comment who
4 wants to. So initially we'll limit those comments
5 to a few minutes and later on if you want to be able
6 to come back up you should be able to.

7 Please maintain your respect for others,
8 wait for others in the room. We are here to make
9 sure that we can get as much input as possible,
10 right. You have that local knowledge that we don't
11 have and that we need to develop the scope for the
12 EA and we want to make sure we hear from all of you.
13 So just be respectful of each other's time and then
14 direct your questions and comments to the scope of
15 the environmental assessment.

16 We've gotten good specific things on
17 things like impacts to property values, impacts to
18 water fowl trying to get into slews, will the solar
19 panels impact them, specific pointed comments like
20 that are really useful for us. So if you can be as
21 specific as possible in helping us develop that,
22 that's what we're looking for.

23 So that is the end of it. And I will
24 call up our first speaker, here. We have Marcus
25 Raines. So when you get up here state and spell

1 your name.

2 MR. MARCUS RAINES: Name is Marcus
3 Raines, M-a-r-c-u-s R-a-i-n-e-s.

4 First off, good evening. Thank you very
5 much to the PUC for hosting this open forum tonight.
6 Like I stated my name is Marcus Raines.

7 As a millwright I've had the pleasure of
8 installing and maintaining power generation
9 equipment over the past twelve years of my career.
10 Now I have the pleasure of representing 27,000
11 carpenters, millwrights and pile drivers across the
12 upper midwest.

13 We would like to thank National Grid
14 Renewables for their ongoing collaboration,
15 committing to paying a prevailing wage to a local,
16 trained work force that would be constructing this
17 project, ultimately helping to provide a quality
18 installation to mitigate any environmental issues
19 during the construction.

20 This project would also provide
21 socio-economic benefits to local families and
22 Minnesota communities, along with the potential to
23 recruit new individuals from the surrounding
24 communities to begin their apprenticeship programs
25 and ultimately a career in construction.

1 We look forward to moving through this
2 process, getting a positive environmental assessment
3 and making this project a win for local craftsmen.
4 Thank you.

5 MR. SAM WEAVER: Thank you, Mr. Raines.

6 Next we have, and I apologize if I get
7 any of these Amy Stefferud and there's a question
8 mark next to your name.

9 MS. AMY STEFFERUD: My name is Amy
10 Stefferud, S-t-e-f-f-e-r-u-d.

11 My concern is just that we live right on
12 the edge of Reading and we have property that's,
13 according to the map, kind of looks like it will be
14 for the battery storage things. I don't know. I've
15 not been at any of the other meetings, so I guess
16 I'm just here to get information about this. I'm
17 not sure what the concerns would all be with it or
18 not, environmental wise, or if there would be a fire
19 or if there's any leakage. We do have a low lying
20 area that runs through there that does stand in some
21 water sometimes. Don't know if that's going to
22 create any issues. I'm just kind of curious.
23 That's all.

24 MR. SAM WEAVER: So to summarize the
25 question, sorry, can you stay up. Just to

1 summarize, so you have concerns with the battery
2 energy storage system?

3 MS. AMY STEFFERUD: Yes.

4 MR. SAM WEAVER: Regarding fire safety
5 and submerging in water.

6 MS. AMY STEFFERUD: Is there any noise
7 with this?

8 MR. SAM WEAVER: So in the environmental
9 assessment, and so tonight I might not necessarily
10 have the answers for you right, but that's the point
11 of building out that environmental assessment, is we
12 will do things like noise studies, we will have
13 information in the safety section about what happens
14 when a unit might be submerged.

15 Fire is a pretty persistent issue for
16 BESS units, and to my knowledge the Applicant has
17 taken all of the -- there is emerging technology and
18 they're a lot more safeguards in place now, and I
19 might hand it over to the Applicant to describe some
20 of those a little bit more in detail. But their
21 responses for fires and their methods for preventing
22 fires will be looked at in the EA and will be
23 developed in the emergency response plan that the
24 Applicant will work with local fire departments,
25 with other emergency responders to develop. And I

1 might just hand it over to them to describe that
2 process little bit.

3 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: So your concern about
4 fire, we do conduct training with local emergency
5 responders, we also have a 24/7 monitoring personnel
6 right in our office in Bloomington, so they're
7 always monitoring, and we also have an operation and
8 maintenance full-time staff also on site. So
9 they're monitoring.

10 In the case of a fire, so let's say that
11 a fire happens, which is very rare, it doesn't
12 happen often, but if it does it will -- the
13 technology now is so developed where we would just
14 let the fire burn within the enclosure. So it's in
15 an enclosure and usually we let it burn out and then
16 we have an inspector come in afterwards once it's
17 safe and then we'll check and see what the cause of
18 the fire.

19 MR. TOM KARAS: One of the pretty
20 exciting things about this industry is how
21 technology is changing as fast as it has. A couple
22 things to understand about battery energy storage
23 systems is the underwriters laboratories
24 certification process has caught up with the
25 technology and how the industry has grown. So we've

1 got two different UL certifications that our
2 equipment meets.

3 If you can think of these battery
4 storages as maybe like a small garage, and inside
5 the garage is all these cassettes that have a bunch
6 of batteries that are individual batteries. Right
7 now one of those UL listings maintains that a fire
8 starting in one of those cassettes cannot spread to
9 any other cassettes, and then a fire that was to
10 start -- is aimed at the enclosure, a fire that
11 starts inside the enclosure is maintained within
12 that single enclosure.

13 So what we have as far as a first
14 responder or fire response, primarily is we're
15 just -- we just -- our job is not to fight the fire,
16 and generally you don't even know which -- I mean,
17 we'll know which cubicle is having the thermal
18 event, but you won't see flames or that sort of
19 thing. It won't be glowing red. But the best thing
20 a fire department can do is just spray down the area
21 around it, just as a precaution. The fumes and such
22 are maintained within the unit.

23 It's a new industry. There's been fires
24 in the past but they've greatly been reduced over
25 the last couple years. And, again, this UL

1 certification has been one of the real new things
2 that's come about to help that. As Sam pointed out,
3 we have very specific noise regulations that we have
4 to meet.

5 MS. AMY STEFFERUD: Then I guess my other
6 comment was concern about property values. Does
7 this decrease the value of our properties any by
8 having this by us?

9 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: So there are property
10 value studies that have been conducted by solar
11 facilities in Minnesota, and they've actually shown
12 that there's little to no effect on the property
13 values. And also our environmental assessment that
14 the Department of Commerce will also put together
15 will also assess that in the report as well.

16 MS. AMY STEFFERUD: Thank you.

17 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: Thank you.

18 MR. SAM WEAVER: Next up we have Darrell
19 Pontos. If you want to come up. There's a question
20 mark, you don't have to. Not right now. We'll move
21 down.

22 I see Curt L something. Curt, you're
23 good. All right, we'll move on down.

24 We have Aletha Cramer. Okay.

25 Russell Penning, there's a firm yes next

1 to your name.

2 MR. RUSSELL PENNING: My name is Russell
3 Penning, R-u-s-s-e-l-l P-e-n-n-i-n-g.

4 I'm a local resident from Wilmont. Some
5 of my concerns about the proposed project have to do
6 with setbacks from road right-of-ways and from
7 county drainage systems.

8 I've been hired by our township in the
9 past when we've had bad snow years to push snow back
10 on township road, blow snow back with snowblowers.
11 One thing that concerns me, are the setbacks going
12 to be far enough for safe snow removal, if we are
13 blowing snow off the roads who is going to be liable
14 if we're sending rocks through solar panels? I
15 guess that would be my first question. If you want
16 to address that and we can go to my next one.

17 MR. SAM WEAVER: So I will let the
18 Applicant take that regarding setbacks.

19 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: Yes. I have some
20 information here that we put in our application.
21 I'm looking at that. I'm trying to find our road
22 setback for you specifically. I couldn't find it.

23 So the county does have regulations too
24 on how far we can setback for certain structures and
25 facilities. There we go. So from the center line

1 of all roads, including fences, from the solar ray
2 that are closest to the center line it will be
3 approximately 85 feet away, and then from the
4 battery energy storage system it will also be 90
5 feet away.

6 MR. RUSSELL PENNING: It would be my
7 experience that that would probably be too close. I
8 mean, on the years that we have to move snow back
9 and push snow back, well beyond 80 feet, especially
10 on these township roads. A lot of the roads are
11 wide enough to get, you know, blowers in there that
12 have attachments, the roads aren't wide enough to
13 drive them side by side, so they just hire
14 bulldozers or farm tractors with blades to
15 physically push the snow back or blow the snow back.
16 I know from experience, 85 feet, I mean, you pick
17 gravel, gravel roads, it's going to throw further
18 than 85 feet.

19 My next question, just regards to the
20 solar panels themselves, when they do get dismantled
21 or broken, from the little bit I've looked online,
22 the technology is growing so fast that by the time
23 we get halfway through these solar panels projected
24 life they're probably going to be decommissioned
25 and, you know, put a newer panel up, just because

1 the technology is growing so fast and, you know,
2 you're learning more and more every day. So at that
3 point what do you do with them?

4 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: So we do recycle the
5 panels after they're end of usable life. So we
6 decommission them. We are responsible for the
7 decommissioning process. We have financial assuerty
8 put in place in order to decommission all of the
9 equipment -- and I guess what was the other part of
10 the question?

11 MR. RUSSELL PENNING: Weather events,
12 hail, if they're destroyed on site, hazard waste
13 leakage.

14 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: So in the case of a
15 weather event, our panels can withstand 150 mile per
16 hour winds, and for hail they can withstand golf
17 ball size hail at winds of approximately 50 miles
18 per hour, and as far as your leaching question goes,
19 like toxicity, the panels are tested I believe it's
20 TCLP tested, toxicity characteristics leaching
21 procedures, and they are tested and were --
22 basically broke up the panels and tested what leaks
23 out of it, and it's mostly made out of glass, that's
24 a majority of what the panels are made out of, so
25 very little to no effect of toxicity leaching.

1 MR. RUSSELL PENNING: My last question
2 would be, our county has a ag preservation law in
3 place already to preserve the right of agriculture
4 in our county, we have some of the most productive
5 farmland in Minnesota. How does this supercede that
6 law or that rule?

7 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: So on the basis of
8 agriculture, siting the facility where we are right
9 now, is very minimal on the bigger scheme of things.
10 We've had this question come up on previous sites
11 that we've had, and it's been less than one percent
12 of total ag taken out of production. But to also --
13 with that being said, the solar facility does help
14 restore nutrients under the soils since it's not
15 being farmed for 30 years, and then once the project
16 is decommissioned that soil actually becomes more
17 fertile.

18 MR. RUSSELL PENNING: That's all the
19 questions I have for you at this time. Thank you.

20 MR. JANEZICH: If there is a distance
21 that you think would be appropriate, because you had
22 mentioned 85 to 90, I'm not putting you on the spot.

23 MR. RUSSELL PENNING: I'd say 300 feet.

24 MR. JANEZICH: That's fine. I wanted a
25 specific number for the Commissioners to consider,

1 that's all. I appreciate that. Thank you.

2 MR. SAM WEAVER: Just confirming that
3 Mr. Don Brink, you do not want to speak. I take
4 that as a no.

5 Now we have Dwayne Wienrank. Come on up.

6 MR. DWAYNE WIENRANK: Dwayne Wienrank,
7 D-w-a-y-n-e W-i-e-n-r-a-n-k. I've got a lot of
8 questions. I'm not even going to ask them all. But
9 you were talking about the 85 feet, I don't see how
10 you could even possibly think of 85 feet, because if
11 you put up a farm building you have to stay back
12 more than a hundred feet. So 85 feet, where you
13 pull that out of, I have no idea. But that is
14 illegal, you know.

15 The other thing is, I haven't found
16 anything, but are you subsidized by the federal
17 government or the state government? I want to know
18 that stuff because I pay taxes, and if I have to
19 subsidize a project like this, I am totally against
20 everything like that subsidies. There's no need for
21 subsidies. If you're making as much money, enough
22 to pay these people rent that's three times amount
23 that a person can make farming, obviously you're
24 making too much money and you're subsidized, so
25 there's no need for that.

1 Another thing, where's the power going?
2 Is it going to be local or is it going to be heading
3 way out of here?

4 And then you're talking about these
5 pillars that you put in the ground. How deep are
6 they going to be? Are they going to go through tile
7 lines, and then the tile lines that go into the
8 adjacent farm, then they get plugged full of dirt.
9 Because I live in Elk Township, and section 18
10 happens to be right up to, butts up against one of
11 the proposed ones just to the west of me. They have
12 an easement to go through my property, but if you
13 start piling through the tile lines then the dirt
14 goes in the tile lines and then it comes to my
15 fields, then I've got to fix that. So who's going
16 to be liable for that?

17 And then the other thing, tornadoes, so
18 you get a tornado goes through this thing and throws
19 the panels into my property. The glass and all the
20 other materials that are probably not good for the
21 soil, you didn't mention anything. You said a small
22 portion. Well, a small portion sometimes is good
23 enough to kill the soil. I mean, you don't need a
24 hundred percent, one percent is too much. So, I
25 mean, you didn't comment on that.

1 So, I mean, and also -- well, without the
2 growing crops you've addressed part of this, without
3 growing crops it doesn't use as much water, but then
4 maybe you figure the grass uses as much as the corn
5 crop. But if it doesn't then you've got some water
6 flow problems that actually go downstream and it
7 might cause problems downstream from people. I
8 don't know anything about those, but those are all
9 questions that I want to know.

10 And then, of course, you said it was a
11 small portion of the land, you say one percent.
12 Well, one percent is one percent, but if one percent
13 of the people die that's still only one percent. So
14 are you willing to go ahead and take one percent out
15 of ag production just so you can put panels. Why
16 can't you put these things on waste land someplace
17 else besides going ahead and putting them on good ag
18 land. There's no sense to put them on good ag land.

19 So at the present time I think that's all
20 I'm going to address. So you can go ahead and
21 address these while I stand here and wait.

22 MR. SAM WEAVER: With the drain tile
23 piece, so any permit that is issued and our statute
24 states if they are to encounter any drain tile, if
25 any drain tile is damaged they are 100 percent

1 responsible for the reparation of that, they have to
2 restore it to better than its original condition.
3 And then the other pieces, setbacks I will let you
4 guys handle most of those pieces, siting, funding,
5 is outside the scope of our EA. I don't know if
6 they want to talk about funding for the project, but
7 I think most of the other pieces would be something
8 the Applicant can answer.

9 But for drain tile, yes, they have to
10 repair any drain tile that they encounter, and even
11 if there is clogged drain tile on the site that's
12 already clogged, I believe they are still required
13 to restore that unclogging, make it functional.

14 MR. DWAYNE WIENRANK: But how do you know
15 that? I mean, how deep do those things go?

16 MR. SAM WEAVER: To my knowledge you
17 have, and I'll probably hand it over to you, but I
18 think they have worked with the county and their --
19 whatever the county resources for mapping drain tile
20 to know where it is.

21 MR. DWAYNE WIENRANK: What about private
22 drain tile, most of it is private.

23 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: So with private drain
24 tile, we do get private drain tile maps from our
25 landowners, but we do know when we hit it. Once we

1 do hit it then we will be responsible for any sort
2 of issues that happen, but it is very rare. I don't
3 know of any that has happened, but it is very rare,
4 but we will know and will be responsible.

5 MR. DWAYNE WIENRANK: I know things like
6 this happen. It happened with rural water when they
7 came through, they came right through the tile and
8 they promised they was gonna fix it. And they could
9 see the tile right on top of the ground but they
10 didn't fix it. So I've got to go ahead and threaten
11 them with taking this thing to court and go through
12 all that business and I shouldn't have to do that
13 because you have to trust the people that are doing
14 this.

15 The problem is you can't trust them,
16 because part of the problem is the government and
17 big entities, they think they can run over
18 individuals. That's how things really get into a
19 problem, when you start trying to run over people.
20 People are eventually going to get just fed up with
21 the whole situation. That remains to be seen.

22 Maybe in some areas it works. If you put
23 it in a wasteland where you don't have any tile you
24 don't to worry about them issues. You know, put it
25 in government CRP, but, now, they can't put it

1 there, you gotta put it in good ag land. So instead
2 of having people growing food, which supposedly in
3 the world we're a little bit short of food, but not
4 according to this, you just go ahead and put up
5 solar panels, to heck with the people, because this
6 is just a little area, you know, and we don't care
7 about that. The rest of the world they can not
8 enjoy having enough food and we're supposed to be
9 all in favor of all this and make it good. I just
10 don't agree with that philosophy.

11 You've still got to answer the question,
12 where's the power going?

13 MR. TOM KARAS: Thanks for your comments.
14 Let me try and hit a couple of them. The drain tile
15 and the pile depth, we're usually working with
16 between 15 and 18 foot steel pile that's driven down
17 and the key to, you know, the key to this operation
18 is that we have firm foundation, just like any
19 building that's going up, so we're just as concerned
20 with that. So we go quite a ways into the ground to
21 counteract the frost heave that takes place.

22 When we do hit tile, and it happens,
23 we're just as motivated to fix it as well. You hit
24 your tile, you find out in the next big rain you've
25 got a crater around your steel pile, we're just --

1 we're on that like --

2 MR. DWAYNE WIENRANK: Yeah, but by that
3 time you've probably got some soil and if it flows
4 down, and this was right next to my lined fence so
5 then that dirt gets in my field. So who's
6 responsible for the dirt that gets in my field, and
7 the panels, if they get thrown out there and the
8 glass is all over and, of course, your contaminants
9 that are in the panels. Obviously there's some
10 contaminants in there. So we don't want any of this
11 -- do bacteria break them contaminants down or do
12 they kill the bacteria in the soil?

13 MR. TOM KARAS: The dirt hopefully
14 dissipates as it goes through the system, again, we
15 want to get that fixed as soon as well, and we'll
16 probably know about it sooner than anybody else in
17 any other situation.

18 The subsidy aspect, there are no federal
19 subsidies. There are tax credits and there really
20 isn't any more or less than what you find in any
21 other energy type of generation, whether you're
22 building a carbon pipeline or gas plant or coal
23 plant. It is part of the business to have some sort
24 of help from the government. I appreciate your
25 frustration level at that.

1 As far as the -- let's just address this
2 right now, Alia talked a little bit about the TCLP
3 testing, to put a little more color to that and
4 that's an easy thing to go and check, good, TCLP,
5 this is the testing that the Environmental
6 Protection Agency does in regards to landfills.
7 Very important that landfills do not have a buildup
8 of toxic metals.

9 The TCLP testing actually is a matter of
10 breaking up whatever component you want to test, in
11 this case they would break up a bunch of solar
12 panels and test, or put water on it, they would
13 check for any leaching. But there isn't -- we
14 haven't seen -- we haven't seen research, we haven't
15 seen evidence of actual contamination that have come
16 out of panels.

17 MR. DWAYNE WIENRANK: What about the
18 glass?

19 MR. TOM KARAS: The glass, think about it
20 like the windshield on your car, it's not going to
21 break apart, it's going to crinkle, that's not the
22 right word, but you know what fractured glass looks
23 like. It's not going to break into a zillion pieces
24 and break apart in your hands. And, again, this is
25 part of the growth of the industry and we've gotten

1 past those things.

2 Another good thing, just for awareness,
3 is understand a couple different types of panels
4 that are out there. What we use predominantly on
5 all of our projects is what's referred to as a thin
6 film panel, made by First Solar. It's a U.S.
7 company, largest solar module company in our
8 country. When you look at that thin film module
9 there's -- the chemicals are actually baked into the
10 glass itself. There is no moving parts or gel or
11 wafers of sort that could fracture that would leak
12 out chemicals. So we think it's a very, very safe
13 product to use.

14 Hail storms, people have a concern, you
15 know, breaking modules. Again, the way the industry
16 has come about, this is going to be a tracking
17 system that tracks to the east and then again to the
18 west. It has the ability to move. And at our
19 control system they're watching the weather, hawking
20 it just like you guys are, and understanding what
21 direction that hail could be coming from, and they
22 can actually move the modules at an angle that
23 minimizes the amount of impact that's taken. I
24 appreciate Mr. Penning's point about throwing stones
25 85 feet, but at that point that's not enough to

1 break a panel.

2 MR. DWAYNE WIENRANK: Depends on the size
3 of the rock.

4 MR. TOM KARAS: Well, no, it's the speed
5 it's traveling.

6 MR. DWAYNE WIENRANK: I wouldn't want to
7 get hit by it.

8 MR. TOM KARAS: Neither would I, most
9 certainly. You have the drain tile, we're totally
10 aware of and working, we've got a mutual need to get
11 it fixed. We're working with the county, we've got
12 a couple of options that we're talking to them
13 about, and our landowners have been very, very
14 cooperative in getting us maps and we work our way
15 out to avoid that tile grid.

16 MR. DWAYNE WIENRANK: You said the
17 landowners, yeah, the landowners that you're
18 paying big money to, but what about the rest of us?
19 How about the younger people -- what are you paying
20 per acre?

21 MR. TOM KARAS: That's a private
22 business --

23 MR. DWAYNE WIENRANK: It is?

24 MR. TOM KARAS: It is.

25 MR. DWAYNE WIENRANK: How come we don't

1 have a right to know that, since we're going to be
2 right there by it? In other words, you can't be
3 open. You can go ahead and do anything you please
4 and we don't have to find out about it, huh?

5 MR. SAM WEAVER: Mr. Wienrank, I do
6 understand your concerns about funding, again, we
7 want to address our concerns and questions to the
8 scope of the environmental assessment here, and the
9 funding for the project and landowner deals are
10 outside the scope of the environmental assessment.

11 Again, we do appreciate your concerns,
12 and you brought up a number of really good points
13 thus far, but we're getting a little bit off track.

14 MR. DWAYNE WIENRANK: I see. Well, can
15 you answer my question about where does the power
16 go.

17 MR. SAM WEAVER: Do one of you guys want
18 to handle that.

19 MR. TOM KARAS: Certainly. The power is
20 going into the Nobles substation that everybody is
21 aware of, and at that point it goes onto that grid.
22 At that point, being able to establish where any
23 particular electron flows to is a futile exercise,
24 you don't know.

25 MR. DWAYNE WIENRANK: In other words,

1 some of it is right here then, huh?

2 MR. TOM KARAS: My understanding, the
3 village of Reading is serviced by Nobles Co-op
4 Electric, so it wouldn't be going there, it would be
5 traveling other places.

6 MR. DWAYNE WIENRANK: That answers my
7 question, I'm glad you said that.

8 MR. TOM KARAS: Just being honest, sir.

9 MR. DWAYNE WIENRANK: I'll let somebody
10 else come up here. I have more questions but I'll
11 probably go ahead and e-mail them.

12 MR. SAM WEAVER: Thank you, Mr. Wienrank.

13 Next up we have Becky Baumhofner, and we
14 have a question mark.

15 MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: My name is Becky
16 Baumhofner, B-e-c-k-y B-a-u-m-h-o-f-n-e-r.

17 I am against this project. One of my
18 concerns is, I drive through this every single day
19 and I drive through beautiful farm ground, not
20 marginal farm ground.

21 I read that these types of projects are
22 to be placed on marginal farm ground. Have they
23 been paying lower property taxes, because they've
24 got yucky ground? It looks pretty nice to me. It's
25 beautiful. Here's a list of some of the animals

1 that I see every day as I drive through this ground.
2 Some of them are on special concern lists, blue
3 heron, sandhill crane, American red star, bobolink,
4 what about the bobolink? They're going to go
5 through you guys making these access road and you
6 guys doing all this stuff? The ditches are going to
7 be wrecked, the grass is going to be wrecked, the
8 prime farm ground is going to be wrecked. Bobolinks
9 are on a special concern list. Bald eagle, castrol,
10 king fisher, pelican, yellow headed black bird, red
11 headed woodpecker, hairy woodpecker, downywood
12 pecker, flicker, brown flasher, blue bird, swans,
13 Canadian goose, ducks of many varieties, gothawk,
14 I'm pretty sure that those are fairly rare, and I've
15 seen them where you guys are putting this stuff up.
16 Verios, bard owl, snowy owl, Franklin's gull,
17 they're special concerns, monarchs, mink, badger,
18 least weasel, special concern, gophers, north pocket
19 gopher, special concern, and you know we love those.
20 Fox, deer, coyote, woodchuck, beaver, snapping
21 turtles, skunks, snakes, salamander all the time,
22 special concern.

23 I don't understand how you guys can call
24 this marginal farm ground. Where is the FSA reports
25 calling this marginal farm ground?

1 So the electricity isn't going here,
2 because Nobles Cooperative is not part of this
3 project, are they. Who is the electric company
4 buying the electricity?

5 MR. TOM KARAS: It's going onto the Xcel
6 grid. I'm not saying that Xcel is the customer
7 purchasing, but that is the grid that is serviced at
8 that substation.

9 MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: And the marginal
10 farm ground?

11 MR. TOM KARAS: I don't understand
12 exactly -- I appreciate your concern for wildlife.

13 I don't understand for sure how you see
14 the threat. I've been on projects, I've constructed
15 projects. The amount of small mammals and birds
16 that live on these projects would really astound
17 you. The vegetation that is shown on the slides
18 comes back and actually creates new habitat and
19 that's not impacted by herbicides and pesticides
20 every year.

21 MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: You're not going
22 to mess up those salamanders putting in those big
23 access roads and heavy equipment coming through?

24 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: So for the solar
25 facility, we will have a fence around the solar

1 facility and it will be woven ag fence. So it will
2 allow small animals and wildlife to pass through the
3 solar facility.

4 And during construction, we have talked
5 with the DNR about our project and coordinated with
6 them, and we've also conducted IPaC for federally
7 listed and state species, and that is also presented
8 in our application. So we're in coordination and
9 talks with them too to prevent any harm to wildlife.

10 MR. TOM KARAS: And that would be part of
11 the EA.

12 MR. SAM WEAVER: And monitoring during
13 construction, so we will have someone on site during
14 construction to monitor for specific species,
15 especially species of concern like you talked about,
16 and we were out driving through the site today and
17 we did see a red headed woodpecker, it was really
18 cool.

19 So, yes, a lot of those species of
20 concern, whether it's the Migratory Bird Treaty Act,
21 whether it's the Main Species Act, any species that
22 are of interest will be written about in the
23 environmental assessment, and those species will be
24 monitored during construction.

25 MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: Thank you. I

1 don't want to drive this and you wouldn't want to
2 either, but you don't put it on your ground.

3 MR. SAM WEAVER: I can address a little
4 bit about the aesthetic value. A lot of the times
5 when a draft permit is issued there will be, often
6 times, special conditions for the view shed if it
7 changes. So if you live adjacent to the project or
8 within the project, there will often times be
9 special permit conditions that require the
10 development of a vegetative screening plan, for
11 example, where the Applicant can work with local
12 landowners to find a solution for vegetation to
13 screen that view, if you are opposed to the view.
14 That is one way that view shed is traditionally
15 addressed and mitigated.

16 All right. So next we have James Jones.

17 MR. JAMES JONES: I'm James Jones,
18 J-a-m-e-s J-o-n-e-s, Jones.

19 Okay, why is this site such a good site?
20 Why are you here? Can you answer that one?

21 MR. TOM KARAS: Generally the substation.

22 MR. JAMES JONES: We just got done
23 putting up a pile of wind energy. We were told by
24 the county commissioners, by Xcel Energy, that these
25 lines are to full capacity, and they're shutting

1 down some of the wind farms to the north. How are
2 you going to get on?

3 MR. SAM WEAVER: Craig, do you want to
4 speak to that a little bit? I'm going to hand this
5 over to our PUC representative.

6 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: You are correct.
7 There are some congestion concerns generally and
8 that's why, as you probably are well aware, there's
9 some buildout of some transmission lines as well.

10 In the meantime, when those come online,
11 how the Applicant is going to get their power on the
12 grid probably would be best for them to address
13 that.

14 MR. TOM KARAS: One of the nice things
15 about solar is that it complements wind energy.
16 Wind energy primarily is at its peak during the
17 evening and early morning hours, if you look at a
18 generation profile, solar obviously is only
19 operating during the day.

20 So it's not the congestion that's being
21 felt right now from the wind is building up and
22 taking place in the evening hours. So it's more of
23 a complementary relationship there.

24 MR. JAMES JONES: We have a lot more wind
25 than we do sun. Do you know how many sunny days on

1 average southwest Minnesota has?

2 MR. TOM KARAS: We know exactly.

3 MR. JAMES JONES: How many?

4 MR. TOM KARAS: I don't have it right
5 here. But we've had a meteorologic station on the
6 site for over two years that we've taken studies,
7 we've had third-party analysis done of it, and then
8 we compare it to what the national data base says.
9 So we're comparing actual readings to what the
10 historical average is, and there's enough sun.

11 MR. JAMES JONES: So how much sun do you
12 need to run it? Being partly cloudy, full sun,
13 cloudy days.

14 MR. TOM KARAS: I'll just tell a quick
15 story. One of the first projects I did was for a
16 dairy farmer in the upper peninsula of Michigan. A
17 reporter came out and asked, geez, you can't, you
18 know, look it's all cloudy, there's no energy today.
19 The gentleman looked at her straight in the eye and
20 he says, Can you see me and she said, Well, yes, I
21 can see you, and he said, Then the sun is shining.

22 So there is solar generation all during
23 the day, sun is up it's happening. Is it best when
24 it's totally cloudless, absolutely, but that's
25 factored into the resource assessment that we've

1 done.

2 MR. JAMES JONES: So we're going to build
3 more transmission lines, is that what you're saying?

4 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: What I'm saying is
5 with -- currently we have applications for more
6 transmission lines, whether the Commission decides,
7 I don't think this mike is working.

8 Will the Commission build them all, I
9 couldn't tell you, they have to go through the
10 process ultimately. There has to be an applicant,
11 let's say Xcel Energy or Great River Energy, they
12 have to show -- not necessarily Great River Energy,
13 but a utility, a publicly traded utility, has to
14 show the Commission that it's needed before they can
15 build it.

16 Because ultimately rate payers pay for
17 it, right? They have to show initially that there's
18 a need for the transmission line. If they show that
19 there's need and they meet the environmental review
20 issues, then, yeah, we will permit more transmission
21 lines.

22 I can't say that we never will or we
23 never won't. We take it on a case by case basis as
24 we get applications.

25 MR. JAMES JONES: So when this project is

1 done in '27, you said, roughly?

2 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: It will be in
3 operation in 2028.

4 MR. JAMES JONES: Are you going to just
5 sell the project to Xcel Energy, the biggest dog in
6 the room?

7 MR. TOM KARAS: That's a business
8 decision, not part of this.

9 MR. JAMES JONES: It's a business
10 decision that we also know. Because I'm a member of
11 Nobles Cooperative Electric, they get most of their
12 energy from West River Energy and coal fire plants,
13 that are getting shut down for this green energy.
14 This green energy, according to their CEO, a solar
15 panel, solar farm is about 35 percent efficient. A
16 wind farm is about 45, 50 percent efficient, a coal
17 plant or a nuclear plant is anywhere from 90 to 95
18 efficient.

19 I know we are trying to convert to green
20 energy, but you guys need to build these things --
21 why don't you build it closer to the Twin Cities,
22 where the power is needed, instead of building it
23 out here and shipping it 300 miles north.

24 I don't understand why, except that
25 they've got a big plant here to grab it.

1 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: So if I may, I'm
2 going to talk about why we sited the project to
3 where we did.

4 Part of the solar project envisioned and
5 decision is the battery energy storage system, and
6 you talked a little bit about the congestion. So
7 the battery energy storage facilities can take power
8 from the grid and store it in the batteries and then
9 put it back onto the grid as needed. So it can
10 actually help with those curtailment issues.

11 MR. JAMES JONES: So basically you're
12 going to take some of the wind energy and store it,
13 at times?

14 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: Yes --

15 MR. JAMES JONES: Who owns the wind
16 energy right now? Xcel Energy, I'll just tell you,
17 you don't have to think about it.

18 What I'm saying is, we're getting so --
19 we're getting to where there's going to be only one
20 power company left, and our electric rates are
21 already high and they're going to get higher.

22 What you're doing is not keeping our
23 energy, that I can see, it's not benefitting most of
24 the people in this room. Maybe four or five, ten
25 landowners come out of this, and they're probably

1 living in Arizona all winter.

2 So why not build it up by the Twin Cities
3 where you can look at it instead of us, where land
4 is not being farmed. I was just up that way two
5 weeks ago. There's lots of land up there that's not
6 being farmed, there's no trees on it, lots of grass,
7 lot of high ground, doesn't flood, why not?

8 MR. SAM WEAVER: So I do think that the
9 Applicant has addressed that this is a good area for
10 solar resource, there's a tie in the connection. So
11 I do appreciate the question and the reiteration of
12 the question, but the siting issue has been answered
13 by the Applicant.

14 MR. JAMES JONES: You're the
15 environmental guy, right?

16 MR. SAM WEAVER: I am the environmental
17 guy.

18 MR. JAMES JONES: So what have you done
19 to address the environmental impacts out here? Have
20 you looked at the water? Have you looked at the --

21 MR. SAM WEAVER: We will be doing all of
22 that.

23 MR. JAMES JONES: Now you're going to do
24 it. Why are you doing it so late? We can't build a
25 grain bin out here without getting the county out to

1 inspect the ground, make sure there ain't a Indian
2 buried there, you've got to make sure there ain't no
3 Indians or artifacts or dinosaurs or whatever else
4 they can find.

5 MR. SAM WEAVER: I want to reiterate that
6 thi is still -- it seems late in the process, but
7 this is early in the permitting process. This site
8 has not been approved by anyone who can approve the
9 site, and the Applicant, in the application, does
10 describe what surveys have been done. They've done
11 also things like wetland, delineations are coming
12 out, they've looked at historical imaging for farm
13 wetlands, they've looked at public waterways,
14 they've done species surveys, all of that is
15 documented in the application. They have done
16 cultural surveys, so consulting the state
17 preservation office, which looks for things like
18 Indian burial sites, different potential for not
19 just indian artifacts, but also local cultural
20 architectural resources.

21 So a lot of the surveys have already
22 taken place, and as part of the EA I will take the
23 information from those surveys, compile it and
24 present it. So I will look at the presence of all
25 those wetlands, where they are, the presence of the

1 species and where they are, and I will write did
2 they site panels to avoid impacts to things like
3 cultural resources, natural resources and, of
4 course, the human impacts as well.

5 MR. JAMES JONES: So you live out here
6 then?

7 MR. SAM WEAVER: I don't live out here,
8 and that's again --

9 MR. JAMES JONES: So you don't have no
10 idea what it's like out here. If you don't live
11 here you don't know. I'm not being mean, I'm just
12 telling you. You should live here a while.

13 MR. SAM WEAVER: I agree with you, but my
14 job is to look at resources like wetlands, and
15 people have come out here, been on site, walked
16 around, except for where the wetlands are, right.
17 So people have been here on the land.

18 But, like I said, we've had comments from
19 people like Mr. Pontos saying this area floods, it
20 you only happens once in every ten years but it
21 floods. So those types of information that we can't
22 get from things like visiting the site once a year,
23 looking at aerial imagery, that is the stuff that is
24 of great use to us.

25 We've gotten some good feedback, like the

1 snowplow throwing debris more than 85 feet, those
2 are the types of things that we're looking for in
3 this process. We've gotten some good information so
4 far and we hope to keep getting comments like that.

5 MR. JAMES JONES: So you're the PUC guy?

6 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: Yes, sir.

7 MR. JAMES JONES: What are the chances of
8 keeping this kind of energy source separate and not
9 tying it to the only big conglomerate power source
10 in the state?

11 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: I can promise you,
12 you're not going to be satisfied with my answer.

13 MR. JAMES JONES: I know I'm not. I damn
14 well know I'm not, that's the problem.

15 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: Just so we're on the
16 same page though, we typically at the PUC, we permit
17 it, let's say that --

18 MR. JAMES JONES: You're supposed to
19 watch out for the public interests.

20 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: Correct.

21 MR. JAMES JONES: What are you going to
22 do to watch out for our public interest?

23 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: These meetings, your
24 comments, all go into the record and they're
25 considered by the Commissioners when they ultimately

1 make the decision. That's why we're here, right.
2 And to hear about the issues relative to water --
3 (Unidentified woman.) Can you turn up
4 the mike?

5 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: Sorry about that.
6 Thank you for speaking up and letting me know,
7 that's helpful.

8 Part of how we protect the public is we
9 come here and we want to know what your thoughts and
10 comments are on the project. Things that we
11 couldn't get from a website. The only thing we can
12 get is by coming here and getting your knowledge, so
13 that if there are issues we don't know about, should
14 we permit the project, we can try to mitigate those
15 issues.

16 We put those issues directly into the
17 permit, right. So let's say a certain person,
18 landowner, has a -- doesn't want to look at the
19 solar panels. Typically what happens is they'll
20 say, first off, we don't want this project, right.
21 Secondly, if the project has to happen, we want
22 vegetation and trees in this area. We take that
23 information and we put it directly into the permit
24 so that the applicant or the person building the
25 project, should it be permitted, has to put that,

1 and it's in stone, they have to do that, as a
2 condition of the permit, all right.

3 Another instance, there's a conversation
4 about drain tile. Drain tile damage is in the
5 permit. If they damage drain tile and the
6 Commission finds out about it we make them fix it.
7 Typically they'll fix it on their own because they
8 don't want to deal with us. But, you know, that's
9 -- we do try to protect the public. That's why
10 we're here.

11 In several months, after the
12 environmental review is done, we will be here with
13 an administrative law judge, all right. We don't
14 have any position on the project either, frankly.
15 We take the applications as they come in.

16 The judge is another person that is
17 separate, independent of us, the Applicant, and they
18 will write a report based on the environmental
19 review done, and they will make a recommendation to
20 the Commission as well.

21 So that's -- and we will be back here and
22 typically we get the question like why are you here
23 again. We will have the environmental report and
24 you'll be able to comment again, knowing the
25 environmental record, you might look at the

1 environmental review and say, hey, this is missing
2 judge, we wish you would have done this. They take
3 all of that into account when they make a
4 recommendation to the Commission.

5 So we take public comments very
6 seriously. We take comments from cities, counties,
7 townships, all very seriously.

8 MR. JAMES JONES: These projects always
9 start out good, just like every fall when we start
10 combining beans. First day goes pretty good, then
11 it's going to rain and everything goes to hell in a
12 hurry. I've watched the wind energy people. You
13 hire a contractor and he's hired to get it done,
14 he's going to get it done, hell or high water. And
15 things don't get done as nice as you say they will.
16 They might get cleaned up later but they don't get
17 done, I'm just saying.

18 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: I'm not here to
19 argue with your experience at all. I can just tell
20 you based on my experience that the Commission takes
21 those things very seriously.

22 MR. JAMES JONES: The only other thing
23 I've got, you showed a board where you were going to
24 give the county like 3 to 4 to \$500,000 in taxes
25 maybe, and a couple townships a couple hundred

1 thousand dollars to split. I think that's probably
2 high, looks good on the board but it might be pretty
3 high. From what I've heard from our county
4 commissioners, they're expecting to get 2 to
5 300,000. Is your payment based on the energy
6 produced?

7 MR. TOM KARAS: Metered, yes.

8 MR. JAMES JONES: So if the energy ain't
9 produced the payment goes down?

10 MR. TOM KARAS: Yes.

11 MR. JAMES JONES: That's all I wanted to
12 know.

13 MR. SAM WEAVER: I just wanted to follow
14 up on one thing Craig said. We're going to be back
15 here in four-ish months for the hearing, and so if
16 there's something that gets brought up tonight, like
17 the snowplowing, the seasonal flooding, the
18 setbacks. If we have brought something up tonight
19 and I don't write about it, then you can come here
20 and you can take me to the judge and say I wanted to
21 hear about what this potential impact is and Sam
22 over there didn't write about it, and so the judge
23 will make me write about it.

24 MR. JAMES JONES: Come out here and live
25 for a while, you really should. Move out here for a

1 year or so.

2 MR. SAM WEAVER: I'll tell my wife,
3 she'll be fine with that.

4 We need that local knowledge, I can't
5 live out here for three months, as much as I'd love
6 to. We can't do it. But that's why you're here,
7 you live out here, you know the land, you know
8 what's going on. That's why your comments are so
9 valuable. We have one more, Phillip Jones. Come on
10 down.

11 MR. PHILLIP JONES: Hi, Phillip,
12 P-h-i-l-l-i-p, J-o-n-e-s, J-o-n-e-s.

13 Couple concerns of mine, on the flip side
14 of the coin to breaking the tile, how do we ensure
15 that the water going down the tile is safe. The
16 gentleman over here mentioned Googling everything.
17 I did a quick Google search, it said the biggest
18 toxins are coming from bacteria coming off the solar
19 panels, so they're not normal to the area. How do
20 we control the water to ensure it's clean before it
21 goes into our tile system, into our creeks and
22 downstream. Is there berms? Are the tiles going to
23 be shut off from service draining? How do we do
24 that?

25 It was brought up before, property tax

1 value. I disagree that you think it's going to stay
2 the same. I'll bet if anybody would come to try to
3 buy my acreage after this project is done I'll
4 probably get half.

5 Another thing, on the flip side of the
6 coin of what Becky brought up on the animals. You
7 have woven fence, you're letting the small animals
8 through. How are the natural predators going to get
9 to them and what are we going to do about all those
10 animals that get over populated?

11 How does a project like this get around
12 the county setbacks? So if somebody wanted to come
13 build a livestock facility next to me they would
14 have to stay, I believe it's three-eighths of a mile
15 without a conditional use permit. No one has
16 approached me to get my signature on that.

17 You say it takes less than one percent of
18 the ag ground, but this is your third project, now
19 we're up to three percent. So if every project is
20 taking less than one percent, pretty soon it's going
21 to add up.

22 As far as the transmission lines go, I
23 think we should have those before any project, kind
24 of putting the cart ahead of the horse.

25 And when this project has reached its end

1 of life, you say there's funds to recycle them. Is
2 it ensured that it has to be taken down, or are
3 those funds just going to going to give it to the
4 property owner, you can leave them if you want or do
5 what you want. That's all I have.

6 MR. SAM WEAVER: So getting the bacteria
7 on the panel is something I have not heard about,
8 but I'm excited to look into that and write about it
9 and figure out what's going on. Thanks for bringing
10 that one up, appreciate that.

11 I will let the Applicant respond about
12 the county setbacks and whether or not those have
13 been followed. I do know that sometimes siting for
14 this process can supercede county ordinances, and
15 I'll let them talk about how they work with the
16 county on their setbacks.

17 The transmission line piece, we have no
18 idea if there are going to be transmission lines.
19 There are potential applicants for that, but right
20 now there's nothing material, there's nothing on the
21 docket that says there will be one here. So I don't
22 know if we want to address that moving forward, it's
23 a little outside of the scope of tonight, but I
24 might bring this mike on over to the Applicants to
25 address the pieces that I've just talked about,

1 unless you've got a mike that works down there.

2 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: I think this one
3 works.

4 So for county setbacks, so for our
5 setbacks that we have proposed --

6 (Unidentified woman.) Little bit louder.

7 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: I'm very soft spoken,
8 so I'll try to be loud.

9 So for our project we have proposed 150
10 feet from the solar ray to residences. I think the
11 county setback is 150 feet from property lines, but
12 we have made sure that we are 150 feet from
13 residences and then, what was the other question I
14 have here.

15 MR. PHILLIP JONES: Excuse me a second,
16 you say 150 feet, but you're not building a normal
17 structure for this area. So it should be closer to
18 like a livestock facility setback.

19 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: I want to address
20 another one of your questions here. I can't
21 remember can you restate your other question that
22 you asked.

23 MR. PHILLIP JONES: Which one?

24 MR. SAM WEAVER: Bacteria transmission.

25 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: So just as general

1 for drain tile, I do want to reiterate that we have
2 been working with Nobles County drainage department
3 as well as with their drain tile engineer to reroute
4 any drain tile that we need to to mitigate any
5 issues with the drain tile and with us hitting drain
6 tile or even working through maybe updating our
7 design too to avoid drain tile, county regulated
8 drain tile specifically, because we have to have a
9 certain setback from each side.

10 But as far as the bacteria going into the
11 water, I honestly have not looked into that. I'm
12 not sure if my teammates here have more information.

13 MR. TOM KARAS: Like Sam, that's a new
14 one to me, but I very much encourage you and
15 everybody else, the written comment form or the
16 online forms, I'd really like to learn more about
17 that and understand where it comes from. Any type
18 of research material or links that you could provide
19 for that, I'd certainly appreciate and I imagine Sam
20 would as well.

21 MR. PHILLIP JONES: It's first thing that
22 came up on Google.

23 MR. TOM KARAS: There's a lot of that.

24 MR. PHILLIP JONES: I agree.

25 MR. TOM KARAS: Just back to the wildlife

1 and such. There's been a lot of research, both by
2 the Argonne National Laboratories in the midwest, and
3 the National Renewable Energy Lab out in Boulder,
4 Colorado. It started out with a tremendous amount
5 of effort for pollinator habitat in Minnesota was
6 one of the leaders in the country about mandating
7 special seed mixes for native plants to encourage
8 pollinator habitat and then what they've been able
9 to find is it's not just the pollinators, but by
10 enhancing that habitat it also has kind of a
11 downstream impact, as far as other insects, other
12 small mammals. Yes, we would like to keep coyotes
13 out of the site, but the raptors are having a fine
14 time feasting on the moles and shrews that come into
15 the site. It really becomes a very vibrant habitat
16 for wildlife once it's established. Anything else?

17 MR. PHILLIP JONES: No, not at this time.

18 MR. TOM KARAS: But I'd really be
19 interested in those links.

20 MR. DWAYNE WIENRANK: Can I comment a
21 little bit --

22 MR. JEREMY DUEHR: Sir, please come to
23 the microphone so the court reporter can hear you.

24 MR. SAM WEAVER: So we have gotten
25 through the speaker list now, so if you would like

1 to comment, Mr. Wienrank, right now. We will still
2 go one at a time, but it is now kind of an open
3 session. We won't be calling on people. If you
4 feel compelled to come up, come on up.

5 MR. DWAYNE WIENRANK: My name again,
6 D-w-a-y-n-e.

7 Question on this, the habitat you're
8 creating, you know, that sounds good. Now you
9 mentioned insects, so what insects -- do you spray
10 for certain insects, what happens if the
11 grasshoppers get in there or the insects move from
12 this particular habitat into my fields where I'm
13 trying to grow a crop?

14 There's two different deals going on.
15 You're concerned about solar, you're not --
16 absolutely you don't care about the crops. That's
17 not part of your living and you could care less.
18 You know, if you guys would all put a house in the
19 middle of these things, that's what you should do,
20 then you can live by them.

21 But if my question is, if you get these
22 insects, different insects, and they grow in this
23 habitat and they're out of control, how am I going
24 to control them in my fields then? I have to go out
25 and spray every once in a while, I assume. You're

1 not liable for anything that you send to my field, I
2 assume.

3 MR. SAM WEAVER: So could you address a
4 few specific species so I can look into.

5 MR. DWAYNE WIENRANK: The grasshoppers
6 would be one. I don't know what else is going to be
7 growing in there, there could be numerous ones. It
8 could be aphids, there could be, I don't know, army
9 worms, could be a lot of different species. I don't
10 know what's going to be growing. You should have
11 that data, because if you've got sites you should
12 know what insects are there.

13 I have never been to a solar panel site
14 so I have no idea what insects in there. You're
15 supposed to be telling us this, because this is an
16 informative meeting, so us as a landowners here,
17 that live here. I've lived here all my life. I've
18 been here 75 years, and it's been going fine.

19 But you come here in with project of
20 yours and you're mixing solar power with ag land.
21 The two don't get along really, because this ag land
22 is too important to grow crops on. This is what
23 we've been doing ever since God -- I mean, God
24 created this earth and we went ahead and plowed this
25 sod and we use it for ag land. I doubt whether God

1 had any intentions of having solar power down here,
2 but I don't really know. But you have to address
3 the things about the insects because you should know
4 what insects are in your solar power area.

5 So I want to know what insects are there
6 so I can be prepared, because I don't want to be out
7 there spraying every week because the insects are
8 there. Are you going to spray? Are you going to
9 kill the bad insects?

10 MR. SAM WEAVER: Again, what are some bad
11 insects?

12 MR. DWAYNE WIENRANK: I just said, I said
13 grasshoppers, aphids.

14 MR. JAMES JONES: Mosquitos, flies.

15 MR. DWAYNE WIENRANK: I just got done
16 saying, you have to have the data in your solar
17 energy site. I've never been to -- evidently you
18 want me to go to your solar energy sites and figure
19 out how many insects are out there. I'm not getting
20 paid to do that, where you guys are getting paid for
21 this. If you're getting paid you better tell us
22 what's going on, because I get paid for farming.

23 MR. SAM WEAVER: So what I can tell you
24 is we have a vegetative management plan that will be
25 developed for the project, and that will say what

1 type of plants are going to be planted and they will
2 have to stick to that. It's DNR approved. It's
3 largely constituted to promote habitat for
4 pollinators, which to my knowledge are generally
5 good for crop growth, we need pollinators.

6 MR. DWAYNE WIENRANK: But there's got to
7 be something else besides pollinators out there.
8 You just can't -- pollinators can't say, okay, this
9 is our domain and nobody else can come in, that
10 ain't the way it works.

11 MR. SAM WEAVER: Then regarding, you
12 know, mosquitos are one you mentioned. I have no
13 idea what the plans are, so there are storm water
14 retention ponds on the site, and I guess do you --
15 it might be in a plan about those will be treated
16 for mosquitos or others pests or anything, but this
17 will all be addressed in the EA as I work on it.

18 We don't have all the information right
19 now, we're developing it. So that's something I can
20 work on. I can look at typical insect communities
21 that are found in solar farms, typical insect
22 communities that are associated with the different
23 seed mixes and then we can address what the plans
24 are to treat the vegetation, treat the insects,
25 treat any wildlife that are present on the site.

1 MR. DWAYNE WIENRANK: So as an
2 environmental assessment by your firm, do you look
3 at this with a fine tooth comb, like you do a single
4 individual?

5 MR. SAM WEAVER: I think typically EAs
6 don't go down to potential species based on seed
7 mixes, but I'm happy to do it. I can take a look at
8 whatever seed mix we have proposed to use for the
9 site. I can take that, I can look at the species, I
10 can go in and I can try and figure out what inspect
11 species it might promote, and we can figure out what
12 might be there based on that. I'm happy to do that.

13 MR. DWAYNE WIENRANK: Good enough.

14 MR. SAM WEAVER: Please come down.

15 MR. KEVIN SCHETTLER: Kevin Schettler,
16 that's K-e-v-i-n S-c-h-e-t-t-l-e-r.

17 I'm in a wind tract already and I've got
18 a question on the acres. I don't remember, it was
19 roughly 2,000 acres or 1,900, but you only utilize
20 1,500 or 1,400. Why do you need all the extra
21 acres? The turbine project I'm on, they didn't take
22 any more acres than they needed. That's about all.

23 MR. TOM KARAS: I appreciate the
24 question. Extra acreage is used a number of
25 different ways. For instance, the access roads that

1 are within the site, they are counted as acreage for
2 the extra. We need to have space at the end of each
3 row for tractors to be able to mow through and turn
4 around, there's space between the fence and the
5 equipment. That's extra acreage.

6 We've got acreage that does have to be
7 used for parking, storing of materials at times and
8 just the general setbacks we have to meet. So it's
9 not all a hundred percent usable, correct.

10 MS. MALORY FRITZ: Hi, my name is Malory
11 Fritz, M-a-l-o-r-y F-r-i-t-z.

12 I apologize, I might get emotional.

13 My husband and I are landowners within
14 the map of this project. We are one of, not trying
15 to offend anybody, one of six young families within
16 the map of this project, and by that I mean
17 approximately 30 and under.

18 We bought our home with the intention of
19 living there for the rest of our lives. This is
20 threatening that. You might not understand that
21 because this is your job. I understand that.

22 Through this whole process I have done a
23 lot of Googling, as I'm sure everybody in this room
24 has, and I found some of the sites that have come up
25 on land value, home value, when solar panels have

1 been put up near their homes. The one that I found
2 and that was referenced at a previous meeting that
3 we had gone to that was not hosted by you, it was
4 purely an informational meeting, was from
5 CohnResnick, and they referenced six different solar
6 farms in these three or four different states.

7 They reference a 134 acre farm by
8 Indianapolis, Indiana; a 56 acre farm outside of
9 Porter County, Indiana; a 13 acre farm outside of
10 Madison County, Indiana; 160 acre solar farm outside
11 of LaSalle County, Illinois. The only one in
12 Minnesota was outside of North Branch, Minnesota,
13 that is the biggest one that they referenced, which
14 was 1,000 acres, and the other one they referenced
15 was outside of Lapeer, Michigan, which is a total of
16 370 acres.

17 This study does show that land values and
18 home values don't decrease. This study shows that
19 they might increase. But we're talking the biggest
20 project that they do any sort of research on is a
21 thousand acres, we're doubling that.

22 Truthfully, I don't know how they feel in
23 Indiana and in Illinois and in North Branch, but I
24 can tell you in Nobles County, and judging by the
25 amount of people in this room, nobody wants it here.

1 We are just normal people trying to live
2 our lives, and most of them are trying to farm to
3 make their living. And while you're not taking a
4 lot of their farm land, because I know who the
5 landowners are, there are not very many of them in
6 this room, you're decreasing the values of property
7 by adding these. If these solar panels expand,
8 which we've been told they won't know, we know
9 that's not going to be the truth, let's be real.
10 Nobody is going to want to buy their land, because
11 why would they?

12 I guess my other question would possibly
13 be, with this vegetation screening that you're
14 recommending, or saying that it's part of the plan,
15 who makes sure that is still growing in six years,
16 ten years?

17 My husband and I planted about 50 trees
18 last year and every single one of them died, to tell
19 you the truth. I'm not a green thumb. I'm not
20 going to be able to keep these trees alive. We have
21 a fence line of this property within 140 feet of our
22 house.

23 We have solar panels to the east of us,
24 we have solar panels to the west of us across the
25 county road, and we have an access road to the north

1 of us in the field in between our house and our
2 neighbor's house, who happens to be a landowner who
3 has a second home, so he'll never be there.

4 Of the houses within this project,
5 depending on how you want to count within the map of
6 the project, there's about eight to twelve of us
7 that are not landowners, there's six of them that
8 are. And, again, one of the houses sits empty and
9 one of them has a second home that he will be at the
10 entire time. I know this for a fact.

11 I guess, I'm just trying to get a little
12 more information on how this is supposed to benefit
13 us and how -- you say you're community-driven, you
14 say farmer-driven. I see how you're farmer-driven
15 for the farmers that give you their land, but I'm
16 not really seeing how you're working to benefit all
17 these other farmers that are trying to make a
18 living.

19 MR. SAM WEAVER: Do you want to talk a
20 little bit -- specifically in there I heard a
21 question about the vegetation, and who is in charge
22 of maintaining that. So if you guys could maybe
23 give some examples of what you've done in the past
24 on other projects, I think that would be useful.

25 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: So for the vegetative

1 screening portion, we would be happy to work with
2 you in enhancing any screening on our project for
3 you from your residence.

4 MS. MALORY FRITZ: Is this like -- is the
5 vegetative screening on our property or on your
6 property or on the fence lines?

7 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: So I think it's up to
8 you. I mean, we can put it on our side of the
9 fence, but if your property has existing screening
10 we would assess that and we can incorporate that in
11 our project.

12 MS. MALORY FRITZ: My next question, if
13 we put this vegetative screening on our property,
14 does that mean we can't have any say if we're upset
15 about what's happening when the project is being
16 built, because the contract I currently have says I
17 can't be mad about something if I sign it.

18 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: Do you want to speak
19 to that, Tom.

20 MR. TOM KARAS: So we look at screening a
21 number of different ways. Yes, we made an offer to
22 landowners to provide -- to give them control over
23 vegetation, you know, to try and help their own --
24 thinking they know their land better than anybody
25 else.

1 What we've done in the past, as far as
2 screening, and what's interesting about the site
3 here is that most of the homes are older,
4 established homes, where they have had really nice
5 wind breaks and other vegetation already protecting
6 them. So in that instance it's almost good -- I did
7 it on another project earlier today, but to go and
8 stand on your front porch and see where, you know,
9 maybe it's just down your driveway, is going to be
10 your shot that you're going to be seeing, and you've
11 got some nice trees.

12 MS. MALORY FRITZ: You know where I live,
13 you've been there.

14 MR. TOM KARAS: Yep. So it is a piece or
15 parcel by parcel kind of evaluation that can take
16 place. One of the reasons that we have in that
17 agreement you saw was to make these decisions at the
18 near -- at the point where construction starts,
19 where we know exactly where the modules are going to
20 be.

21 If you've got a -- if there's a hill in
22 front or a little rise in front, and we want to find
23 the point that you can see over that, if it's a
24 valley, there isn't much we can do, so it's better
25 to put the vegetation on our side, because anything

1 else you're going to be seeing over the top of it.
2 So it's a case by case basis on trying to come up
3 with the best plan for each landowner.

4 MS. MALORY FRITZ: Unfortunately for us,
5 where we would like trees will encroach on the
6 property that you guys currently have access to.

7 MR. TOM KARAS: Well, we'll have to see
8 where the final fence line is, where it's laid out,
9 you know where the survey marks are and we can look
10 at it at that point.

11 I appreciate that you did a considerable
12 amount of work with the CohnResnick report, and then
13 you asked how is this going to benefit the area, the
14 people in the area.

15 MS. MALORY FRITZ: I understand how it
16 will benefit the county, and I understand how it
17 will benefit the township. I get that.

18 MR. TOM KARAS: Okay.

19 MS. MALORY FRITZ: The one thing, even on
20 your website it pushes that you're very community
21 and neighbor-driven. I don't think many of the
22 neighbors to this project, that have no money being
23 put into their bank accounts, really feel that you
24 guys are neighbor-driven.

25 MR. TOM KARAS: That is your opinion.

1 Thank you.

2 MS. MALORY FRITZ: Thank you.

3 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: One thing. I
4 understand that you may be working -- should the
5 project be permitted you'll be working with the
6 project proposer on maybe some mitigation. I would
7 encourage you to also, if you have ideas, I think
8 you can state very clearly that you don't support
9 the project, right.

10 MS. MALORY FRITZ: Yes.

11 MR. JANEZICH: Should the project go
12 forward, I don't know if you're comfortable saying
13 this, and I don't want to put words in your mouth,
14 but there is an opportunity that if the project goes
15 forward you can draw it on the map and you can say I
16 want trees right here and the Commission can make
17 that happen. I don't know if they'll say yes or no,
18 okay, but it's another avenue for you to get what
19 you want sort of, frankly.

20 MS. MALORY FRITZ: I mean, it kind of
21 does go back to my question, though, if I get these
22 trees put on my property by the developer,
23 Applicant, whatever you want to call them at this
24 point, am I going to then not be able to have any
25 sort of opinion or complaint about something else

1 that may happen down the road on this project?

2 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: So maybe you're like
3 one day I don't like that tree, is that what --

4 MS. MALORY FRITZ: No, more so if
5 something leaches into my well that's in my yard, am
6 I going to be able to have a complaint about it
7 because they put these trees on my property? I'm
8 obviously going to have to sign some sort of
9 contract. The current contract that I have, that I
10 have not signed, says if we sign this and we get
11 this money for vegetation screening, we cannot say
12 anything.

13 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: Right. So I can't
14 speak to a private contract between you and the
15 landowner, and frankly most people don't want the
16 government involved in their private contracts.

17 MS. MALORY FRITZ: I agree.

18 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: But, you know, if
19 the Commission were to do it, there's five
20 Commissioners and they have all different opinions,
21 we can't guarantee anything to you.

22 MS. MALORY FRITZ: Right.

23 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: But you wouldn't
24 have those conditions if they did that, it would be
25 in the permit.

1 MR. SAM WEAVER: And also, if you do
2 think that there is ground contamination or if you
3 see something happening, like during construction if
4 they come on your property and you didn't give them
5 access or anything along those lines, I can't
6 imagine that any contract would prevent you from
7 going to the PCA, for example, and saying they are
8 exceeding noise, they are polluting, if you can, you
9 know, provide any type of documentation. I am
10 pretty certain that there's no way that there's no
11 way -- it's a private contract and it doesn't let
12 you go to the PCA and other monitoring agencies to
13 say they're not following what they're supposed to
14 based on the permit that they were given.

15 MS. MALORY FRITZ: Sounds good. Thank
16 you, guys.

17 MR. NATHAN RUNKE: Nate Runke, that's
18 N-a-t-e R-u-n-k-e.

19 I'm with the International Union of
20 Operating Engineers, Local 49. So we represent over
21 15,000 heavy equipment operators, mechanics and
22 stationary engineers across Minnesota and the two
23 Dakotas.

24 A good size portion of our members make
25 their living building projects like these, so the

1 main thing for the scoping of this, we always ask
2 that -- their livelihood, you know, they go one
3 project at a time. Sometimes they're able to get
4 that project that's going to be just down the road
5 but most of the time some of them have to travel
6 just based on skill base, what they do. So just let
7 it be factored in when the decision is made that
8 similar to Marcus with the Carpenters, our members
9 make their living through projects like this. So
10 just wanted to be on the EA. Thank you.

11 MR. PHILLIP JONES: Just a couple things.
12 First off, when I was up the last time I asked if it
13 was mandatory that the solar panels get recycled
14 when they're removed from the property. I got head
15 nods but I never got an answer. I'd like that to be
16 on the record.

17 MR. SAM WEAVER: Yes. The Applicant is
18 responsible and has proposed to recycle, I don't
19 know if a specific recycling company was proposed,
20 but they are responsible for recycle and disposing
21 all those panels, yes.

22 MR. PHILLIP JONES: And what makes them
23 do that? What keeps them from just walking away?

24 MR. SAM WEAVER: So it's a condition of
25 the permit that's issued. The condition says that

1 they are responsible for, at the end of the life
2 cycle of the panels, that they are recycled. So if
3 they don't do that they are in violation of their
4 permit. So, yeah, that's why they have to do it.

5 MR. PHILLIP JONES: How are they recycled
6 that benefits the environment?

7 MR. SAM WEAVER: Sorry, I've got my
8 counterpart here that might want to chime in.

9 MS. SUZANNE STEINHAUER: Thank you.
10 Suzanne Steinhauer with the Minnesota Department of
11 Commerce.

12 Sam is correct. There's a permit
13 condition in all wind and solar permits that
14 requires the Applicant, or at that point the
15 Permittee, to prepare a decommissioning plan.
16 There's a draft of their decommissioning plan in the
17 application, which we have not reviewed in detail
18 but we will be.

19 The permit requirement requires the
20 Applicant to remove everything from the site at the
21 end of the project's useful life. It does not
22 have -- I do want to clarify, there is not a
23 specific requirement that it be recycled. The
24 recycling market for -- a lot of the components can
25 be recycled. It's metal. You know, it goes to a

1 metal recycling facility.

2 There is a developing market for
3 recycling of photovoltaic panels, that continues to
4 develop and we're keeping an eye on that over the
5 course of 30 years.

6 As far as the -- in addition to being
7 responsible for physically removing the components
8 of the project, the Applicant has to pay for it.
9 They do that by establishing some sort of financial
10 assurance and identifying a beneficiary, that starts
11 in year ten and needs to be fully funded and is
12 reviewed every five years and needs to be fully
13 funded before 30 years. It varies from project to
14 project depending on what they're doing with the
15 power and how they're selling it. So that's the
16 general outline.

17 MR. PHILLIP JONES: So if the company
18 goes bankrupt it's not funded to take out.

19 MS. SUZANNE STEINHAUER: No. The
20 Department, this was probably ten years ago, had a
21 working group including representatives of local
22 governments, representatives from developers, and
23 there is general agreement that for the first, let's
24 say ten years of the project, if the project is
25 constructed and they have an interchange to the

1 transmission system there's value. So somebody is
2 going to buy that project of the developer goes
3 under. They still -- and that then new party would
4 be responsible. So that's one of the -- the
5 decommissioning fund is fully funded before the end
6 of the project, but there is general agreement it
7 does need to be fully funded at the beginning.

8 MR. PHILLIP JONES: It does have to be
9 fully funded?

10 MS. SUZANNE STEINHAUER: Yes.

11 MR. PHILLIP JONES: At the beginning of
12 the project?

13 MS. SUZANNE STEINHAUER: No. It does not
14 need the fully funded at the beginning of the
15 project. The financial assurance mechanism, which
16 has to identify a beneficiary, which are not the
17 landowners, usually a county, sometimes the
18 Commission, they need to establish that funding
19 generally -- some of them are earlier -- but
20 generally year ten and be fully funded by -- it
21 varies, but maybe by year 20, something like that.

22 MR. PHILLIP JONES: So if something would
23 happen within the first ten years there's a
24 possibility that it's not going to get cleaned up?

25 MS. SUZANNE STEINHAUER: There would

1 still be value in the project and it would be
2 cleaned up, and they're responsible for that.

3 MR. PHILLIP JONES: But there's no
4 assurance that somebody else is going to buy it just
5 because it has value.

6 MS. SUZANNE STEINHAUER: That's a
7 business question I'm going to have to give to the
8 Applicant. I will say that I was surprised that
9 there was general agreement about the value of the
10 project initially. Their operating and maintenance
11 costs are relatively low, it's like a new car,
12 you're spending less. You spend more as the project
13 ages. So there's still value. As people have
14 noticed and talked about tonight, there's concern
15 about lack of transmission, so if the project has
16 access to transmission that's still considered
17 valuable.

18 MR. PHILLIP JONES: Right. But there's
19 no law that says that if all of a sudden within ten
20 years it's determined -- say government subsidies
21 get taken away and the project has zero value, if
22 it's not fully funded, take it down before we start,
23 it's possibly going to sit there and do nothing?

24 MS. SUZANNE STEINHAUER: That's a valid
25 point, and let me think about that, that's not the

1 general consensus that we've heard from local
2 governments.

3 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: If that is a concern
4 of yours, that you think it should be funded sooner,
5 certainly that's something that -- you are saying it
6 right now, right, so you are submitting it. So that
7 is something that the Commission can look at.

8 MR. PHILLIP JONES: That's why we're
9 here.

10 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: Yes. I just want to
11 say that depending on what the Commission does, and
12 I can't guarantee what they do. On any given day
13 they make a decision that is different from that
14 what I thought, sometimes. But they have the
15 opportunity to take your comment and say, yeah, that
16 makes sense, maybe we should require them to be have
17 a bond, a surety bond or whatever, sooner than those
18 ten years.

19 MR. PHILLIP JONES: That is my opinion.

20 MR. JANEZICH: Thank you.

21 MR. PHILLIP JONES: One last thing, CO2
22 levels in the atmosphere, it's no secret, have been
23 rising. How much oxygen does a solar panel create?
24 I think we know the answer. A corn crop converts
25 CO2.

1 MR. SAM WEAVER: There will be a lot of
2 vegetation underneath the solar panels, you saw the
3 progression photos, so usually five through seven
4 it's a fully established community, so there is
5 still going to be photosynthesis occurring, and that
6 is actually something we do CO2 modeling, and that
7 be looked at in the EA, so we will address that.

8 MR. JAMES JONES: I just have one
9 question. How much liability do the landowners in
10 this project hold? It's their property, somebody
11 gets killed on their property, somebody runs off the
12 road, gets killed on their property, how much
13 liability does the landowners hold?

14 MR. TOM KARAS: First time I've got that
15 question. I'm pretty pretty sure that our
16 landowners are absolved of the liability and the
17 liabilities come to the operator of the plant.

18 MR. JAMES JONES: That's if they hit a
19 solar panel, right? You're going to completely, all
20 liability, so if the township supervisor or somebody
21 gets hurt on our road, you guys are going to -- even
22 during this project, let's say, you're a contractor
23 and your project, drops something off, somebody hits
24 it on the road and kills themselves, it's your
25 liability, the landowners hold no liability to

1 whatever goes wrong or goes right out there, right?

2 MR. TOM KARAS: If there's an accident
3 that takes place, having to do with the actions of
4 one of our contractors working on the site, the
5 landowner does not have liability. The contractors
6 carry liability. The operators of the project and
7 the owners carry liability.

8 MR. JAMES JONES: So a deer comes out
9 along your solar fence and runs across and car hits
10 it, rolls and guy gets killed, is that your
11 liability or is that the township's liability or is
12 that the landowner's liability?

13 MR. TOM KARAS: I am not an insurance
14 expert and that's a very interesting question.

15 MR. JAMES JONES: I think landowners
16 should be somewhat liable for what they do with
17 their property.

18 MR. TOM KARAS: Are they liable now?

19 MR. JAMES JONES: I'm liable for my
20 property, you have to be liable for your property.

21 MR. TOM KARAS: Are they liable now for
22 the deer that runs through their corn crop and gets
23 hit on the road?

24 MR. JAMES JONES: They can be. If
25 they've got a blind corner, if they farm too close

1 to the road, if you put your solar panels too close
2 to the road, somebody daydreams along looks at --
3 watching your solar panel and runs off the road,
4 you'd be surprised what people can sue for.

5 I just want to know if the landowners
6 carry any liability in this project. That's all I
7 want to know. Maybe the attorney there can answer.

8 MR. ROD BURKHARD: My name is Rod
9 Burkhard, R-o-d B-u-r-k-h-a-r-d.

10 I've got a question that was brought up
11 before, really never got talked about too much, and
12 that is the setback of these panels from the
13 residence. Am I to understand that that's 150 feet,
14 is that correct?

15 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: Correct.

16 MR. ROD BURKHARD: Who set that distance?
17 Who ever figured out that that might be a healthy
18 distance?

19 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: So we -- we based off
20 of what the county has. The county did have 150
21 foot setbacks from property lines, but in order to
22 meet capacity with our solar facility that we
23 needed, we need to have -- we still want to honor
24 that number, so we're doing 150 feet from
25 residences.

1 MR. ROD BURKHARD: So what you're saying
2 is the panelists are more important the natural
3 freedom that the residents have? Stop and think
4 about this. I can think of several residents in
5 this project that their land is going to be -- in
6 fact, their home is going to be encapsulated with
7 panels. At 150 feet you're saying they've got a 300
8 foot circle to live? That's cruel.

9 MR. SAM WEAVER: So you're proposing --

10 MR. ROD BURKHARD: That is absolutely
11 unacceptable.

12 MR. SAM WEAVER: So you're proposing a
13 farther setback from residences or property lines?

14 MR. ROD BURKHARD: Residences.

15 MR. SAM WEAVER: Gotcha. Is there a
16 number that you think would be more appropriate?

17 MR. ROD BURKHARD: Just as kind of an
18 experiment, I set a 500 foot flag out from the front
19 of our house and went back to the house and looked,
20 and I would say 500 feet is too close.

21 Like I say, I can't imagine that someone
22 came up with a distance like that. That is
23 ridiculous, and when these guys talk about possibly
24 needing screen fencing, you know, with vegetation
25 and stuff. That should absolutely be on the cost of

1 the people putting up this project. They're the
2 people that are putting all this artificial panels
3 and stuff out there.

4 People that live out in the country, we
5 live out there for a certain reason and that's so we
6 can enjoy nature, so we can have our freedoms and
7 stuff, so we can see our sunrises and sunsets. 150
8 feet is absolutely an insult, and I don't know who's
9 going to make that call. The people that are going
10 to put up the project, they're going to push these
11 panels as close to residences as they can, simply
12 because it's their pocket, it's more important than
13 the welfare of the residents that have to live with
14 this.

15 MR. SAM WEAVER: So your proposal for
16 increased setback is certainly something that will
17 make it's way into the record. It is something that
18 the Commission will hear.

19 MR. ROD BURKHARD: Like I say, 150 feet
20 is totally unacceptable. May I ask for a show of
21 hands?

22 MR. SAM WEAVER: You can. It won't
23 substantially alter the record.

24 MR. ROD BURKHARD: Just to prove a point.
25 Does anybody else here think that setback should be

1 larger than 150 feet?

2 MR. SAM WEAVER: I won't count, but I
3 will say a substantial part of the room has raised
4 their hands indicating their support for farther
5 setbacks.

6 MR. ROD BURKHARD: And then the same
7 thing with the property values, you guys kind of
8 sidestepped that.

9 What can you do to perhaps help the
10 people that their property values will be affected
11 by this project?

12 And I know, excuse my language, I know
13 damn well, if you have somebody's house surrounded
14 with only 350 feet or 300 feet of panels around you,
15 you're going to have a hard time giving that
16 residence away, let alone selling it.

17 I'm sure any of you sitting up here would
18 not agree to live in conditions like that, correct?

19 MR. SAM WEAVER: What I can say is, we've
20 talked about mitigation measures such as screening
21 but if there are any other mitigation measures that
22 you can think of kind of the top of your head --

23 MR. ROD BURKHARD: For the screening.

24 MR. SAM WEAVER: It could be a outside
25 the screening.

1 MR. ROD BURKHARD: Tom, does your company
2 plan on buying the screening, installing the
3 screening, taking care of the screening, maintaining
4 the screenings?

5 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: Yes, I can say yes.

6 MR. ROD BURKHARD: That's a definite yes?

7 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: That's a definite
8 yes.

9 MR. TOM KARAS: If it's on our property.

10 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: If it's on our
11 property.

12 MR. ROD BURKHARD: What about the Fritz's
13 situation, they don't have the space. It's going to
14 have to be out in the neighboring field.

15 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: When it comes to that
16 we will definitely assess it.

17 MR. ROD BURKHARD: I mean, you guys are
18 only going to get one chance to do this right.

19 And another question that Dwayne brought
20 up. Drain tile. This country is full of drainage
21 tile. It's the prairie potholes. We've got tile in
22 spots that don't even know it's there, and when you
23 guys go start pounding out piles in the ground, you
24 are going to destroy many, many drainage tiles. In
25 fact, I would bet most fields, after you're through,

1 the drainage system in that field will not work.

2 MR. SAM WEAVER: So --

3 MR. ROD BURKHARD: When you start
4 pounding these piles in the ground, you can't tell
5 me that you're going to notice that going through a
6 tile. There's no way. And you won't know that
7 damage is done until probably two, three, four years
8 later. Who is going to pay for it?

9 MR. SAM WEAVER: So I do want to say
10 thank you, again, for bringing up drainage tile, but
11 I do think that the Applicants have, you might not
12 be happy with them saying they can tell it's going
13 to happen, they're going to fix it. I understand
14 you've probably been through situations where people
15 have gotten through it and not fixed it.

16 MR. ROD BURKHARD: Absolutely.

17 MR. SAM WEAVER: All we can do is tell
18 them that if and when it happens they have to fix it
19 at this point.

20 MR. ROD BURKHARD: PUC, so can you make
21 wind power people fix tile that they've destroyed?
22 I know that's a question not --

23 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: No, no, I think
24 that's totally appropriate, and without having the
25 permit in front of me, a sample permit in front of

1 me, I can't guarantee, but I can tell you with solar
2 they are required to repair it.

3 MR. ROD BURKHARD: What can you do to
4 make them fix it? Nothing.

5 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: Well, we issue the
6 permit.

7 MR. PHILLIP JONES: Once they have the
8 permit what's the big deal?

9 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: The Commission can
10 reconsider a permit.

11 MR. ROD BURKHARD: The point I'm getting
12 is, two, three, four, five years down the road
13 there's nothing that we can do to make these guys
14 fix that tile.

15 Our land is in a pretty special
16 situation, where all of our land, which is where we
17 live, it's only 30 acres, but all that property
18 drains to the east, all that property drains through
19 a field that will be full of animals. I know them
20 tile will get busted. So two, three, four, five
21 years down the road when we have back up on our
22 property and we have water damage, whose going to
23 pay for that, and how are we going to get these guys
24 to fix this tile. This land is going to be full of
25 cables and stuff. They are going to run a tile plow

1 through there to fix anything.

2 I mean, we're talking the real world
3 here. I mean, these cables are going in the ground,
4 correct?

5 MR. TOM KARAS: Some are.

6 MR. ROD BURKHARD: How are you going to
7 plow and fix the tile after that? You're not going
8 to plow through those cables. I mean, I can't
9 imagine that somebody hasn't brought these questions
10 up before. Dwayne, you know, brought up a very good
11 point about these and you guys sort of sidestepped
12 that.

13 MR. TOM KARAS: Having fixed tile in the
14 past, we don't dredge in a new line. We're coming
15 in with a mini X and making it --

16 MR. ROD BURKHARD: No, no.

17 MR. TOM KARAS: I'm sorry, that's the
18 industry standard that we do to fix tile and it's
19 worked.

20 MR. ROD BURKHARD: How --

21 MR. TOM KARAS: Where it's broken is
22 where we fix it.

23 MR. ROD BURKHARD: How are we going to
24 get you to come out there and fix it after?

25 MR. TOM KARAS: As explained earlier, we

1 are just as motivated to make that fix because it
2 effects the foundation, the structural stability of
3 our product. Our ability to make energy that is the
4 revenue that we're all after, that tile break
5 impacts us as well. We are just as motivated to fix
6 that tile.

7 MR. ROD BURKHARD: On what kind of a time
8 frame, are we talking two months, three months, a
9 year down the line, how long are we going to have to
10 put up with this?

11 MR. JEREMY DUEHR: So there is, as part
12 of the site permit there is a complaint process, and
13 so if you do have a complaint, it's something that
14 happens, you can file a complaint. If a complaint
15 is filed it has to get reported to the Commission on
16 a monthly basis, and if the complaint is not
17 resolved the commission can take action. Like Craig
18 said, they can reconsider the permit. They can
19 revoke the permit. They can put additional
20 conditions on the permittee.

21 So the complaint process does have teeth
22 and that is the process that is followed, and in
23 order to continue to operate the project they still
24 have to have a site permit. So if it is revoked
25 because they're not doing what they're required to

1 do, there are teeth there to make sure that they do
2 what they're supposed to do.

3 MR. ROD BURKHARD: How are the non
4 participating landowners going to get paid for the
5 damage, for the water damage caused by the backup
6 because of damaged tile.

7 MR. JEREMY DUEHR: Again, that can be
8 resolved through the complaint process.

9 MR. ROD BURKHARD: Can be, but you're not
10 making any promises, though?

11 MR. JEREMY DUEHR: No.

12 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: If there is language
13 that you would like the Commission to consider that
14 is more specific than what is in the permit, and
15 I'll show you the permit language, just so you can
16 see it --

17 MR. ROD BURKHARD: Something needs to be
18 put in that language that guarantees landowners will
19 be reimbursed and this will get fixed.

20 MR. JANEZICH: I will show you the
21 language, I don't want to read it -- I mean, I could
22 read it for everybody, but I don't know that you'd
23 be wanting to hear me read. I can show you the
24 language, and if the language is not -- if it
25 doesn't do what you think it should do, you can

1 submit language to the Commission to consider.

2 Again, I can't guarantee you they'll do it or not do
3 it, but at least it will be in the record for them
4 to consider.

5 MR. ROD BURKHARD: Okay. I apologize for
6 some of my negativity here, but I've dealt with the
7 wind power company for several years now. It
8 started out the same way, all kinds of promises,
9 when it actually come time to get things fixed, you
10 can't get them guys to do that. When you guys are
11 going to tell me three, four, five years down the
12 road that you're going to take care of all kinds of
13 problems, it sounds really, really good now, but to
14 actually get it done later, I don't believe you.

15 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: What I would suggest
16 going forward, dealing with wind turbines, it is
17 permitted by the state, and I don't know a specific
18 project or how many megawatts, I would suggest you
19 file a complaint with the Commission. If you're not
20 getting the type of response you'd like from whoever
21 owns the project.

22 MR. ROD BURKHARD: When you say to file a
23 complaint --

24 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: With the commission.

25 MR. ROD BURKHARD: I've got another --

1 it's really not a question, but dealing with this,
2 we've got some wonderful county commissioners that
3 know a hell of a lot more about what's better for
4 the residents and the welfare and this town than the
5 PUC. Why can't they make more decisions? Their
6 hands are tied.

7 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: Sure.

8 MR. ROD BURKHARD: That makes absolutely
9 no sense to me.

10 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: As you can imagine,
11 I didn't write the law. But what I will say is,
12 again, we take comments from counties, cities and
13 landowners very seriously. So if there is something
14 the county would like they should put it in writing
15 or verbally come here at the next hearing in a
16 couple months and please let us know.

17 MR. ROD BURKHARD: I mean, they're here,
18 they help us, they are a very good resource and
19 somebody from the cities come, I'm sorry, you guys
20 are probably the greatest guys in the world, but you
21 don't know what it's like here.

22 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: Sir, I'm from the
23 Iron Range and I can relate.

24 MR. ROD BURKHARD: Thank you for this
25 opportunity.

1 MS. LORETTA HALBUR: Hello, I'm Loretta
2 Halbur, L-o-r-e-t-t-a, H-a-l-b-u-r.

3 I'm the Nobles County Coordinator. I've
4 been working with National Grid Renewables since
5 October in getting them to understand the county
6 tile and all of the requirements that we have to
7 follow under Minnesota Statute 103E.

8 This project is going to impact three of
9 our drainage systems. We have County ditch 11,
10 which was established in 1912, it encompasses about
11 1,500 acres and is valued at \$1.1 million.

12 Judicial ditch 11 was established in 1919
13 and it encompasses 11,900 acres, it's valued at \$9.2
14 million.

15 Judicial ditch 8 was established in 1921
16 and it encompasses 11,600 acres and is valued at
17 \$19.7 million.

18 This project is going to have a direct
19 impact on 831 of those acres between CD 11, JD 11B
20 and JD 8.

21 When we talk about drainage we also talk
22 about the benefits. These benefits are based on a
23 comparison of the conditions prior to the
24 installation of the drainage system, to what it is
25 today after the construction of the system.

1 Special assessors use a variety of
2 technology and tools to determine the increase in
3 market value for a piece of land within a drainage
4 system. With this understanding the Summit Lakes
5 Solar Project will have an impact to agricultural
6 ground that has an increased market value of \$1.12
7 million.

8 Sometimes land within the drainage system
9 could be non benefitting, when we see any changes in
10 land use because of certain restrictions, permanent
11 programs, certain things like this. Typically we
12 see it in CRP, rim ground, that kind of thing. That
13 land will then convert to non benefitting acres,
14 where we will see that market value change, that
15 increase in market value change to zero.

16 In this case the Summit Lakes Solar
17 Project could cause the system benefits to decrease
18 because of the change in land use.

19 For each system CD11 would see -- they'd
20 have benefits affected by the solar projects of
21 \$134,000. JD11B has 590 acres affected, the land
22 benefits affected by the solar project are \$887,000.
23 Judicial ditch 8 has 110 acres valued at \$103,000.

24 So that is one of the impacts that this
25 project could have on the drainage systems from a

1 property value standpoint.

2 MR. SAM WEAVER: So those last numbers
3 that you just listed, were those increase in values
4 or decrease in values?

5 MS. LORETTA HALBUR: Increase in values.
6 That is what -- the land within those systems,
7 that's what those benefits are assessed at. We use
8 those benefits to understand how much we can charge
9 for -- how much we can allocate for repairs and
10 maintenance. We also use that as a basis for what
11 we can use for future improvements as well.

12 It's a very important number when we talk
13 about the maintenance and repairs that the county
14 has to statutorily -- we are responsible for.

15 One of the things when we do drainage
16 system projects is we typically have a drainage
17 engineer, which National Grid Renewables has hired.
18 The engineer that they're using is one we have used.
19 One thing that we have to do with our drainage
20 projects is we have to complete modeling and
21 hydrological studies in order to understand the
22 impact that improvements or repairs could have on
23 downstream waters.

24 I think it would be wise for this project
25 to have to model, to have to go through that

1 modeling process, to look at the hydrological flows
2 between current conditions and future conditions for
3 different peak flow events, peak velocity, peak
4 elevations, and volume, such as two, five, ten, 25,
5 50 and 100 year storm events, because that is the
6 standard that we have to follow when we submit our
7 projects to the DNR for their review.

8 In watershed districts they also have to
9 submit those to the Board of Soil and Water
10 Resources as well. So I think they should be held
11 to the same standards since they be affecting our
12 county tile.

13 So we have been working together on
14 trying to figure out the best plan to accommodate
15 the county tile within the solar project area.

16 One of the things we've talked about is
17 setback distance, which a number of the landowners
18 have mentioned today. We have gone back and forth
19 on the setback distance. Ideally the county would
20 like to see 100 to 200 feet setbacks from center
21 line. National Grid Renewables has countered with a
22 50 or 75 foot from center line.

23 We would still love to see that 100 to
24 200 feet, because as we dig we want to make sure
25 those trenches are safe for the contractors. We

1 need ample space to repair that tile as we are
2 statutorily obligated to, and then in the case any
3 of these systems are improved, which these systems
4 are over a hundred years old, it could easily happen
5 in the next 10 to 20 years, if the landowner so
6 chooses. We need that space in order to move that
7 tile possibly, in order to capture the most water
8 that we can.

9 Ultimately any decisions with the
10 drainage are the county's decision. The county
11 serves as the drainage authority, they are the
12 drainage authority board, so any setback distance
13 will be decided by them, which could impact the
14 total amount of panels that the project could have.

15 In some cases a setback distance doesn't
16 work, so under Minnesota Statute 103E. 227 National
17 Grid Renewables could reroute an abandoned old
18 county tile.

19 After reviewing all of those things, they
20 did include planned reroutes on their initial
21 concept layout. They did give me the chance to
22 review those with their PUC application, and I do
23 want to submit for the public record just the things
24 that I noticed when I reviewed that.

25 The first thing being three tile branches

1 proposed for abandonment would no longer serve the
2 upstream landowners. These areas are the northeast
3 corridor of Summit Lake 22 and the southeast
4 corridor lake 23, near the battery storage area.
5 This is explicitly against statute. Those reroutes
6 cannot impact those upstream landowners and deprive
7 them of benefits that they are so duly and legally
8 able to use with their system. So accommodating
9 those upstream landowners is extremely important.

10 Many of the reroutes and connections with
11 old tile rely on 90 degree bends around property
12 lines -- or corners of properties. These bends can
13 reduce hydrologic capacity and/or fail during very
14 large rain events. We've had three FEMA
15 designated -- we've had three FEMA designated events
16 in the past six years. I have concerns that with
17 the increase in intensity in grade and heavy rain
18 events that even the vegetation wouldn't be able to
19 establish, because we probably will get another one
20 in the next three years.

21 My suggestion is that bends and
22 connections should be swapped for more round and
23 curves, using 45 or 22 and a half degree bends.

24 They also straightened long stretches of
25 tile, this can reduce the hydraulic capacity. The

1 tile follows the natural topography of the land to
2 catch that water and to avoid cutting through large
3 hills, which some of the reroutes do. Some of those
4 reroutes are planned through large hills. If those
5 stay then we need to make sure that those setbacks
6 are that 100 to 200 foot wide setbacks from center
7 line so we have the ability to make safe trenches
8 for whoever is repairing that tile.

9 Based on that initial concept layout, and
10 I do want to state that National Grid Renewables is
11 working with a trained and very experienced drainage
12 engineer to figure all of this out. However, if we
13 were just going off the initial concept layout I can
14 guarantee you the drainage authority board would not
15 approve the reroutes and abandonments as laid out in
16 that plan.

17 I think there would also be plenty of
18 discussion from the benefitting landowners about
19 setbacks as well.

20 So with all that said, I do look forward
21 to National Grid Renewables submitting their
22 petition for reroute and abandonment so we can get
23 that process started so we can start looking at all
24 those things.

25 I look forward to looking at all those

1 and starting the process so the benefitting
2 landowners can be involved in that.

3 MR. TOM KARAS: We'll also be in touch.

4 MS. KATHY HENDERSCHIEDT: My name is
5 Kathy Heinderschiedt, K-a-t-h-y
6 H-e-n-d-e-r-s-c-h-i-e-d-t.

7 I'm a Nobles County Planning and Zoning
8 Administrator. I have been working with National
9 Grid Renewables, we've had conversations about this
10 proposed project.

11 I would very much request that they be
12 held to the Nobles County ordinance of 150 foot
13 setback from property lines. As you've heard from
14 the people today, there's a lot of concern being 150
15 feet from their houses. To give a little bit of
16 perspective, counting tile here tonight, this room
17 is approximately 100 feet long, just to give you a
18 visual perspective of what their concerns are.

19 I really think the human condition needs
20 to be considered here on this project. I do know
21 that there is one family on the northern side of the
22 village of Reading that does have a special needs
23 child. Have they considered what this project or
24 proposal may do to this special needs child? I
25 don't know the degree, but has that conversation

1 been had. Is there going to be potential
2 repercussions for that child with all of this going
3 on.

4 I feel like the project need is kind of
5 choking out the village of Reading, because it's
6 surrounding the village of Reading. We encourage
7 our people to live in the rural areas, and we'd like
8 to see these smaller communities continue to grow or
9 develop or even, as it is a very senior village,
10 younger families move in to these areas. With all
11 of this proposal going on that may not happen. I
12 think we need to be considerate of that fact.

13 It was discussed earlier about, you know,
14 the visual effects and the proposal of trees to help
15 shield some of this from the non participating
16 landowners. I think that they need to have that
17 conversation with those people and that these visual
18 effects should go on the project, not on the
19 landowners, because you heard from Ms. Fritz earlier
20 this evening. I have not looked at their property,
21 but I'm pretty sure they have a very small piece of
22 property and the expectation would be that if the
23 trees were put -- or any sort of screening were put
24 on their property, they're losing their land and
25 their ability to enjoy their acreage.

1 So I think that, looking at from the
2 health, safety and welfare, which is what my job
3 entails, it would be a very good thing to look at
4 any type of screening be required to be on the
5 project property, not on non participating
6 landowners.

7 Listening to these people again this
8 evening, language from the PUC stating that if
9 there's any repairs for future issues of projects
10 from specifically tiled, that there be language or a
11 condition on their permit stating that for the 30
12 years of this project, should an issue arise from a
13 neighboring landowner that something was destroyed,
14 that the project owner is responsible for those
15 repairs and/or reimbursements to people that may
16 have a repercussion. We have a rain event and they
17 may not be on the project but neighboring, and if it
18 creates backup onto their property and some sort of
19 damage to their structures, I think it's important
20 that the PUC take that into consideration.

21 Then I have a question to the project.
22 Why are you proposing for the -- there's a proposed
23 expansion to the substation, as well as the battery
24 storage system. Why is that being proposed to go
25 closer to the people that are choosing -- out of the

1 village of Reading why are you not going north?

2 You're creating -- we're talking about human
3 condition, you're creating further impact.

4 Why are you not proposing this to go to
5 the north side of the substation, instead of going
6 south and closer to the village of Reading. It's a
7 substation, you can add or expand any direction you
8 want. Why are you choosing to go towards the
9 village rather than go north and away from these
10 people?

11 MR. SAM WEAVER: Do you want to respond
12 to anything regarding the siting of the BESS unit?

13 MR. TOM KARAS: Kathy, can you show me on
14 the map. It is on the northern most part of the
15 parcel that we have. Xcel is not going to sell us
16 property.

17 MS. KATHY HENDERSCHIEDT: Have you tried?

18 MR. TOM KARAS: Yes. I'm assuming they
19 want to keep it for their future expansion, but
20 we've moved it up there to this as far to the north
21 as we can. Whether, when we get the final layout,
22 there's this little triangle to the west, because of
23 the way that the lot is shaped, we may be able to
24 squeeze some more up there but we're totally aware
25 of to minimize or impact our neighbors to the south.

1 MS. KATHY HENDERSCHIEDT: Because, you
2 know, there's already a low level hum from the
3 substation, now you're proposing to increase the
4 substation, which could potentially increase that
5 noise, and from my understanding there is a sound
6 effect from that battery storage system as well.

7 So I'm just concerned that, you know, the
8 placement of that being closer to the residents and
9 village of Reading could also have an impact for
10 people's health, safety and welfare, with that being
11 the condition again.

12 MR. SAM WEAVER: So noise is something
13 that we cover, there's a minimum allowed threshold
14 for residences, and so there would be noise modeling
15 done for that, and a lot of what we do now is we put
16 a condition in the permit that states that noise
17 needs to be monitored during and post construction
18 as well, to make sure that they're still meeting
19 that threshold. That is certainly something -- a
20 condition that can be in the permit.

21 MS. KATHY HENDERSCHIEDT: Thank you.

22 MR. GENE METZ: Good evening, Gene Metz,
23 G-e-n-e M-e-t-z.

24 I'm also a Nobles County Commissioner.
25 I'm kind of careful about what role I'm taking here

1 tonight.

2 I've been a Commissioner for 13 years and
3 I've been involved in renewable energy all those 13
4 years, counting at the regional level, state level.
5 We've worked with the Commissioners on transmission,
6 siting and all that type of thing.

7 But the biggest thing I get asked is why
8 can't the county set our setbacks, and we can on the
9 small projects, you know, the non commercial
10 projects we have setbacks. But we have no say on
11 commercial grade setbacks, and I'm basically going
12 to ask the Commission that they seriously have to
13 look at this. These things are getting real big.
14 Mention was talked about, you know, comparing the
15 livestock facilities, the bigger the units get the
16 further back they have to be from somebody. So
17 being we don't have control we're really leaving
18 this up to the Public Utilities Commission, and it
19 doesn't seem that there's consistency from project
20 to project.

21 We always hoped that we could maybe solve
22 this with legislature, and a bill came up this year
23 to have all setbacks at 500 feet for wind or solar,
24 and these things are -- if you think it's
25 contentious here, I'll go to the state legislature

1 and talk about energy, it's not any better.

2 That's, from my point, that's about the
3 only way we can solve this, is the Public Utilities
4 agrees to something a little bit stricter or if the
5 petitioners would -- we have what we call a good
6 neighbor policy. When we put up a livestock
7 facility we're supposed to talk to the neighbors and
8 kind of work with them. So I would implore them to
9 maybe look at extending the setbacks somewhat, if
10 they can, or the Public Utilities scrutinize this a
11 little bit closer. Thank you.

12 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: Sir, the Commission
13 will read the record, but also I will take that back
14 to them, that conversation about policy, public
15 policy, it's above my pay grade. But I certainly
16 will bring that back to the Commissioners.

17 MR. GENE METZ: The thing I forgot to say
18 is, and I was sitting next to one of my fellow
19 commissioners, and said where would you put it and
20 he said 300 and I said 500. It's all over the
21 board.

22 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: Right. And I would
23 encourage you, to the extent it's possible, if you
24 want to speak as an individual you can certainly
25 make comments, but if you can get the board together

1 and they can come to a number that they want to
2 submit something to the Commission for
3 consideration, until there's a policy fixed to your
4 satisfaction I'd suggest you submit that.

5 MR. GENE METZ: So these comments tonight
6 are from me, because we haven't talked about that.
7 I have to be careful about that.

8 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: Completely
9 understand.

10 MS. JUDY CHRISTIANS: Judy Christians,
11 J-u-d-y C-h-r-i-s-t-i-a-n-s.

12 I am here to speak on my experiences on
13 the wind turbine side. With tile, we've had trouble
14 with tile for the last five years that we've had
15 wind turbines by us, so make sure you get tile
16 language in there.

17 Last year we farmed a farm that we lost,
18 out of 140 acres we lost over 30 acres, and it's
19 probably due to tile damage. I've been talking to
20 the people from the Nobles too and they don't jump
21 up and volunteer that they're going to fix tile,
22 they knew there was a problem but they didn't
23 contact myself as renters or anyone else. And I've
24 been trying to get crop payment from them for the
25 last like three years for damage they had years

1 prior. So that is just one thing that I would like
2 to have in there.

3 Setbacks, also, we have wind turbines by
4 us. The setback is not far enough. We can hear the
5 wind turbines, especially when it's foggy or a
6 little bit frosty out. Plus we get flash on our
7 place, and we had no say in where that turbine went
8 to. We farm around the turbines and they made a
9 huge mess. Honestly, we're still dealing with it,
10 it's over five years later. He's on speed dial on
11 my phone. I don't know if he's reporting it to the
12 PUC or not. I haven't looked up the reports lately
13 to see if he is. So we've got tile trouble there
14 and I've got tile trouble with my mom's ground too
15 where they put two turbines. So I'd like to make
16 sure that language is in there strong and for years
17 to come.

18 Also, I have a question for these folks.
19 I'm not by these panels, but what is the sound going
20 to be like? You know, you said that the panels will
21 follow the wind. Is it going to be like a wind
22 tunnel for these poor folks that are living there,
23 and is this BESS battery system, is there going to
24 be sound from that? I was told from the county
25 there is no noise ordinance.

1 We have a wind turbine by us that they
2 tried to fix, that should be decommissioned. It
3 hasn't run in years, they tried to fix it. We had
4 like 90 decibels at our house. I called the county,
5 there is no noise ordinance in Nobles County. Thank
6 God they couldn't get it fixed, because I was
7 calling my attorney, I had him on speed, I talked to
8 an attorney I don't want to, but how much noise is
9 there going to be from this?

10 These panels are going -- we have wind
11 turbines so we know the wind blows often, but we
12 also see that the wind turbines are getting turned
13 off, because we're right in the middle of it. I
14 mean, the last week we've probably seen ten to 15
15 turned off at a time, so the line has to be full.
16 How much noise is there going to be from panels and
17 from the BESS system that's going to be there.

18 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: So we are
19 coordinating -- we're doing some sound modeling for
20 both the BESS and the inverters from those solar
21 facilities, because that's where most of the noise
22 is produced, is from the inverters from the solar.
23 So they will be produce some sound, but it will be
24 under the state regulated noise requirement.

25 MS. JUDY CHRISTIANS: And what is that?

1 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: I believe it's 50
2 DBA.

3 MS. JUDY CHRISTIANS: 50, so would you
4 want to live next to that? I mean, I live next to
5 turbines, I know the sound I get, and honestly I
6 wouldn't want 50 constantly. It would be very
7 annoying. So I hope you can move that.

8 You talked about vegetation for these
9 poor folks that are going to be in the middle. I
10 mean, how long does it take a tree to grow? How
11 long does it take for a tree to grow for these poor
12 folks?

13 I mean, you talk about this stuff, but
14 from my experience with the wind turbine people,
15 they talked big. When they came through my folks
16 signed up, honestly every day we say we really,
17 really wish we wouldn't have done this. It's too
18 late now but it's a huge pain where the lines go
19 through, there's compactin, lots and lots of
20 compaction going on, and we're still dealing with it
21 years later.

22 They want to cross the creek, where the
23 (inaudible) lives. We can't even touch the creek
24 but they could. So I don't know how that -- if the
25 PUC knew they went across the creek or not.

1 But just my comments from my experiences
2 on the wind turbine side, questions that I know will
3 come up with a similar project like this.

4 Honestly setbacks, the longer the better.
5 We're at least 1,300 feet from the closest turbine,
6 and if it was a mile away that would make me a lot
7 happier.

8 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: To the extent you're
9 having issues with the wind turbines in your area,
10 whether it be drainage tile, whatever the issue may
11 be, if you're not getting resolution working through
12 the company that owns the project and it is
13 permitted by the Minnesota Public Utilities
14 Commission.

15 MS. JUDY CHRISTIANS: And it is.

16 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: I would suggest,
17 there is a complaint process and I suggest you do
18 that.

19 MS. JUDY CHRISTIANS: Will that process
20 be, you know, I can get my ...

21 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: Yes.

22 MS. JUDY CHRISTIANS: I'm getting really
23 tired of calling Tim Martins up and talking to him.

24 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: There is a public
25 process for sure.

1 MS. JUDY CHRISTIANS: Do you have a
2 business card?

3 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: I have one in my bag
4 and I'll give one to you.

5 MS. JUDY CHRISTIANS: That's just my
6 experiences from the wind turbine side. People make
7 a lot of promises and it's not been stellar, let's
8 put it that way.

9 MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: And I can't
10 guarantee what resolution the Commission will
11 provide, it's up to them frankly. But putting it on
12 the radar, it's got to be helpful.

13 MS. JUDY CHRISTIANS: Like I said, the
14 further away the better. The vegetation, the
15 screen, it takes time for trees to grow. You start
16 out with a five foot tree, I've got trees in my
17 front yard, in case you don't know it, ash bore is
18 here, the people with the nice groves, poof, they're
19 gone. So the trees that you're planning on these
20 people having they're going to be gone. I mean,
21 we're making arrangement at our house, a couple
22 years our grove will be dead. But just that
23 knowledge, just letting you know what I've seen from
24 the other side of town.

25 MS. MALORY FRITZ: Malory Fritz, so this

1 is from your joint application. So this setback
2 thing is going to come around a million times. It
3 says that the setback required for a solar facility
4 is 150 feet, but you're close -- if I'm
5 understanding this correctly and you tell me if I'm
6 wrong, this grid shows that you have a solar rate at
7 the closest in feet is 50 feet from a non
8 participating landowner, is that correct? I don't
9 know if you have a copy of this, but it's on page
10 34. If you want to look it at it you can look at my
11 copy.

12 MR. SAM WEAVER: There's a map over
13 there.

14 MS. MALORY FRITZ: It doesn't tell you
15 where, there's a graph that shows the closest
16 setback for the solar rays and the closest setback
17 for fence line, and it says on here non
18 participating parcels, but I just want to know if
19 that's accurate.

20 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: So the solar rate at
21 50 feet from the parcel line, not houses.

22 MS. MALORY FRITZ: That's what I was
23 wondering, you know, when you see this big graph
24 it's a lot of stuff.

25 MR. TOM KARAS: It's a lot.

1 MS. MALORY FRITZ: And I'm going to be
2 honest, I read your entire application, probably
3 more than once.

4 And then just with the sound that she
5 brought up, is the state standard, is that the MPCA
6 statement?

7 MR. TOM KARAS: Yes.

8 MS. MALORY FRITZ: That's on page 59,
9 this says for residential during daytime hours it
10 says 65 or 60, I don't know the difference in what
11 those are, and for commercial, which is in my
12 opinion this is a commercial project, it's 70 and 65
13 so there's that.

14 One other question, do you want --

15 MR. DUEHR: I'll speak to the sound
16 before you move on. This daytime is the 60 or 65,
17 but then it's more restrictive at night.

18 MS. MALORY FRITZ: Yeah, it is, you're
19 right.

20 MR. JEREMY DUEHR: So usually when they
21 do noise modeling they always go to the more
22 restrictive, and it's not the land use that's
23 producing the noise it's the receptor.

24 MS. MALORY FRITZ: Right.

25 MR. JEREMY DUEHR: So if it's your house

1 it's not commercial, it's residential.

2 MS. MALORY FRITZ: So, yeah, so if
3 residential is the lowest threshold is 50, so that's
4 what you're saying you're going to -- okay.

5 My only other question, the pile driver,
6 says it has 101 decibels of sound, and I know that's
7 a very small portion of what this project is, but it
8 says it's limited to daytime hours, but daytime
9 hours are until ten p.m. I'm 31 years and I go to
10 bed at nine o'clock, 8:30, like is there actual --
11 will you be running a pile driver until ten p.m.
12 some nights, because it's within 150 feet of my
13 house, it's going to be loud.

14 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: So during
15 construction duration it says it can happen all day,
16 from very early till ten p.m. There's certain
17 standards too that we have with our contractors and
18 how often they can work throughout the day.

19 MS. MALORY FRITZ: Okay. I think that
20 was all I had. Thank you, guys.

21 MR. JEREMY DUEHR: One more follow up
22 comment, just to follow up on the MPCA noise rule.
23 So somebody was commenting earlier, Judy, I think
24 you were talking about -- is it Judy or Jody? Judy,
25 you were talking about the county not having a noise

1 standard, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency
2 standard applies statewide.

3 So even in the absence of a county
4 standard that state noise standard applies.

5 MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: You suggested that
6 if I visited one of your sites I would see how much
7 nature was there, correct, do you remember saying
8 that?

9 MR. TOM KARAS: Sure.

10 MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: How many sites do
11 you have?

12 MR. TOM KARAS: I haven't been to all of
13 the National Grid sites. I've got a construction
14 career that was about seven years long and I've
15 probably been to 40 sites and then you go back as an
16 O and M technician, after they've been operating,
17 and that's important because it's after that
18 establishment point. So you see the site in full
19 growth, let's say. So, no, I've been to a number of
20 sites.

21 MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: What is the
22 largest site?

23 MR. TOM KARAS: A hundred megawatts.

24 MS. BAUMHOFNER: In acres.

25 MR. TOM KARAS: Just for general

1 reference, kind of think of five acres per megawatt
2 is just a rough number.

3 MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: And your largest
4 site is 100 megawatt?

5 MR. TOM KARAS: No, that's the largest
6 one I've been to, and it was probably over 700 acres
7 when you put in the periphery and such.

8 MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: So the largest one
9 that you've been to is 700 acres?

10 MR. TOM KARAS: That I've visited after
11 establishment.

12 MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: Wow, this one is
13 quite a bit larger.

14 MR. TOM KARAS: It would be following the
15 same standards as the other sites, so I don't have
16 any expectation that it would be any different.

17 MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: Are these sites in
18 Minnesota or other states?

19 MR. TOM KARAS: Mainly Minnesota.

20 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: We do have sites in
21 Minnesota. I would say that this project is on par
22 with a lot of our other facilities that we are
23 planning.

24 MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: I was wondering
25 which sites he was inviting me to go see. You said

1 I should go to a site and see what it looks like,
2 did you not?

3 MR. TOM KARAS: Certainly. I'd suggest
4 everybody here go on a road trip.

5 MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: I think we should
6 all go. Which site should we go to, which site are
7 we tromping through?

8 MR. TOM KARAS: From here, maybe the
9 closest one of this size would be the Marshall solar
10 project, just to the east of the city of Marshall.

11 MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: Could we talk to
12 some of the neighbors involved?

13 MR. TOM KARAS: I can't say what you can
14 do.

15 MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: Would the
16 neighbors like to speak to us about how they felt
17 about the project, and maybe the neighbors would
18 have some insight to what we should be demanding.

19 MR. TOM KARAS: I don't know.

20 MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: You said I should
21 go see a site so now I'm thinking, hey, which site
22 should I go see.

23 MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: I will say we have
24 operating facilities, one in Illinois and we have
25 actually had our operations and maintenance people

1 giving tours of our solar facilities. So if it is
2 something that is of interest for people we can work
3 it out and talk with our operations and maintenance
4 teams.

5 MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: How big is the
6 Marshall site?

7 MR. TOM KARAS: 80 megawatts.

8 MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: And this --

9 MR. TOM KARAS: This site will be 200
10 megawatts, that one at the time was --

11 MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: How can we arrange
12 a tour of the Marshall site?

13 MR. TOM KARAS: I would talk to the
14 owners.

15 MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: I think it would
16 be relevant.

17 MR. TOM KARAS: Go for it.

18 MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: How do we do that?
19 Do I submit something?

20 MR. SAM WEAVER: That is not something
21 that we can address in the EA or the scoping, but I
22 would encourage you to reach out to representatives
23 outside of this process, right.

24 Reach out to someone at National Grid
25 Renewables and say I'd be interested in getting a

1 group of interested landowners together to tour a
2 facility.

3 It's not really something we can address
4 in the scope of the EA, it's not really relevant to
5 this. But it sounds like the folks over there are
6 more than amenable to setting something up, so if
7 you can do it through e-mail, something like that.

8 MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: I think it would
9 be relevant to this because then we would know more
10 what we want to submit for environmental assessment,
11 because of the failures that we've seen from wind
12 turbines and the disgruntlement that we've had from
13 that. Then we could see what people with active
14 sites have a problem with and what we know we should
15 be asking for.

16 MR. SAM WEAVER: And a lot of what I
17 write about will be based on findings from other
18 studies, I focus on other solar farms as well, and
19 they're going to follow the standard practices. So
20 just know that information from other solar sites
21 and those development processes are used when
22 writing the EA. But that said, I still encourage
23 you to go to the sites and when we come back here in
24 four months for the hearing, if there's something
25 that you find concerning when you go tour another

1 site or just drive by and look, if that is something
2 that's not addressed in the EA you can bring up at
3 the hearing and say, you know, I drove by the site,
4 I saw this, I didn't like this, you didn't really
5 talk about that issue. You can bring it up at the
6 hearing and then we'll be sure to address it.
7 Before June 5th, right, the comment period goes for
8 another couple weeks here.

9 MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: How are the panels
10 recycled? Is a big hole dug and they're put in the
11 hole and it's covered up? Is that how you recycle
12 them? How do you recycle?

13 MR. TOM KARAS: That wouldn't be
14 recycling, wouldn't it?

15 MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: No. Does anybody
16 know why I ask that question. How are the wind
17 turbines recycled?

18 MR. TOM KARAS: I would encourage
19 everybody to go and look at the website for our
20 supplier, First Solar. They have this very unique
21 program where they actually come and pick up their
22 modules, take them back because they operate their
23 own recycling facility next to their manufacturing
24 facility, so what they can reclaim from the
25 recycling facility goes in to new panels. It's a

1 circular system that they take responsibility for
2 and they're one of the leaders in the industry.

3 MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: Okay.

4 MR. TOM KARAS: And that's the way
5 recycling really should operate, as you know.

6 MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: Yes. And that it
7 does, is just something that it would be nice to
8 know that it really does happen the way it should.
9 Thank you.

10 MR. SAM WEAVER: So it is 8:55, so if we
11 have anyone who wants to get up. So if you have
12 written comments, if you have written anything down,
13 I would love if you could bring those up just to me
14 personally once we adjourn here. It would be great
15 to get all those. If you chat to chat a lit more
16 we're here.

17 Thank you all for coming tonight. We
18 appreciate all your comments and we will see you
19 again soon.

20 (Proceeding concluded at 8:55 p.m.)

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25

1 STATE OF MINNESOTA)

2 COUNTY OF HENNEPIN)

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4
5 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

6 I, Jonna Schrupp, do hereby certify
7 that the above and foregoing transcript, consisting
8 of the preceding 126 pages is a correct transcript
9 of my stenographic notes of the proceedings to the
10 best of my ability.

11 Dated June 11, 2025

12
13 /s/ Jonna Schrupp
14 JONNA SCHRUPP
15 Stenographic Court Reporter
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