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.
    - No oral comments
- March 22, 2025 – Worthington, Minnesota, 6:00 p.m.

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

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

BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

AND DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

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

MPUC DOCKET NOs. IP-7153/GS-25-89
IP-7153/ESS-25-88

Meeting held remotely via:

Webex and Telephone

May 21, 2025

COURT REPORTER: Christine Simons, RMR, RPR

I N D E X

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

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

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

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission

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

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

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

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

transmission.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Next slide, please.

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

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

Next slide, please.

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

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

Next slide, please.

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

Next slide, please.

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

Next slide, please.

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

Next slide, please.

And we included some pictures on what

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

Next slide, please.

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

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

Next slide, please.

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

controls and also access for vegetation.

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

Next slide, please.

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

Next slide. Thank you.

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

Next slide, please.

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

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

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

Next slide.

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

annually will be approximately $500,000.

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

Next slide.

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

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

Next slide.

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

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

Next slide.

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

Next slide, please.

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

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

And next slide.

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

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

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

Next slide.

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

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

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

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

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

Next slide.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MR. SAM WEAVER: Um-hmm.

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

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

MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: Go ahead.

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

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

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

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

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

(Public comment concluded.)

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

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

BEFORE THE OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS

FOR THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

In the Matter of the Joint Application of Summit Lake Solar, LLC for a Solar Energy Generating System Site Permit and a Battery Energy Storage System Site Permit for the up to 200 MW Summit Lake Solar Facility and the up to 200 MW Battery Energy Storage System in Nobles County, Minnesota

MPUC DOCKET NOs. IP-7153/GS-25-89
IP-7153/ESS-25-88

Held at:
Worthington Event Center
1447 Prairie Drive
Worthington, Minnesota

STENOGRAPHIC COURT REPORTER: Jonna Schrupp

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

SPEAKERS: PAGE

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

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

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

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

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

Can everybody hear me okay?

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

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

The Commissioners have the ultimate say

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

So our project is sited in Nobles County

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

and ours will actually rotate.

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

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

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

Some economic and social benefits that we

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

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

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

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

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

We do not advocate for or against

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

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

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

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

So we want to hear from you all about the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

your name.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MS. AMY STEFFERUD: Yes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

got two different UL certifications that our equipment meets.

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

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

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

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

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

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

MS. AMY STEFFERUD: Thank you.

MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: Thank you.

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

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

We have Aletha Cramer. Okay.

Russell Penning, there's a firm yes next

to your name.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Now we have Dwayne Wienrank. Come on up.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

we're on that like --

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

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

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

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

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

MR. DWAYNE WIENRANK: What about the glass?

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

past those things.

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

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

break a panel.

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

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

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

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

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

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

MR. DWAYNE WIENRANK: It is?

MR. TOM KARAS: It is.

MR. DWAYNE WIENRANK: How come we don't

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

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

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

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

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

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

MR. DWAYNE WIENRANK: In other words,

some of it is right here then, huh?

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

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

MR. TOM KARAS: Just being honest, sir.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: And the marginal farm ground?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: Thank you. I

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

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

All right. So next we have James Jones.

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

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

MR. TOM KARAS: Generally the substation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

average southwest Minnesota has?

MR. TOM KARAS: We know exactly.

MR. JAMES JONES: How many?

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

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

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

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

done.

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

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

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

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

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

MR. JAMES JONES: So when this project is

done in '27, you said, roughly?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: Yes --

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

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

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

living in Arizona all winter.

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

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

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

MR. SAM WEAVER: I am the environmental guy.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

We've gotten some good feedback, like the

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

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

MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: Yes, sir.

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

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

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

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

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

MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: Correct.

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

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

make the decision. That's why we're here, right. And to hear about the issues relative to water --

(Unidentified woman.) Can you turn up the mike?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MR. TOM KARAS: Metered, yes.

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

MR. TOM KARAS: Yes.

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

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

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

year or so.

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

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

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

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

It was brought up before, property tax

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

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

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

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

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

And when this project has reached its end

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

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

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

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

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

MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: I think this one works.

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

(Unidentified woman.) Little bit louder.

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

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

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

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

MR. PHILLIP JONES: Which one?

MR. SAM WEAVER: Bacteria transmission.

MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: So just as general

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

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

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

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

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

MR. PHILLIP JONES: I agree.

MR. TOM KARAS: Just back to the wildlife

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MR. JAMES JONES: Mosquitos, flies.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MR. DWAYNE WIENRANK: Good enough.

MR. SAM WEAVER: Please come down.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I apologize, I might get emotional.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: So for the vegetative

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MR. TOM KARAS: Okay.

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

MR. TOM KARAS: That is your opinion.

Thank you.

MS. MALORY FRITZ: Thank you.

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

MS. MALORY FRITZ: Yes.

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

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

that may happen down the road on this project?

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

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

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

MS. MALORY FRITZ: I agree.

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

MS. MALORY FRITZ: Right.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

metal recycling facility.

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

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

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

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

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

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

MS. SUZANNE STEINHAUER: Yes.

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

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

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

MS. SUZANNE STEINHAUER: There would

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

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

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

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

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

general consensus that we've heard from local governments.

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

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

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

MR. PHILLIP JONES: That is my opinion.

MR. JANEZICH: Thank you.

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

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

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

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

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

whatever goes wrong or goes right out there, right?

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

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

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

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

MR. TOM KARAS: Are they liable now?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MS. ALIA MOHAMMAD: Correct.

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

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

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

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

MR. ROD BURKHARD: That is absolutely unacceptable.

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

MR. ROD BURKHARD: Residences.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

larger than 150 feet?

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

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

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

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

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

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

MR. ROD BURKHARD: For the screening.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the drainage system in that field will not work.

MR. SAM WEAVER: So --

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

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

MR. ROD BURKHARD: Absolutely.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

through there to fix anything.

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

MR. TOM KARAS: Some are.

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

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

MR. ROD BURKHARD: No, no.

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

MR. ROD BURKHARD: How --

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

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

MR. TOM KARAS: As explained earlier, we

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MR. JEREMY DUEHR: No.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: With the commission.

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

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

MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: Sure.

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

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

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

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

MR. ROD BURKHARD: Thank you for this opportunity.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

property value standpoint.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The first thing being three tile branches

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I look forward to looking at all those

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

village of Reading why are you not going north? You're creating -- we're talking about human condition, you're creating further impact.

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

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

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

MS. KATHY HENDERSCHIEDT: Have you tried?

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

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

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

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

MS. KATHY HENDERSCHIEDT: Thank you.

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

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

tonight.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: Completely understand.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MS. JUDY CHRISTIANS: And what is that?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MS. JUDY CHRISTIANS: And it is.

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

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

MR. CRAIG JANEZICH: Yes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MS. MALORY FRITZ: Malory Fritz, so this

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

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

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

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

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

MR. TOM KARAS: It's a lot.

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

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

MR. TOM KARAS: Yes.

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

One other question, do you want --

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

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

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

MS. MALORY FRITZ: Right.

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

it's not commercial, it's residential.

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

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

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

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

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

standard, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency standard applies statewide.

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

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

MR. TOM KARAS: Sure.

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

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

MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: What is the largest site?

MR. TOM KARAS: A hundred megawatts.

MS. BAUMHOFNER: In acres.

MR. TOM KARAS: Just for general

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MR. TOM KARAS: Mainly Minnesota.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MR. TOM KARAS: I don't know.

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

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

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

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

MR. TOM KARAS: 80 megawatts.

MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: And this --

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

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

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

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

MR. TOM KARAS: Go for it.

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

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

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

group of interested landowners together to tour a facility.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MS. BECKY BAUMHOFNER: Okay.

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

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

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

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

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

STATE OF MINNESOTA)
COUNTY OF HENNEPIN)

REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

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

Dated June 11, 2025

/s/ Jonna Schrupp
JONNA SCHRUPP
Stenographic Court Reporter

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