

Oral Public Meeting Comments Received on the  
Scope of the Environmental Assessment for the  
Lake Charlotte Solar Project  
Docket No. IP-7159/GS-25-206 (Solar Facility) IP-7159/ESS-25-205 (BESS Facility)

**Public Meetings**

1. August 28, 2025 – Fairmont, Minnesota, 6:00 p.m.
2. September 2, 2025 – Virtual, On-Line Meeting, 6:00 p.m

**In The Matter Of:**

*Lake Charlotte Project - 25-205 25-206  
Virtual Info & Scoping Meeting - 8-28-25*

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*August 28, 2025*

*Lake Charlotte Project - 25-205 25-206 - Info & Scope - 8-28-25*

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Richfield, MN 55423*

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1 PUBLIC INFORMATION AND SCOPING MEETING - 25-206 & 25-205  
 2 Fairmont - August 28, 2025 - 6:00 p.m.  
 3 BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION  
 4  
 5  
 6  
 7  
 8 In the Matter of Lake Charlotte, LLC's Joint Application  
 9 for the Lake Charlotte 150-MW Solar Facility and 150-MW  
 10 Lake Charlotte Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)  
 11 located in Rutland Township, Martin County, Minnesota  
 12  
 13 MPUC DOCKET NOS. IP-7159/GS-25-206  
 14 IP-7159/ESS-25-205  
 15  
 16  
 17 Fairmont Event Center  
 18 1201 Torgerson Drive  
 19 Fairmont, Minnesota  
 20  
 21 August 28, 2025  
 22  
 23  
 24  
 25 COURT REPORTER: Janet Shaddix Elling, RPR

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1 **MR. CEZAR PANAIT:** Hello, everyone. Good  
 2 evening.  
 3 My name is Cezar Panait, I'm an engineer  
 4 with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission in  
 5 St. Paul, Minnesota.  
 6 And we are here tonight to conduct a  
 7 Public Information and Environmental Assessment  
 8 Scoping Meeting for the Lake Charlotte Solar  
 9 Project.  
 10 This case has two dockets numbers. There  
 11 will be two permits required from the Commission,  
 12 and we have the docket numbers listed on the screen.  
 13 The first one, the short number, GS-25-206, is for  
 14 the solar facility, and then the ESS stands for  
 15 Energy Storage System, dash, 25-205.  
 16 We are conducting this public information  
 17 meeting today, August 28th, 2025, and we'll have a  
 18 similar meeting in the virtual format using the  
 19 Webex platform on Tuesday, September 2nd.  
 20 So, we have an agenda for tonight. So,  
 21 I'll be talking briefly about the Commission, our  
 22 role, my role as a staffer with the Commission, in  
 23 terms of receiving and the processing of these  
 24 permit applications, conducting the public meeting  
 25 process, such as this one. And, also, my colleague

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1 here, Jessica, she will talk about her role on the  
 2 project. And then we'll talk about Lake Charlotte  
 3 Solar, have Lake Charlotte Solar talk about a  
 4 project description, timelines, and other useful  
 5 information. And then Jessica will be talking about  
 6 the environmental document and that will be  
 7 conducted in the seeking the comments for that  
 8 process.  
 9 So, there is three government units  
 10 involved with a large energy facility permit  
 11 application such as this project. First, the Public  
 12 Utilities Commission is the agency that was  
 13 delegated the authority by the legislature to manage  
 14 the overall application review process for large  
 15 energy facilities, such as solar projects, wind  
 16 farms, high voltage transmission lines, and  
 17 pipelines, and other gas pipelines, and petroleum  
 18 pipelines, also.  
 19 Energy Infrastructure Permitting, this is  
 20 a new name for us, we used to be called Energy  
 21 Facilities Permitting, now we broadened our scope  
 22 and there's some changes that took place on July  
 23 1st. Namely, the Environmental Review and Analysis  
 24 Unit was moved over to the Commission by a new law  
 25 that was passed last year.

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1 And then later we will have an  
2 Administrative Law Judge assigned to the case and  
3 the judge will be conducting a public hearing. And  
4 we have a timeline for that. And there's a process  
5 where the judge seeks input from members of the  
6 public, from local government units, from townships,  
7 the local cities, counties, and then will be writing  
8 a report and making some findings and  
9 recommendations to the Commission. And that report  
10 will be used by the Commission, along with every  
11 document, every comment that arrives in eDockets,  
12 and they will be deliberating and deciding on the  
13 requests for a permit application based on the  
14 record as a whole, not just on the judge's report.  
15 The proposed project, Lake Charlotte  
16 Solar, lies about three miles north of here. You  
17 are familiar with the area on the east side of Lake  
18 Charlotte. And I will not go into too many details  
19 because Geronimo is the most qualified to talk about  
20 the particulars of the project. I'll just say it's  
21 a 150 megawatt solar and 150 megawatt battery  
22 storage. Occupies about 1,000 acres of land.  
23 Includes a substation, a short transmission line.  
24 And then there's a timeline for the anticipated  
25 construction and the completion -- and the

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1 storage is charged by energy from the grid, they  
2 don't use any fuel, renewable projects, the  
3 legislature recognized that. And the projects are  
4 exempt from needing a certificate of need, which is  
5 a different type of process that requires an  
6 analyses and the justification for why the project  
7 is needed. For this one, no certificate of need is  
8 required.  
9 We have listed here some of the permit  
10 considerations that are found in Minnesota 216E and  
11 administrative rules 7850. And these are just some,  
12 these are not the complete list.  
13 So, when deciding whether this -- the  
14 Commission should approve a project and issue a site  
15 permit, the Commission looks at the potential human  
16 and environmental impacts of the project. And those  
17 impacts could be anything from noise, if this would  
18 be a -- more so a wind farm, but this is a solar.  
19 The Commission looks at aesthetics impacts, public  
20 health, land use conflicts, any cultural and  
21 historic resources that may be affected, air  
22 quality, and plants and wildlife.  
23 Also, the Commission looks at suitable  
24 ways to minimize and mitigate such identified  
25 impacts, and Jessica will talk about what the

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1 commercial operation date will be last part of 2028.  
2 I mentioned briefly earlier that this  
3 particular project requires two kinds of permits.  
4 Both of them are referred to as site permits,  
5 location where the project is to be located. And  
6 not only the location, but conditions, general  
7 conditions and specific that we -- the Commission  
8 has been using for similar projects. And the  
9 statutes requires a permit and gives jurisdiction to  
10 the Commission because this project exceeds the  
11 threshold in terms of megawatt in size. Fifty  
12 megawatts or higher requires a permit from the  
13 Commission. Under 50, it goes to the local review,  
14 namely, to counties.  
15 And similarly for the battery storage,  
16 that was a new law that was passed a couple years  
17 ago, I don't know what date because I may be wrong,  
18 and I'm not the authority, I'm an engineer. But  
19 that is 10 megawatts for that. So it's lower  
20 because battery storage is a more complex type of  
21 operation and installation and the legislature, not  
22 the Commission, recognized the need to treat it  
23 separately.  
24 And just a last mention here. That  
25 because this project are powered by solar and

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1 purpose of that environmental document is.  
2 Also important is the overall collected  
3 system from reliability also, where this project  
4 fits in the overall grid. Every one of these  
5 projects is proposed because there's a need for it.  
6 And the energy produced by this project is used to  
7 follow everything from residential to commercial to  
8 industrial and we think that is reliability.  
9 Cost of constructing, operating, and  
10 maintaining the facility is also a factor that goes  
11 into the decision-making. Because this project  
12 ultimately are being paid by -- we refer to them as  
13 ratepayers, which is all of us people or commercial  
14 businesses that use power. So we'll be paying for a  
15 project like this one through our rates.  
16 And the Commission is very cognizant of  
17 that and was tasked by the legislature to be very  
18 judicial, in terms of approving projects. They need  
19 to be used and useful in order for the projects to  
20 be approved.  
21 We have a timeline for the project. And  
22 I just want to point out that a gentleman point me  
23 out, I had some wrong 2025s in there. So the future  
24 dates, obviously, are going to '26. So, the  
25 printout still says '25, that's a typo. I apologize

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1 for that.  
2 So, the application, and this is a joint  
3 application that came in this summer, and the  
4 Commission approved it as complete, meaning the  
5 review process would start after the application was  
6 deemed complete. If the application would not have  
7 been complete, then the applicant would be required  
8 to supplement, provide additional information, and  
9 then obtain that approval.  
10 We are here for the highlighted lines,  
11 rows, for the first of the two public info and  
12 scoping meetings. And then there's the comment  
13 period, we'll talk about it, associated with this  
14 public meeting that ends on September 17th. And,  
15 actually, the comment period, we consider that to  
16 become open and with a date, they issue -- the  
17 notice gets issued first, which was August 7th, and  
18 now people have commented, not just after this date  
19 out, but up to this point. Including there will be  
20 a scope of the environmental assessment issued in  
21 October. The document is -- Jessica will talk about  
22 it, January is anticipated. Then we'll have a  
23 public hearing that will be conducted by  
24 Administrative Law Judge from the Court of  
25 Administrative Hearings and we'll get an assignment

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1 will be taking the comments and working on the  
2 report. And you could even send your handwritten  
3 comments to our Public Utilities Commission physical  
4 address, which is in St. Paul, Minnesota.  
5 So the focus of the comments, the  
6 Commission would like people to focus on the  
7 questions that were posed in the notice for the  
8 meeting itself. And those would cover the same --  
9 address the same type of topics like we talked  
10 about. They go to some of those factors.  
11 So, impacts to human environment, natural  
12 environment. If there are impacts, what kind of  
13 mitigation are you seeing that are feasible to be  
14 implemented for the project. And, also, if there  
15 are any unique aspects of the project that should be  
16 taken into consideration. Additional information.  
17 So, anybody interested in finding out,  
18 including the full application and any document that  
19 would be submitted subsequent of that application,  
20 which is this summer, in June. So we ask people to  
21 kindly visit our website and our web address is  
22 listed there. And there's a website for specifics  
23 created for this project and the documents are  
24 listed there. You can click on there and open them  
25 up. Or you could go into the full record, which is

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1 in the next two weeks.  
2 And then that judge will be conducting  
3 the public hearing, which is more formal of set up  
4 for taking comments and facilitating questions and  
5 answers from members of the public or local  
6 government units about the process to us or to the  
7 applicant. And then there will be a report that  
8 would be written and submitted into the docket, and  
9 then later in May -- not May, end of April, the  
10 Commission will take up the permit applications and  
11 will decide whether to issue the permits or not.  
12 We have slide here that provides some  
13 information about the end of comment period, which  
14 goes until September 17th. And I like to point out  
15 that it is deadline, so please try to make your  
16 comments by that time. The Commission may or may  
17 not consider late-filed comments, depending on how  
18 late they come.  
19 And these are various ways to submit your  
20 comments. The preferred method would be to go  
21 online, visit the website of the Commission, which  
22 is mn.gov.puc to get involved with public comments.  
23 Or since most of the comments we think will go to  
24 the environmental document, so Jessica will be the  
25 designated recipient for those comments because she

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1 the eDocket system, and log in the numbers 25-206,  
2 that's for the solar facility, or if you are  
3 interested or want to comment specifically to the  
4 battery side of the project, you go to 25-205.  
5 We have some pink slips, or orange, that  
6 people could take one. If you want to know how to  
7 subscribe and get more information, place your name  
8 on the project contact list. So, please, if you are  
9 interested, fill one of these out and leave it with  
10 us and we'll take it and scan it and we'll add your  
11 name to the mailing list. So every time there's a  
12 document that is filed, you will get an email  
13 notification and just with a hot link, click on  
14 that, and see what that new document that was just  
15 filed is about. Or you can go electronically to the  
16 Commission's eDocket system and there's a tab that  
17 says Subscribe to the Docket, and then follow the  
18 prompts, and you have to enter the docket number to  
19 indicate interest in this particular project and you  
20 subscribe to the docket.  
21 The state agencies, that's our contact  
22 information here. Jessica, myself, Cezar Panait,  
23 and we have Sam Lobby. He's the designated public  
24 advisor and he couldn't be here tonight. But if you  
25 have any process-related questions, how do I

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1 comment, when is my deadline, what's the next phase  
2 of the project, we'll be more than happy to help you  
3 out and navigate any process-related questions.  
4 Unfortunately, I want to make sure that I  
5 state this clearly, I'm a staffer, I'm not in a  
6 position to be able to advise or answer varied  
7 questions about this project. In fact, this way,  
8 and you do this for me, everything that goes in, it  
9 needs to be into the docket, and for everybody to  
10 see, including the Commissioners. And that's how  
11 the decisions are made, based on what is in the  
12 docket. Not conversation one-on-one, and I won't be  
13 able to answer any merit-related questions.  
14 With that, I would pass it to have Lake  
15 Charlotte Solar talk about the project specifics.  
16 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** Hello. My name is  
17 Marta Lasch, M-A-R-T-A, L-A-S-C-H.  
18 And I'll let my colleagues introduce  
19 themselves as well, or maybe later.  
20 **MR. KARSEN RUMPF:** My name is Karsen  
21 Rumpf, senior developer for Geronimo Power.  
22 K-A-R-S-E-N, R-U-M-P-F.  
23 **MR. JEREMY DUEHR:** Good evening. Jeremy  
24 Duehr, I'm the project attorney, I'm with Fredrikson  
25 & Byron and helping out the project.

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1 number.  
2 Here is a picture of the project  
3 footprint and the site design. The green represents  
4 the solar array, and the pink in the center is the  
5 battery storage system, and the blue is our proposed  
6 substation.  
7 So I just listed off a couple of  
8 components of the storage project. There are  
9 electrical cables running through the project and  
10 the solar project will be surrounded by a security  
11 fence. The fencing we'll be using for Lake  
12 Charlotte is an ag style or a deer style fence, with  
13 rectangular woven wire with wooden posts.  
14 Next slide.  
15 So, solar is, you know, a somewhat  
16 familiar technology in Minnesota, but battery  
17 systems are relatively new. It's become very  
18 popular due to providing additional value to solar.  
19 So it takes on electricity when there is excess and  
20 we can deploy that energy at any time when there is  
21 demand. So it adds a lot of value to, you know,  
22 being paired with wind or with solar projects.  
23 These are weatherized cabinets. They are  
24 intended to be out in the elements 24/7 365 days a  
25 year. Each of these cabinets are roughly 10 feet

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1 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** So, as I said, my name  
2 is Marta Lasch. I'm the permitting lead for the  
3 Lake Charlotte Solar Project. Geronimo Power is  
4 the -- will be the owner and operator of Lake  
5 Charlotte.  
6 We are headquartered in Bloomington,  
7 Minnesota. We got our start here in this area, in  
8 Mountain Lake, when our late founder was approached  
9 by a wind developer. He thought he could do a  
10 better job as a wind developer. And so our first  
11 project was the Odin Wind Farm on his family's land  
12 near Odin, Minnesota.  
13 Since then we've evolved. We have been  
14 developing wind. We started with community solar  
15 about ten years ago, and when we were acquired in  
16 2019 by National Grid Renewables, we began  
17 developing utility scale, and so we're in storage  
18 projects, our first was in Texas in 2020.  
19 Recently, we were acquired by Brookfield  
20 Asset Management, and we've gone back to our roots  
21 and we're Geronimo Power.  
22 Cezar covered the specifics of Lake  
23 Charlotte. It's a 150 megawatt solar and 150  
24 megawatt storage. It is a four-hour duration  
25 battery, which gets us to that 600 megawatt-hour

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1 tall. And a full battery system may be slightly  
2 smaller than the width and length of a semi-truck  
3 trailer.  
4 Within the cabinets are the battery  
5 modules and the electrical systems that support  
6 them. So, there's 24/7 monitoring. There's a  
7 heating and cooling system and fire suppression  
8 systems all contained in those cabinets.  
9 The BESS area will be graveled within a  
10 fenced area so they will be fenced separately from  
11 the solar project, and they're mounted on concrete  
12 pads, and it will tie into the substation next to  
13 the solar project.  
14 Here's some snapshots of what  
15 construction may look like. We'll build out access  
16 roads, conduct any grading that may be needed, the  
17 delivery of equipment, spans, I would say,  
18 throughout the project. Here you can see in that  
19 lower left an inverter being delivered. And once  
20 grading is completed, pile drivings, these act as  
21 the foundation for the racking, and then the panels  
22 are welded to the racking system.  
23 We're producing electricity and so we  
24 have quite a few wires and cables to manage. And so  
25 the direct current that comes from the panels is

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1 routed above ground, but below the panels. They're  
2 combined and sent to a combiner box. From that box  
3 to the inverter. The electrical system is below  
4 ground, and from the inverter to the substation is  
5 more below-ground alternating electricity.  
6 Here is some pictures of the phases of  
7 construction, restoration, and operation. Here you  
8 can see a stormwater basin that's being stabilized  
9 to revegetate. And the established vegetation  
10 between the panels and the fencing, that depicts  
11 chain link, and like I said, we'll be using an ag  
12 style fence. The vegetation that we'll be using  
13 will be perineal, native, and typically pollinator  
14 friendly. This is a vegetation management plan that  
15 we've created and have reviewed by various state  
16 agencies. Here you can see how the vegetation will  
17 evolve over time. It typically takes three years  
18 for full establishment of these types of seed mixes.  
19 We've proposed some vegetative screening,  
20 a visual buffer, along the solar project on 170th  
21 Street south of Northrup. And in our discussions  
22 with our neighbors, we will be addressing their  
23 concerns by supplementing our landscaping plan with  
24 a landscaped buffer along the western border of the  
25 project along Charlotte Oak Drive. And here you can

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1 neighbors to our community.  
2 We believe that there are some benefits  
3 to the project that it brings to the community.  
4 Primarily, the construction jobs, the full-time  
5 positions that will be needed to monitor and  
6 maintain and operate the solar and storage projects.  
7 Along with that, economic development, the project  
8 will produce tax revenue for the county and township  
9 through its production tax on the electricity it  
10 generates.  
11 So we are looking forward to being  
12 long-time partners. We plan to own and operate Lake  
13 Charlotte Solar, and we want to continue to offer  
14 ourselves as resources to our neighbors and continue  
15 our outreach and presence in this community.  
16 It doesn't end here with whenever the  
17 PUC's decision is for our permit application. But,  
18 if approved, we'll be here for the next 25 years and  
19 want to be a positive and impactful neighbor and  
20 partner in the community.  
21 Thank you.  
22 Jessica.  
23 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** All right.  
24 Thank you, everybody, for your patience and for  
25 attending the scoping meeting tonight.

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1 see the plain view of the proposed landscaped  
2 buffer, and this is a visual simulation of what it  
3 may look like once established.  
4 So we're here because we have submitted a  
5 site permit application. Prior to doing that, we  
6 conducted a lot of research and due diligence.  
7 We've conducted wetland delineations, cultural  
8 resource surveys, habitat assessments and threatened  
9 and endangered species reviewed. I mentioned the  
10 vegetation management plan, we've also crafted an  
11 agricultural impact mitigation plan, which we've had  
12 reviewed by the Department of Agriculture.  
13 Some other reviews and approvals we've  
14 gone through have been the generating  
15 interconnection agreement with MISO and reviewed by  
16 the -- and cleared by the FAA.  
17 So we've done a lot. We've done a lot of  
18 ground work to learn all we can about the project  
19 and the resources, which are all found in the  
20 application. But we're here to listen to the topics  
21 you feel should be addressed, the unique  
22 characteristics that you know about this area and  
23 your community, and what you recommend we need to  
24 address those resources or unique characteristics.  
25 We want to do the right thing and we want to be good

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1 My name is Jessica Livingston and I am  
2 here on behalf of the Public Utilities Commission  
3 Energy Infrastructure Permitting team. I'll be the  
4 last person to talk to you tonight before we open it  
5 up for public comment. But I'm here to talk to you  
6 a little bit about the environmental review that  
7 will be done for this project and what the public  
8 commenting process will look like.  
9 So, first an introduction to me and  
10 talking about what I'm here to do. So, I'm here  
11 tonight to conduct an environmental assessment  
12 scoping comment period.  
13 So, when the Commission decides what  
14 projects get permitted in the state, like Cezar  
15 talked about, they have to consider certain  
16 environmental impacts. How it's going to impact the  
17 air, how it's going to impact the water. If there's  
18 certain animals that might be displaced by the  
19 construction or operation of the project. These are  
20 all things that get studied in the environmental  
21 review document.  
22 So, at the back table when you all came  
23 in I had a couple copies of the draft environmental  
24 assessment scoping decision. So this is an example  
25 of what I'm going to study for the project.

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1 So, before the Commission makes a  
2 decision on the permit, all of the things within  
3 this document will be looked at. So things like  
4 socioeconomics, also things like I mentioned before,  
5 soil or water quality. And then things like  
6 wildlife and habitat. And if there's something  
7 unique in the area that you all know about, we would  
8 like to collect comments on that so it can be  
9 properly studied.  
10 The first thing to say is it is informed  
11 decision-making by everyone impacted by the project,  
12 so that includes all of you who live here, as well  
13 as the Commission. So getting your input on this is  
14 the best way that we can make sure that this project  
15 fits in with the community.  
16 So, like I talked about, the  
17 environmental assessment is an objective analysis of  
18 what the environmental impacts of the project will  
19 be. So, we look at different things like human and  
20 environmental impacts, and we also develop  
21 strategies to potentially avoid, minimize, or  
22 mitigate any other impacts. So, if we see that the  
23 project area is susceptible for, example, erosion  
24 and that is something that we want to prevent, we  
25 can put certain things in the site or route permit

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1 special to this area, a stream that has a special  
2 aquatic habitat, we would want to hear about that so  
3 that it gets studied. If there's an eagle's nest  
4 that you've seen, we would want to hear about that.  
5 So, make sure your focus is directed to the  
6 environmental impacts and if there's any  
7 alternatives that could mitigate impacts. So if you  
8 know of an eagle's nest, maybe wouldn't want to do  
9 construction during the time of year that the eagle  
10 may be in that nest, things like that. We would  
11 like to hear solutions if there is stuff that you  
12 guys know about that we can address at the beginning  
13 stages of the project.  
14 So, there's a couple different ways that  
15 you can provide comment. Like I said, we'll be  
16 opening it up for verbal comments at the end of this  
17 meeting, so everybody who signed up will have the  
18 chance to speak. And we'll have a court reporter  
19 that collects those comments so they can be put into  
20 the record for the Commission to consider as part of  
21 the permitting decision.  
22 We also have written comment sheets which  
23 I have copies of at the back table, so if you would  
24 rather write your own comment and mail it to me,  
25 that's an option as well. They have my address

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1 that make sure that extra attention is paid to those  
2 issues. So, we work with other agencies when  
3 developing these as well. So, the DNR, the  
4 Department of Agriculture, the Pollution Control  
5 Agency, they all have input on the things that get  
6 included in this study as well. So, it's a very  
7 comprehensive look and it's a neutral document  
8 that's able to provide a snapshot on what the real  
9 impacts will be on you all and then all of the  
10 environmental and natural communities that exist in  
11 this area.  
12 Like I said, the goal is informed  
13 decision-making. We're not here to advocate on  
14 anyone's behalf. In particular, we're here to  
15 represent the people and animals and the environment  
16 that live in this place. So, just a clear look on  
17 everything that may be impacted by the project.  
18 So, today we would like to hear from you  
19 all on what should be studied for this. So, input  
20 on this table of contents is the main thing that we  
21 will be collecting comments on tonight. So, if  
22 there are any human and environmental impacts that  
23 are not listed on here that you would like to make  
24 sure gets studied, we'd like to hear about that  
25 tonight. If there's something that's particularly

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1 right on the back of that sheet, you can just put a  
2 stamp on it, put it in the mail, and it will come  
3 right to my desk. You can also email me a comment  
4 if you would rather do that. My email is listed on  
5 the slides and then also on the notice that got sent  
6 out.  
7 So, if you would rather wait to provide a  
8 comment, the comment period is open until  
9 September 17th, so you have a couple weeks to get  
10 your thoughts together, if you would like to provide  
11 extra information in your written comment, you have  
12 time to do that.  
13 And like Cezar said, we would like to see  
14 all comments in by the deadline, but if we get a  
15 couple comments coming in after the deadline, we'll  
16 also take them into consideration in terms of the  
17 scope of the environmental assessment, but the  
18 Commission may not see it as part of the whole  
19 record. So, for informed decision-making, it's best  
20 to get your comments in before the comment period  
21 closes.  
22 So, before we open it up for public  
23 comment, I would like us all to acknowledge that we  
24 all took time out of our day to be here, and it  
25 would be really great if everyone who would like to

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1 participate has the opportunity to do so. So, if we  
2 can get agreement on commenting etiquette, that  
3 would be best for everyone.  
4 We have a list of people who have signed  
5 up to speak today, so I'll give them the opportunity  
6 first. And just a reminder, please, one speaker at  
7 a time. And state and spell your full name for the  
8 court reporter so your comment is properly captured  
9 for the Commission.  
10 Also, please limit your comments to only  
11 a few minutes so everybody who would like to comment  
12 has the opportunity to do so. And while you're  
13 commenting, please maintain respect for others. We  
14 all took time out of our day to be at this meeting  
15 and we all want an opportunity to be able to  
16 participate in the process, so the best way we can  
17 do that is by maintaining respect for all people  
18 here.  
19 Like I talked about before, we would like  
20 your comments to be directed to the scope of the  
21 environmental assessment. So, like I said, any  
22 human or environmental impacts that you're concerned  
23 about related to the project, any unique  
24 characteristics of the project area that should be  
25 taken into account, and ideas to potentially

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1 Charlotte Oak Drive, which would be the west  
2 boundary of the Lake Charlotte Solar project.  
3 And the first question that I have about  
4 this project is in regards to the wildlife,  
5 specifically the eagles that are in that area. I  
6 was 20 years old before I saw an eagle in the wild.  
7 My grandson lives a quarter of a mile away from me  
8 and he can look up pretty much any day of the week  
9 and see eagles flying over. I'm wondering how this  
10 1,300-acre sea of black glass is going to affect  
11 their hunting and feeding grounds.  
12 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** That's a good  
13 question. We will be looking into avian impacts  
14 related to the project. So, typically we would see  
15 how potential glare related to the solar impacts  
16 those populations and if there is. The DNR also has  
17 input on the strategies to mitigate this as well,  
18 but if there is potential for bald eagles or any  
19 sort of avian species would be impacted, that would  
20 inform the Commission's decision. So, we'll take  
21 that into account.  
22 Thank you.  
23 **MR. BRADLEY WALLACE:** Okay.  
24 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** Okay. Next we  
25 have Nathan Runke.

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1 minimize or mitigate those impacts.  
2 So, yeah, just a reminder, we'll be  
3 collecting comments, so you all have a reminder of  
4 the different things we're looking for comments on.  
5 But, like I said, the table of contents, which we  
6 have a copy of at the back table. Human and  
7 environmental impacts, strategies to mitigate those  
8 impacts, and any unique characteristics of the  
9 project area.  
10 Now, with that being said, I can open it  
11 up for public comment.  
12 Do we know if that microphone is on?  
13 **MR. JEREMY DUEHR:** I'll do that.  
14 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** Okay. Perfect.  
15 We have six people who signed up to speak  
16 right now and once everyone has an opportunity to  
17 provide their comment, I'll provide another  
18 opportunity for anyone else who would like to  
19 comment and get a couple minutes in to speak, you'll  
20 have that chance.  
21 So, the first person we have on the  
22 list -- and sorry if I mess up names here -- we have  
23 Bradley Wallace.  
24 **MR. BRADLEY WALLACE:** My name is Brad  
25 Wallace, B-R-A-D, W-A-L-L-A-C-E. I live at 1615

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1 **MR. NATHAN RUNKE:** Hi. My name is Nathan  
2 Runke, N-A-T-H-A-N, R-U-N-K-E. I'm with the  
3 International Union of Operating Engineers,  
4 Local 49, and I am also speaking for the North  
5 Central States Regional Council of Carpenters  
6 tonight because they weren't able to make it out  
7 tonight.  
8 Local 49 is composed of over 15,000  
9 members who are heavy equipment operators,  
10 mechanics, and stationary engineers across Minnesota  
11 and North and South Dakota, more than 250 of which  
12 live within Martin County or one of its adjoining  
13 counties.  
14 Many of our members make their living by  
15 building and maintaining Minnesota's energy  
16 infrastructure, which includes a wide range of  
17 generation sources, including coal, natural gas,  
18 nuclear, wind farms, a solar project, and battery  
19 storage, such as the one we're discussing tonight.  
20 Our electric system continues to  
21 transition towards more renewable generation like  
22 wind and solar. It's important we maintain the high  
23 job standards the energy industry has traditionally  
24 had for its construction workers. Both in  
25 compensation and the quality of work performed in

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1 Minnesota, we're fortunate to have cultivated an  
2 extensive, diverse, and highly scaled energy  
3 infrastructure construction workforce over the past  
4 few decades and utilizing these tradesmen and  
5 tradeswomen on projects like this one ensures that  
6 more of the project's social and economic benefits  
7 will remain in its host communities.  
8 In our conversations with the project  
9 developer, we appreciate that they have committed  
10 using local labor on this project, which they  
11 estimate will create over 200 construction jobs.  
12 So, we also find it really important that they  
13 mentioned they have an executed generation  
14 interconnection agreement because we've seen a lot  
15 of projects get permitted and they have to wait for  
16 years on that. So, we would ask that the Commission  
17 consider both benefits of using local construction  
18 workers for the proposed project in the  
19 environmental assessment and the fact that it  
20 actually might get built in the near future because  
21 of that generation interconnection agreement.  
22 Thank you for the opportunity to speak.  
23 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** Okay. Thank  
24 you, Mr. Runke.  
25 Next we have Catherine Sovell-Bartz.

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1 need more information about how you're going to exit  
2 after 25 years.  
3 You also mentioned that you were going to  
4 put a buffer on the east side. I'd also like to  
5 know why you are not going to put a buffer on the  
6 north, south and west sides of the properties.  
7 And those are my questions that I'd like  
8 answered as soon as possible.  
9 Thank you very much.  
10 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** Thank you.  
11 I can address a couple of your questions  
12 related to the environmental assessment. So, in  
13 terms of water quality and impacts from potential  
14 weather, those are all things that the Commission  
15 will consider when deciding a permit.  
16 So, we've had other projects in the past  
17 that are close to water systems, and if there's  
18 concern over what the potential impact of a panel  
19 breaking or what that will look like if a panel gets  
20 into the water system, we can create an emergency  
21 plan that has the applicant response laid out so  
22 they know what will be taking place if there's an  
23 emergency that impacts the energy system.  
24 We also have the requirement of a  
25 decommissioning plan that was actually provided as a

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1 **MS. CATHERINE SOVELL-BARTZ:** Hello. My  
2 name is Catherine Sovell-Bartz. C-A-T-H-E-R-I-N-E,  
3 Sovell is S-O-V-E-L-L, and Bartz is B-A-R-T-Z.  
4 And I have lived in Fairmont, Martin  
5 County and Rutland my whole life. And I have some  
6 concerns about some of the toxins and heavy metals  
7 that go into making the solar panels and the  
8 peripherals that go up with the whole shebang.  
9 There is lead and cadmium and arsenic,  
10 aluminium, silver, copper, and nickel that goes into  
11 the creation of these solar panels. This is a very,  
12 very large creation that is over -- it equals about  
13 900 football fields' worth. And I have concerns  
14 that if there's a large hailstorm, it wouldn't even  
15 have to be that large, in ten minutes the whole  
16 acreage could be wiped out and broken and all of  
17 these toxins and heavy metals could be leaching into  
18 the groundwater and into the lakes and into our  
19 systems.  
20 You also mentioned that we'd be working  
21 together for 25 years. That's about the life of the  
22 solar panels. I am very -- I want to know more  
23 about how you plan on leaving. Are you just going  
24 to leave the solar panels in this 900-football  
25 fields' worth of acreage and then just leave? I

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1 part of the application. So they've described all  
2 the ways that the project would be taken apart at  
3 the end of its life, what will happen to the panels.  
4 There are certain rules in Minnesota of what  
5 percentage can be recycled. So, all of that stuff  
6 gets taken into consideration before the project  
7 gets permitted.  
8 I don't know if the applicant wanted to  
9 address anything.  
10 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** Yeah. You covered the  
11 first two topics.  
12 Also, the vegetative buffer, you know, we  
13 want to provide a visual buffer where we can to  
14 those that will be most affected by the project.  
15 And so those homes on the south side of Northrup and  
16 those along Charlotte Oak Drive. The other homes  
17 within the project area are primarily participating  
18 landowners and so we don't plan to visually buffer  
19 the entire fenced area of the project.  
20 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** I also wanted to  
21 add, if there is other concern about visual  
22 screening impacts, something that can also be added  
23 as a part of the environmental assessment is a  
24 permit condition related to a specific visual screen  
25 plan, so those can be developed with residents, they

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1 can also be developed with the township or whoever  
2 has jurisdiction over the land. So, if it's a state  
3 highway, it could be developed with MnDOT. Just  
4 making sure that all neighbors have a say in what  
5 gets planted in and around the solar facility is a  
6 priority of this Commission as well.  
7 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** And one more thing to  
8 note.  
9 The toxicity came up. And there are many  
10 studies out there showing that the components of the  
11 panels do not leach. They are not soluble in water.  
12 And we can provide those studies, if you would like  
13 to review them. These panels are designed to be out  
14 in the weather, they're rated to make it through  
15 full-sized hail, so there are studies regarding a  
16 hailstorm.  
17 **MS. CATHERINE SOVELL-BARTZ:** How many  
18 studies included a hailstorm? And in regards to the  
19 leaching, I would like to know how many of those  
20 studies you're discussing have to do with a  
21 hailstorm, involved a hailstorm, or were around a  
22 hailstorm.  
23 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** I don't know of any  
24 that -- we can find studies, the studies that I've  
25 been discussing are studies where they purposely

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1 Brad, who was already up here.  
2 And I want this project to be done  
3 correctly with the safety to the environment and the  
4 least possible impact to the area.  
5 I feel that those of us on Charlotte Oak  
6 Drive have been overlooked in the planning of this  
7 project. We found out about it in April of this  
8 year. The plan showed the project would start  
9 approximately 125 feet from our front door. And  
10 we've measured that. And that's closer than we  
11 could build to the lake. I have pictures of several  
12 of the homes on Charlotte Oak Drive looking out to  
13 the west and looking back to the east. So you can  
14 see the proximity of the proposed project.  
15 I'm glad to hear that the project is  
16 talking about putting a buffer zone by Charlotte Oak  
17 Drive. Because the maps don't show anything, any  
18 type of setback for Charlotte Oak Drive. It's as if  
19 we didn't exist. It was just the fence was there  
20 and there was our house.  
21 Any government official that we have  
22 contacted, and we've contacted township, county,  
23 representatives for the state, and everybody says we  
24 don't have anything to say about it. The zoning and  
25 planning committee, you know, nobody wants to take

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1 crushed the panel in a lab and tested it there.  
2 **MS. CATHERINE SOVELL-BARTZ:** In my quick  
3 review of what's online on the Internet, there is  
4 leaching that is involved just from simple rainwater  
5 once the containments are broken.  
6 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** I also wanted to  
7 add that I will also be looking into the soil  
8 conditions of the site. So, a full analysis will be  
9 done on the availability for leaching to even take  
10 place within the soil systems, and we'll also look  
11 at the depth of water tables, how it is going to  
12 impact the aquifers and if there's any possibility  
13 for soil impacts related to that as well, so.  
14 **MS. CATHERINE SOVELL-BARTZ:** Thank you.  
15 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** Yes.  
16 **MS. CATHERINE SOVELL-BARTZ:** Any other  
17 rebuffs that I should stay up here for?  
18 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** No. Thank you.  
19 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** Do you have any  
20 other questions?  
21 **MS. CATHERINE SOVELL-BARTZ:** No.  
22 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** Okay. So next  
23 we have Deb Wallace.  
24 **MS. DEB WALLACE:** Deb Wallace, D-E-B,  
25 W-A-L-L-A-C-E. I live on Charlotte Oak Drive with

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1 responsibility or be involved with it, it seems. Or  
2 they were told they couldn't. I don't know which,  
3 but that's what we've been told. So when you say  
4 you are going to talk with and include them, that's  
5 a good thing, I would like to know that they know  
6 that.  
7 A setback would be really great. There  
8 should be a minimum setback for the residences along  
9 the lake, especially, because, you know, it's  
10 just -- but the visual impact, the landscape, I  
11 mean, it just needs a setback. That's definitely  
12 something.  
13 And I have a question about the farm  
14 drainage tile and what's going to happen to that  
15 farmland to the east of us that's very productive  
16 farmland. I know the farmers have farmed it and  
17 improved the land every year doing something. And  
18 that includes drainage tile that at one time years  
19 ago was a swamp land, from what I've been told. So,  
20 in the making of the project and putting in the  
21 pilings, what's going to happen to that drainage  
22 tile? And the farms farther to the east or to the  
23 north that might drain into those, and all of that  
24 stuff, and then when you decommission and you pull  
25 it out, then maybe none of us are going to be alive

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1 when that happens to have to worry about it, but it  
2 is a concern to make the farmland productive again,  
3 things are going to have to be done, and that's a  
4 big concern.  
5 And, also, a fence around that. It snows  
6 around here occasionally and fences catch snow. How  
7 much is that going to impact the roads that we have  
8 to drive on every day just down Charlotte Oak Drive  
9 and down 160th and out to Highway 15. That is kind  
10 of a big deal.  
11 And the property values around the area,  
12 is there going to be a micro climate created because  
13 of the black solar panels and the battery storage  
14 system on drainage tile, and what about the drainage  
15 tile as it goes into the lake? Or is it going to be  
16 rerouted? Those sorts of things, those are all big  
17 concerns that I have for the project.  
18 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** Yeah. Thank  
19 you, Deb, those are all very good questions.  
20 I wanted to first address your question  
21 about the proximity to local residences. So, that  
22 will be something that the Commission looks at when  
23 they decide. We'll look at the environmental  
24 impacts, what are the potential public health  
25 impacts in certain proximity to the solar project.

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1 won't be impacting the other land systems or water  
2 systems and they will be able to operate the way  
3 they always have.  
4 There's a lot of solar projects that gets  
5 built on farmland in Minnesota, so we make sure that  
6 the project can be put back into farmland once the  
7 permit is done. So the intention is to plant  
8 beneficial vegetation that can retain the soil, we  
9 would look at what the soil will be given, what the  
10 plans are for what's going to be planted in there,  
11 and making sure that it'll be able to be put back to  
12 farmland if the project gets decommissioned and  
13 everything could be hopefully operating better than  
14 it was before, we would like to see the land be  
15 restored to better conditions. The Commission  
16 wouldn't want any significant impacts to prime  
17 farmland to take place from the project.  
18 **DEB WALLACE:** Can I ask another question?  
19 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** Yes.  
20 **DEB WALLACE:** I'm also a gardener. I  
21 know the perineal garden, the first year it sleeps,  
22 the second year it creeps, and in the third year it  
23 leaps. That's wonderful. But there's also a lot of  
24 weeds that come along with gardening. And how is  
25 that going to be? I mean, when you look at some of

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1 We'll also take a look at setbacks. And I think  
2 there might have been confusion based on how the  
3 Commission permits work.  
4 So, locally the Commission permits  
5 supercede township, city, and county roads, but that  
6 doesn't mean that they are not taken into account.  
7 So if there is concern over county involvement, or  
8 we would like to see more local government  
9 involvement, that's always something that can take  
10 place throughout the process. We still have a long  
11 time until the project gets permitted to make sure  
12 that all parties that should be involved can be  
13 involved. So we can make sure that there is extra  
14 attention paid to the local governments and have  
15 their voices at the table as well.  
16 In regards to drainage tile, that is  
17 something that the applicant had to address with  
18 their application. And Department of Agriculture is  
19 very involved in reviewing all the plans. We also  
20 have the vegetation management plan that addresses  
21 the stormwater draining, so that gets reviewed by  
22 the Natural Resources Agency, the Pollution Control  
23 Agency, local agencies who have jurisdiction over  
24 wetlands are all involved in that. So, it's a very  
25 comprehensive document to make sure that the project

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1 the fields, and there's a lot of weeds out there, so  
2 how is that going to be maintained and controlled  
3 and taken care of so that those perennials will  
4 flourish?  
5 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** So part of the  
6 vegetative management plan is to include an invasive  
7 species management plan. So they have to address  
8 how all invasive species, noxious weeds will be  
9 addressed. If they're going to use herbicide, there  
10 has to be really specific details on where and when,  
11 what kind of herbicide will be used. A look into  
12 how the invasive species may impact local land plant  
13 communities, if there's a prairie in the area we  
14 would want to make sure that gets maintained. So  
15 there's a really comprehensive system when it comes  
16 to reviewing the vegetative management plan to make  
17 sure that gets addressed.  
18 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** I'll touch briefly on  
19 the drain tile question.  
20 So we've been working with our landowners  
21 to get ahold of their drain tile maps. Being our  
22 founder was a farmer, we understand the community's  
23 reliance on, you know, tile functioning. And so in  
24 the agricultural impact mitigation plan, there are  
25 steps to address tile, tile strikes and repairing

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1 those. With the tile maps we obtained from our  
2 landowners, we do our utmost to avoid, you know,  
3 impacting the tile that they spent plenty of time  
4 installing, and so we'll be doing our very best to  
5 maintain the tile as it functions currently.  
6 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** I also wanted to  
7 briefly address that property values will also be  
8 studied for the environmental assessment.  
9 And then in terms of snow drift and  
10 fencing, that's also come up on a couple projects  
11 before, so if it seems to be something that's  
12 significant, we can always do special permit  
13 conditions that address that specific issue for this  
14 project.  
15 And then in terms of micro climate, we  
16 typically don't see that happening with solar.  
17 Sometimes they can create a cooling effect, which  
18 can benefit the vegetation that's grown under. A  
19 lot of times corn can sometimes create a warming  
20 effect for the vegetation, so when we see it being  
21 replaced by native perennials, sometimes it can  
22 attract pollinators and create beneficial habitat  
23 for the area, so we typically don't see micro  
24 climate impact. But, yeah.  
25 All right. So the next person we have is

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1 I may see on a regular basis, I don't know if they  
2 turn and follow the sun, so depending on just how  
3 that affects me, I may not be able to stay living in  
4 my home. And if that decreases my property value,  
5 that's not cool.  
6 Also, the wildlife concerns, which you  
7 guys have kind of addressed.  
8 I was told at one point, I think it was  
9 maybe Tom that came before you, I think, told me  
10 that it was going to look like a war zone during  
11 construction. The maps keep changing slightly, too.  
12 So, I don't know exactly what a war zone looks like,  
13 but it doesn't sound encouraging to me.  
14 We've talked I believe that the trees and  
15 vegetation initially were being -- we were getting  
16 told that we had to plant them on our side, or our  
17 property, which on Charlotte Oak Drive is not  
18 possible due to the property line being the center  
19 of the road. So I know I spoke with Karsen  
20 yesterday, and it sounds like that's potentially  
21 going to be built on the east side of that road now,  
22 which I guess is beneficial, but still too close.  
23 One suggestion I talked with somebody  
24 suggesting, you know, even a hog barn has to be  
25 about a half mile from homes and people need to be

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1 Jennifer Moeller.  
2 **MS. JENNIFER MOELLER:** Jennifer Moeller,  
3 J-E-N-N-I-F-E-R, M-O-E-L-L-E-R. I live at 1609  
4 Charlotte Oak Drive right next to Brad and Deb, so  
5 similar concerns to a lot of mine have been  
6 addressed already.  
7 My number one issue is that it's just too  
8 close to our homes. When we measured it was 125  
9 feet from my front door, which is unacceptable, in  
10 my opinion. Even if you push out another 125 feet,  
11 it's far too close. I know Google can't be relied  
12 on for everything, but anything you find says it's  
13 way too close.  
14 We also -- I also feel like we residents,  
15 we have been blind-sided. I didn't know anything  
16 about this until April or May of this year. It  
17 would have been nice to have been involved in prior  
18 information so that we could have, I don't know,  
19 just known about it and had a chance to say what we  
20 felt and be involved in it.  
21 My concern is about property value  
22 decreasing, especially if it's built that close to  
23 my home. I have some health concerns. I get  
24 migraines sometimes due to bright lights and so I'm  
25 a little concerned if there's any kind of glare that

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1 alerted and aware of the meetings way prior to it  
2 getting to this point. It feels very blind-sided  
3 that we weren't giving that respect, I guess, and  
4 just being part of it. And then I'm privy to groups  
5 on Facebook that are very against solar farms, and  
6 I'm just questioning if solar farms are so awesome  
7 why are there so many people saying don't let it  
8 come to your community.  
9 That's it.  
10 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** Thank you for  
11 those questions.  
12 So, like I said, we will be looking at  
13 property value impacts. There are some new studies  
14 that we found that we've been referencing in current  
15 projects and there hasn't been too significant  
16 decrease in property values. I think the largest  
17 percentage we've seen has maybe been a four percent  
18 impact, and that's like if you're 50 feet in the  
19 solar facility. So there's going to be more over  
20 time that we're going to be including in those  
21 studies, but we'll update -- this assessment will  
22 include the most updated studies related to property  
23 values.  
24 In terms of health concerns, we'll look  
25 at all of that. So, for glare we'll make that

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1 there's not going to be any impact to humans or  
2 animals because we wouldn't want anybody to be  
3 impacted by glare related to the solar panels.  
4 Usually, because they're absorbing the solar, it's  
5 not going to be reflected back out. If anything, it  
6 might reduce glare from snow. But we'll be looking  
7 at that as well.  
8 And then, yeah, in terms of wildlife  
9 concerns, like I talked about before, the DNR is  
10 very involved in the review of these projects. We  
11 can do certain things like creating wildlife habitat  
12 corridors, we can also make sure that the DNR is  
13 involved during construction. So, like I said,  
14 wildlife-friendly things are used. So, for example,  
15 we can do wildlife friendly erosion control, we can  
16 also do lighting that doesn't impact wildlife.  
17 Things that are making sure that everyone who lives  
18 there can keep living there and hopefully attract  
19 even more habitat with the pollinators, that's the  
20 intention, but all that stuff will be getting  
21 addressed.  
22 All right. So, the last person we have  
23 is Neal Becker.  
24 **MR. NEAL BECKER:** I have no comment.  
25 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** All right. So,

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1 to talk fast because then it won't be in, unless you  
2 give me a copy of what you are reading.  
3 **MS. MAKAYLA NEPP:** Okay. I do talk fast  
4 and I'll try to not do that.  
5 But my question is, when we were informed  
6 in our county about any sort of public notice that  
7 went somewhat broad, and I'm not going to say broad  
8 because a neighbor of mine sent me, like, we got 25  
9 people there last minute. And that was the last  
10 public hearing with written comments before the PUC  
11 approved our first 1,000 acres in June.  
12 So, are you guys that far? So, okay. So  
13 at least you guys have a little more time to talk  
14 about this, I suppose. But have you already gotten  
15 your conditional use permit from the county?  
16 Okay. All right. You guys got some  
17 time.  
18 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** No. We're very  
19 early in the permitting process, so we're just like  
20 looking at the application and figuring out the  
21 potential impacts at this point. So no permitting  
22 can take place.  
23 **MS. MAKAYLA NEPP:** I do want to say that  
24 that's awesome. Ours, we found out, was going on  
25 for years, and there was a few meetings, but it was

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1 it seems like that is everybody who signed up and so  
2 now I'm going to open it up. If there's anyone who  
3 hasn't signed up and would like to provide a public  
4 comment, now is your opportunity to do so. We'll  
5 just go first come, first serve, just come right up  
6 to the podium if you're ready to provide a comment.  
7 We'll wait about five minutes.  
8 **MS. MAKAYLA NEPP:** I am Makayla Nepp,  
9 M-A-K-A-Y-L-A, N-E-P-P.  
10 So I wrote this this afternoon thinking I  
11 was not going to be able to be here.  
12 I found out about this yesterday. I am  
13 from Faribault County, and we have been dealing  
14 with -- I hate to call them solar farms because it's  
15 not farming, but we'll leave it at that because it's  
16 easy to say, for a good chunk of this year.  
17 And I had someone from our community send  
18 me the notice about this and she said I think you  
19 really should go over there and speak with  
20 everything that you have learned. So, I don't know  
21 how far you guys are in this, and I wanted to wait  
22 because, if I could have a few more, this is like --  
23 I practiced at home, it's like nine minutes. I will  
24 talk fast, if that's okay.  
25 **COURT REPORTER:** No, no. You don't have

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1 so quiet that all of a sudden it bombarded us and it  
2 was happening.  
3 I'm going to talk more on the agriculture  
4 aspects of things. I farm in Faribault County with  
5 my husband and our family. My husband runs a metal  
6 shop. We're very involved in agriculture, and we  
7 have hogs and all the things.  
8 I live about a mile east of Huntley, so  
9 about 10 miles from this potential solar project  
10 that you guys are talking about. And, like I said,  
11 our first 1,000 acres got approved in, I think it  
12 was roughly June. Right? Okay. Hold on.  
13 So we got to speak, there was a few of us  
14 that spoke very last minute, we talked about a lot  
15 of concerns. I'm an EMT in Winnebago, as well, and  
16 my husband is a fireman. The BESS, the battery  
17 storage system, that's a whole nother thing. I  
18 don't believe they are very safe. I get they have  
19 their own systems that put them out if they start on  
20 fire and all of that, but they do have a potential  
21 to fail. And they did tell us that once it starts  
22 on fire, just stand back, and there's nothing you  
23 guys can do, because they don't want us to get hurt.  
24 But you think about green energy and how safe it's  
25 claimed to be, yet a chance of it starting on fire,

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1 maybe not high, but I have done a lot of research on  
2 them and they do start on fire and those systems do  
3 fail. And so, anyways, okay.  
4 So, anyways. And our solar farm is right  
5 off of a highway as well, Highway 169, like this, so  
6 safety with car accidents, semis, I get the setbacks  
7 of a couple hundred feet, maybe, I'm not exactly  
8 sure on this project, of course.  
9 So, anyways, once the meeting was over a  
10 few of us wrote in to the PUC as well, but like I  
11 said, that one was so far, it was, you know,  
12 whatever.  
13 There's another 1,700 acres in the works  
14 just south of our first 1,000 acres. South of the  
15 Huntley Gun Club, there is another big project, I  
16 don't know the acres, I'm guessing probably a couple  
17 thousand acres because it's about double in size.  
18 Okay. That is 4700 acres, plus another potential  
19 2000. Okay, that's going to be 4700 acres just in  
20 our county. Okay. Then you add this one, this one  
21 totals 6,000 just in this small area, okay.  
22 So we've been doing a lot of research on  
23 these solar panels since this spring. I've asked  
24 many questions and they don't like to be very  
25 specific. I know you guys are not that company, but

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1 looked at him. The gentleman had that on his phone  
2 from his solar panel of the last couple of years,  
3 and they said that their panels are better. Okay,  
4 that's fine. You know, things improve, I get that.  
5 But the sun in Minnesota is the sun in Minnesota and  
6 the length of days are the length of days and snow  
7 is snow. This gentleman also said that snow very  
8 seldom actually melts off of his.  
9 So, first off, they're in a state that  
10 doesn't perform well in solar panels, and on top of  
11 that they're taking very good farmland. And I want  
12 to say I 100 percent understand land rights, and I  
13 don't want those to go away. South Dakota is  
14 fighting eminent domain issues, and I 100 percent  
15 don't want that, okay. I get it is the landowner's  
16 decision if they want to sign a contract or not.  
17 But we have to be very careful. If we do research  
18 on our own and not just be told what you guys want  
19 us to hear.  
20 You guys, I know you're doing your job,  
21 you guys have to get contracts signed, you want  
22 panels put up, I understand everybody makes a living  
23 in a different way and I respect that. I do know  
24 there's a lot of tax incentives that come from solar  
25 panels to solar companies. I have actually heard,

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1 I'm just sharing some of the things we've dealt  
2 with. They like to change their answers. At our  
3 public hearing meeting, for example, this spring, I  
4 asked our solar company, in the happenstance of a  
5 field fire, let's say south of these solar panels,  
6 with a south wind pushing the fire north, what kind  
7 of situation would that lead to once the fire gets  
8 into the solar farm? Their answer was solar panels  
9 don't really burn because they are metal and glass.  
10 So, basically they will stop the fire. Okay, that's  
11 a good answer. We then had a meeting with that same  
12 solar company the day before they went to the PUC  
13 for approval. Someone different at that meeting  
14 asked them about fires and if these panels burn,  
15 what kind of harm is it to the environment? And  
16 their answer was they pollute the air about like a  
17 house fire would if a house burns.  
18 Okay. So, that's two different answers.  
19 One time they don't burn, second time they release  
20 air like a house fire. At the second meeting there  
21 was a gentleman who he has a solar panel in his  
22 backyard. He asked one question. He said what are  
23 you guys doing in the state of Minnesota? Solar  
24 panels do not perform well at all in this state.  
25 The company did not have an answer, they kinda just

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1 actually our solar company that's in our town told  
2 us that Minnesota wants to be dependent on green  
3 energy, I don't like that term, but we'll call it  
4 that, by 2030, I believe, if I heard it that and  
5 wrote that down correctly. So I understand our  
6 state is really, really pushing this kind of energy.  
7 And I know the money is good. I  
8 understand farming is hard, I understand firsthand  
9 trying to make ends meet is not easy. And at least  
10 the solar company we are dealing with has promised  
11 us that they will specifically give our schools and  
12 our towns and our fire departments money. And  
13 that's great, but it probably won't be for the whole  
14 30-year lifespan of the project. I guess we'll see.  
15 But I was talking to someone who is  
16 involved in politics to a point and he made a really  
17 good statement. He said solar companies are using  
18 our tax dollars to bid against us farmers. It's  
19 hard enough picking up new ground because of, I'm  
20 going to call them sugar daddies, I know they're  
21 investors, but the truth is harsh sometimes. And  
22 now we have solar companies coming in as well. Like  
23 I told them, our solar company kept telling us, you  
24 know, we're so sorry, we understand it sucks they're  
25 on prime farmland. And why are you doing it is a

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1 question.  
2 Okay. So now some other nitty-gritty  
3 things. I don't think we are thinking as a whole  
4 the impact this is going to have on our ag economy  
5 in this area.  
6 So, the four projects I listed, there is  
7 three in our county, one here at about 6,000 acres,  
8 that totals 6,000 acres, and this is just the  
9 beginning, okay. If 10,000, 20,000 acres get taken  
10 out of production for 30 years or so, what impact is  
11 that going to have on the seed dealers, custom  
12 sprayers, fertilizer plants, truckers.  
13 This is not just going to effect specific  
14 landowners, there are people that live right next to  
15 it that are not happy about this. There are people  
16 in our area as well dealing with the same thing.  
17 And our area is so driven by agriculture. As  
18 multiple ag businesses start struggling in our area,  
19 how is this going to impact the industry as a whole?  
20 Are people going to want to come back to this area?  
21 We already know no one wants to come back here,  
22 everyone wants to go to the Cities. Agriculture is  
23 like the last thing that kind of ties us together to  
24 get any sort of young people back here.  
25 Then we are going to talk about

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1 Again, I don't know, I can't get an answer. The  
2 only thing the county told me was because \$24  
3 million on 1,400 acres is just a boat load of money  
4 and nobody can handle it, so it falls on the county.  
5 And, again, I know we're being promised,  
6 there is funds set aside, but I have asked our solar  
7 company three times what about bankruptcy? A lot of  
8 times, and I know you guys want to try to be here  
9 for 25 years. Probably not realistic. A lot of  
10 times they sell to a different company.  
11 What happens a couple years before  
12 decommissioning if a company files for bankruptcy?  
13 Is this going to kill our county? Faribault County  
14 is a poor county and that's what the solar company  
15 is promising us, that they're going to save us with  
16 all their money.  
17 Okay, maybe for now, but I hope, I have  
18 four kids, I hope a couple of them choose to stay  
19 here, but our county is already a mess with being so  
20 broke and all that kind of stuff, like what is this  
21 going to do? Taxes are already outrageous.  
22 Okay. Anyways, moving along.  
23 Okay. I think I talked about that  
24 already.  
25 The next thing. I know you talked about

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1 decommissioning, okay. I understand and we have  
2 been told that there is money always set aside for  
3 each project, and I understand that. But my  
4 question is, and I cannot get an answer from  
5 anybody, if decommissioning is 100 percent taken  
6 care of by the solar companies, why are counties so  
7 concerned about having bonds set aside for  
8 decommissioning?  
9 I talked -- I didn't talk, I've been in  
10 contact with multiple other counties, but there's a  
11 county in Minnesota that has done a study and it  
12 costs roughly \$24 million to decommission about  
13 1,400 acres. And the solar company over there gave  
14 them one million dollars to put towards a bond.  
15 Okay, that's good, bonds grow over time, but guess  
16 what, everything inflates so it will be more than  
17 \$24 million in 30 years to deconstruct these things.  
18 And our county is talking about growing  
19 our bonds because we have bonds, but they are not  
20 going to touch even one of these projects in regards  
21 to decommissioning. So if they grow their bonds, I  
22 talked to multiple counties, how do you do that, you  
23 increase taxes so you have bigger bonds to grow to  
24 protect yourself in the long run. Why isn't it the  
25 landowner's problem to deal with decommissioning?

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1 how good it will be for the ground because it's not  
2 going to have anything grown on it. I have done a  
3 lot of research and found studies that show it's  
4 actually insanely hard on the ground. Yes, you guys  
5 are growing some vegetation, but that's not a lot  
6 and that's not a lot of organic matter. Organic  
7 matter is so stinking important. If land doesn't  
8 have organic matter it loses its water holding  
9 capacity, it loses its soil elasticity, all sorts of  
10 things. And when you are not fertilizing ground for  
11 30 years, it takes a long time to build that back  
12 up. And my personal opinion and research I've done,  
13 the land is not going to be in better shape in 30  
14 years.  
15 I do have some studies if anybody wants  
16 them on research I've found from universities about  
17 how hard this is on the soil. And also as well,  
18 leaching, I have found articles on studies that  
19 actually show it does leach into the soil, and that  
20 will cause issues when you're trying to grow stuff  
21 30 years down the road as well.  
22 The State of Minnesota has a rule to  
23 protect prime farmland. The 1,000 acres in our  
24 county that got approved this summer was originally  
25 only allowed 75 acres because it's all on prime

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1 farmland. The solar company went around the state  
2 of Minnesota, to two or three places, and claimed  
3 that those places wouldn't work because there were  
4 some trees. And the main thing they said was there  
5 is a transmission line going right through that area  
6 in Faribault County, so that would make things  
7 really, really easy for us.  
8 And so the group said, okay, we tried,  
9 and just like that they were then allowed 1,000  
10 acres on just that one project.  
11 I was driving here tonight, I call it the  
12 Huntley Road, and you can see that transmission line  
13 and that transmission line goes right through the  
14 property that this project is on. So we are going  
15 to be -- solar companies are not going to stop.  
16 And.  
17 I understand none of this can be dealt  
18 with at the county level. Once it's over 50  
19 megawatts, I believe, it goes to the state. Yes,  
20 they will take into consideration what our county  
21 wants, but ultimately it doesn't matter. I have  
22 maybe figured out that you guys have to follow our  
23 setbacks, if we have specific setbacks, but I'm not  
24 100 percent sure.  
25 I've also emailed the PUC a couple times

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1 on 1,000 acres, not just that it's zero once they're  
2 going. They said they won't have an answer until  
3 the project is done. They have four completed  
4 projects so I asked for a number on that and they  
5 said they didn't know the answer, they'd get back to  
6 me. I have emailed them multiple times and no  
7 answer.  
8 But, you know, you look at a windmill.  
9 They will never make up their carbon footprint. And  
10 I understand solar panels don't have as much cement  
11 and they're not as big and all the things, but if we  
12 want to have a conversation about this so-called  
13 green energy, we need to have a conversation from  
14 the very, very beginning.  
15 And their lifespan. I have gotten so  
16 many different answers on lifespan from politicians  
17 that I've talked to, to our solar company giving us  
18 multiple different answers. Maybe they will last  
19 the whole 25, 30 years, maybe they won't, I don't  
20 know, but if they have to be replaced we have to  
21 take that into account as well as what is the  
22 greenhouse gas emissions that is given off.  
23 And so I think all in all I understand  
24 the landowners can ultimately do what they want, but  
25 I really think we need to think this through in

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1 and have not got a response back, so maybe  
2 eventually that will happen and we can kinda figure  
3 some of this out. Our county is really working, we  
4 don't have a lot of options, but we are trying  
5 because we're broke, we're a poor county, and we've  
6 got that transmission line. We've got the  
7 datacenter in Blue Earth. You guys, this all just  
8 goes together.  
9 So it is just a bummer that Minnesota has  
10 that rule to protect prime farmland, but as long as  
11 the solar companies try to find another place, it's  
12 good enough to say you can have whatever you want.  
13 And I know it's more complicated than that, but I'm  
14 just taking this conversation to a point.  
15 I do have the documentation and articles  
16 on this rule and what was said was what I said here,  
17 so if anybody wants that you can go online to find  
18 it, they're easy to find.  
19 I'm almost done, I promise.  
20 Another question I have for you guys,  
21 maybe you guys will know this. I have asked our  
22 solar company, greenhouse gas emissions, okay, so we  
23 want to talk about green energy. So I asked them, I  
24 want to know how much greenhouse gas emission is  
25 produced in a production of all of the solar panels

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1 regards to the long-term impact these solar farms on  
2 prime farmland are going to have on our agriculture  
3 area.  
4 I understand that corn sold to an ethanol  
5 plant goes into energy production, I get that, but  
6 the seed is still being bought and planted, the  
7 fields are being sprayed, ground is being  
8 fertilized, semis are hauling the grain, and there's  
9 byproducts from ethanol plants that feed livestock.  
10 In the off year that you're not growing corn, you're  
11 growing soybeans or something of that nature. When  
12 you take a farmland for solar panels, it is 100  
13 percent taking those acres out of production  
14 completely, and for 30 years at that.  
15 Our job as citizens of these counties is  
16 to protect them for future generations. And I  
17 believe these are going to be detrimental for our  
18 counties for many, many years to come. This is just  
19 the beginning of the solar panel push in our area  
20 and we are targets because of these big transmission  
21 lines that they have put up. And just because they  
22 claim it's easy, I'm going to say this nicely,  
23 screwing over our county citizens, our future county  
24 citizens, our future young farmers and our ag  
25 businesses that are always into these counties.

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1 They also want to say something about  
2 private tiles. So for county tiles, there's always  
3 a setback. But someone from Soil and Water in a  
4 different county, she said this is a great area, so  
5 they can't really talk about it, but how many  
6 farmers have handshake, you know, yep, your field is  
7 next to mine, you can go ahead and hook onto my  
8 tile, help everybody out. Okay. How do you fix a  
9 private tile that is broken that's under a solar  
10 panel? Right? Like there's so many complicated  
11 pieces to this, but we have got to keep all of this  
12 in mind.  
13 I just want to say do your research.  
14 There is so much out there. Look at all the  
15 documents tied to this project or look at other ones  
16 from the other areas, there's so many documents tied  
17 to all of these projects. Ask the lawyer to read  
18 through your contract before you sign them if you  
19 are approached. Just really, really ponder the  
20 long-term effects of our county citizens, ag  
21 businesses, and all the things.  
22 Thank you for your time.  
23 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** All right.  
24 Thank you.  
25 So I just wanted to address a couple of

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1 impact assessment. So, any other project proposed  
2 in the county, like a datacenter, would be  
3 considered and we would look into how that maybe  
4 co-impacted this project and how the community will  
5 be impacted by all of those things as a whole. And  
6 so that is something that we look into.  
7 In terms of economic impacts and  
8 agriculture, I think from my research in the county,  
9 over 90 percent of the land is being used for  
10 agriculture, so we will be looking at impacts in  
11 relation to the agriculture economy in this county  
12 and what percentage of land is going to be impacted  
13 for that economy. Those were the main things that  
14 we'll be addressing, in terms of the land.  
15 I think you mentioned drain tile, so  
16 we'll be looking at that as well. There are certain  
17 things with the Department of Agriculture that they  
18 have to go through in terms of agricultural drain  
19 tile. So I can let the applicants address that a  
20 little more in relation to drain tile.  
21 But for greenhouse gas emissions, so we  
22 usually typically look at construction-related  
23 emissions and operations-related emissions.  
24 Emissions from materials would be considered scope  
25 three, so out-of-scope emission is not typically

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1 the things that were said.  
2 I can't speak to all the projects that  
3 are happening in this area, but I can speak to a  
4 little bit of the process we're here for now.  
5 So, in regards to being noticed about the  
6 project. So we are at the first step in terms of  
7 the Public Utilities Commission. They first sent  
8 their application to us back in June, we provided on  
9 comments on application completeness in July. Being  
10 here in August is the earliest that we're going to  
11 do this type of meeting, so you were all notified at  
12 the very first step in terms of the state process.  
13 So, you still have another chance. We'll  
14 be back I think in February to do a public hearing,  
15 there will be a judge here so you'll all have  
16 another chance to submit more comments. The judge  
17 will be capturing everybody's concerns, and that  
18 report will be going to the Commission. So, we  
19 still have time. The project has a long process  
20 with the state before it even gets any sort of  
21 permit, so we're not far along in the process at  
22 all.  
23 In terms of economic impacts, we do look  
24 at cumulative impacts. So, part of the  
25 environmental assessment is doing a cumulative

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1 considered from this type of project, but if it's  
2 something that's of concern we can always pay extra  
3 attention to that type of emission. Overall, it  
4 will be compared to like generating energy via solar  
5 versus generating energy not being solar, so it will  
6 be a whole picture analysis in relation to the  
7 entire operation of the project. But all of  
8 greenhouse gas emissions related to constructing and  
9 operating the project will be taken into account.  
10 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** I'll address a few  
11 things.  
12 We talked about the production, or the  
13 electricity that the project will produce. We -- we  
14 send out meteorological stations roughly two years  
15 ahead of when we went to permit a project. And so  
16 we measure the sun, we look at a lot of climate data  
17 and we plug that into a model and it tells us how  
18 much energy we can expect to produce. And that  
19 informs our financials. And so, you know, yes,  
20 there is, you know, weather that may limit the sun,  
21 or the rays that the panels absorb. But we've  
22 factored that into our financials and we still feel  
23 that this is, you know, a good place to put us over  
24 a project and be financially profitable.  
25 Let's see. You mentioned

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1 decommissioning. Part of our decommissioning plan  
2 looks at possible salvage value. So, there's a lot  
3 of materials that go into these projects, which will  
4 be -- still be of value in the future and so that is  
5 sometimes factored into the decommissioning assuredty  
6 that will be available to the county, should  
7 something happen, like you said, bankruptcy. But in  
8 the event, unlikely event that that occurs, these  
9 projects are still very valuable. Like I said,  
10 there's a lot of salvage value and so when it does  
11 come time to decommissioning, there are recycling  
12 plants and you can salvage avenues.  
13 **MS. MAKAYLA NEPP:** Would that be the  
14 county's job to deal with salvaging if the company  
15 who owns it at the time goes broke before the  
16 project is done?  
17 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** Essentially, yes. But,  
18 like I said, there's still a lot of value in these  
19 projects. So if the project or company goes  
20 bankrupt, there will be other interests, companies  
21 interested in acquiring an asset like this and using  
22 it for the salvage value.  
23 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** I'd ask you to  
24 come to the podium, please.  
25 **MS. MAKAYLA NEPP:** I understand that.

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1 it's there, and ultimately it's going to be the  
2 county's issue if there's a bankruptcy before it's  
3 done. What can you do about it? Let's say you're  
4 ten years in, you're doing your five-year review and  
5 there's issues, or there's no salvage value,  
6 bankruptcy, then what?  
7 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** Yeah.  
8 Typically, we would contact local government units.  
9 So, the county, the other counties adjacent that  
10 maybe have landfills, recycling facilities. There  
11 is also the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency that  
12 can get involved in the disposal of these panels  
13 because of the materials related to them. So, if  
14 there was a concern over a large amount of panels  
15 being left on the land, then the MPCA would make  
16 sure that gets taken care of. There are certain  
17 rules that state agencies get involved in that we  
18 would make sure they've spoken on the project.  
19 **MS. MAKAYLA NEPP:** Right. And I don't  
20 want rules to be broken, but if it costs \$24  
21 million, somebody has to pay for that.  
22 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** Yeah. And the  
23 decommissioning plan lays out that the assuredty will  
24 be 125 percent of the cost, right. And that is  
25 updated every five years, and that assuredty, the

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1 But in 30 years, if we find out that solar isn't all  
2 that it's cracked up to be, is there going to be  
3 salvage companies who want this stuff in 30 years?  
4 I mean, is that going to just be the county's  
5 problem in 30 years? And I know some people are  
6 saying quit wasting your time because you're up  
7 against a giant, I get that. But we have kids, and  
8 I love this area, and I don't want to leave this  
9 area. And it is our job, we can't just think of the  
10 now, like some people are thinking in the now  
11 because the farming is hard and they need the money,  
12 or all the things, but in 30 years from now, if,  
13 let's say it doesn't have a salvage value, then  
14 what?  
15 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** I can chime in  
16 real quick to say the Commission reviews the plans  
17 every five years. And there are certain things we  
18 have to look at throughout the life of the permit,  
19 so that gets reviewed during the project. It's not  
20 something that gets dealt with at the end of the  
21 life.  
22 **MS. MAKAYLA NEPP:** And they told us that,  
23 too, I understand that. But if it's up and you  
24 review something and 15 years down the road you  
25 figure out something in your review isn't right,

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1 financial assuredty reflects the updates that are  
2 assessed every five years.  
3 **MS. MAKAYLA NEPP:** So even if there's  
4 bankruptcy, that money will be given to the county.  
5 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** And the plan  
6 would be changed if there needs to be more added, or  
7 if there's any change to where it can be disposed  
8 of, it would be part of the review.  
9 **MS. MAKAYLA NEPP:** Okay. So, even though  
10 you did say a few minutes ago that it won't land on  
11 the county, you are for sure it won't?  
12 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** There would be  
13 the five-year review periods up to that point, so it  
14 would likely be addressed before then. But if there  
15 had been something that came up in year 29, that  
16 would be addressed then.  
17 **MS. MAKAYLA NEPP:** And the county would  
18 get money.  
19 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** It would be  
20 whoever is in the plan. So, if they have the  
21 assurance, it would be the applicant.  
22 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** If the county is named  
23 as the beneficiary, and the owner is not around,  
24 then the county would have access to that money to  
25 decommission the project.

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1 **MS. MAKAYLA NEPP:** So then how come  
2 counties are very concerned about having bonds and  
3 having enough bonds?  
4 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** From my  
5 knowledge, a lot of it has to do with landfill space  
6 and recycling capabilities. There are certain rules  
7 on what can be disposed of and which way, I think a  
8 lot of counties want to make sure that they have the  
9 capabilities to recycle these panels at the end of  
10 the life, essentially.  
11 **MS. MAKAYLA NEPP:** But if there's money  
12 set aside for that, why is it the county's job to  
13 come up with the money?  
14 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** It's more just  
15 like they will have the staff. Like, people will be  
16 prepared, essentially.  
17 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** The financial assurety  
18 is there for the county to use should the operator  
19 not be able to.  
20 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** So, like  
21 physical space, rather.  
22 **MR. JEREMY DUEHR:** This is Jeremy Duehr.  
23 I think we're talking about two different  
24 things. So, part of the decommissioning plan  
25 requires a financial assurety that the applicant,

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1 companies filing for bankruptcy and walking away and  
2 the counties are stuck. I have talked with multiple  
3 counties in this state with big projects and they  
4 all are concerned about the bonds not being big  
5 enough. And it's all projects that are PUC, not at  
6 the county level. So, I guess, I mean, we cannot be  
7 screwed in 30 years.  
8 I mean, these companies, at least some  
9 have changed hands so many stinking times since they  
10 started this a few years ago and it's a mess. So a  
11 lot of times, they change hands a lot of times, and  
12 we just do not want to get screwed. And I mean that  
13 in a nice way, but, I mean, we got to take care of  
14 ourselves.  
15 I mean, I get you guys are down here  
16 working with us, but when the project is over, you  
17 guys are gone. Like, you guys don't have to live  
18 around them, you guys don't have to deal with the  
19 impact on the ag industry. So, I mean, I just want  
20 to make sure that -- I mean, I understand you guys  
21 can tell us and there can be rules and things to  
22 review and things written, but ultimately what is  
23 going to happen when the project is over and it ends  
24 and we gotta get rid of these things. And if there  
25 is absolutely no salvage value for them in 30 years,

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1 the project proponent, has to fund. And that is 125  
2 percent of the cost to ensure proper decommissioning  
3 that's updated every five years and reviewed by the  
4 Commission. So, that amount has to increase or  
5 decrease. And then, typically, if the county is  
6 willing, they can be named as a beneficiary of that  
7 bond if the applicant goes away, then they can draw  
8 on that money to decommission the plan.  
9 I don't know why the counties would --  
10 are concerned about having their own bonds for  
11 projects. If there's a project that's permitted at  
12 the county level, they often require a bond as part  
13 of that conditional use permit, right, so that they  
14 can make sure that there's funds available to  
15 decommission them. But Jessica's guess is as good  
16 as mine, in that maybe they're concerned about other  
17 things that they have to take care of outside of the  
18 project.  
19 **MS. MAKAYLA NEPP:** And I understand  
20 windmill companies are different, but over, it was  
21 the county next to us in Door County, bankruptcy  
22 happened, the windmills were left, it finally got  
23 dealt with here not too long ago.  
24 I have been in contact with the people  
25 down in Iowa who have dealt with green energy

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1 you are saying there is money to get back, I mean,  
2 there's a lot of questions.  
3 And I think there's just a lot of things  
4 in this ag area that we are taking up this farmland  
5 for something that, in my opinion, there's a lot of  
6 desert space in Arizona, and the sun is real hot  
7 down there. It's really too bad that we're taking  
8 up very, very useful land, you know.  
9 You know, down in Texas as well they're  
10 starting to do this, down in Texas there's a lot  
11 more land with human food on it, not just livestock  
12 feed, what is the impact of this is going to be down  
13 the road? And I don't think anybody is looking at  
14 it in the long run, because you can't make more  
15 farmland, and it's going to be used for 30 years,  
16 and that's that.  
17 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** I just want to  
18 reemphasize that the Commission does look at impacts  
19 to prime farmland specifically in relation to what  
20 the impacts of the use of prime farmland are in the  
21 economy. So, we will take that into account for  
22 sure.  
23 **MS. MAKAYLA NEPP:** Thank you.  
24 **Ms. CATHERINE SOVELL-BARTZ:** This is  
25 Catherine Sovell-Bartz, a lifelong resident of

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1 Fairmont, Rutland, and Martin County.  
2 And, again, you mention that people will  
3 just be really excited to recycle all of this  
4 material, but it's going to be containing lead and  
5 cadmium, arsenic, and selenium. And from what I saw  
6 on the Internet, is it's not going to be recyclable,  
7 it's going to cost a lot of money to get put into  
8 the wasteland because they have to follow a lot of  
9 rules and be taken apart, so it's not going to be a  
10 recycling boom.  
11 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** I don't know  
12 where the studies that you were looking at were  
13 from, but in terms of Minnesota, the MPCA is very  
14 involved in the disposal of these panels. They're  
15 in charge of all of the hazardous material disposal  
16 in the state, and we wouldn't want any sort of  
17 impact related to those panels, so they would be  
18 involved to make sure whatever happens likely they  
19 would get recycled, but if they can't be recycled  
20 the MPCA would be directly involved to make sure  
21 that the disposal is up to code and does not have  
22 any sort of health impact.  
23 **MS. CATHERINE SOVELL-BARTZ:** And the  
24 other thing that I would like to mention is that I  
25 would like to make sure that there is a bond or

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1 one in Louisiana. So with a partner like First  
2 Solar, they would be a part of the recycling  
3 process.  
4 **COURT REPORTER:** Remind me of your name.  
5 **MS. MAKAYLA NEPP:** Makayla Nepp.  
6 You brought up the hail and you said  
7 something about what if a tornado hits it, you know,  
8 the first two years. Refresh my memory, I don't  
9 remember. Were you part of Winnebago? You look  
10 familiar.  
11 Okay. With the money for  
12 decommissioning, something wasn't available until  
13 year ten; is that correct? So what is not available  
14 until year ten?  
15 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** It is that financial  
16 assurance.  
17 **MS. MAKAYLA NEPP:** Okay. What happens if  
18 in the next year -- five years and this hail or a  
19 tornado happens and we're not past year ten? What  
20 happens then?  
21 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** Like I said, there's a  
22 lot of value in these projects, and so besides the  
23 panels, having the infrastructure already there is a  
24 value. And so if a majority of panels were damaged,  
25 then you would clean it up and new panels could be

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1 assurity or insurance that covers the total cleaning  
2 up of the land if there is a hailstorm or something  
3 that damages, a tornado that damages the whole crop  
4 of solar panels in two years. It won't be 30 years  
5 that you guys get financial benefit from. So I just  
6 want proof in the paperwork that comes back that  
7 there is insurance to cover that.  
8 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** I can't address  
9 the actual insurance. But we will look at -- an  
10 emergency response plan is required for these type  
11 of projects. So, there will be something that's  
12 filed with the Commission that describes how they  
13 will respond in the event of an emergency, and it  
14 usually is up to the applicant to pay for it and to  
15 conduct all of that cleanup. So that's part of the  
16 what the Commission will consider when they provide  
17 a permit for this project.  
18 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** I'll just add that for  
19 damaged panels, panels at the end of the life of the  
20 project, we've partnered for many years with a  
21 company called First Solar, they're a panel  
22 manufacturing company based here in the U.S., and  
23 they have an extensive recycling system already in  
24 place. They have plants and recycling, collocated  
25 recycling plants in Ohio and Alabama, and I believe

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1 placed. And, yeah, with insurance involved as well,  
2 of course.  
3 **MS. MAKAYLA NEPP:** So your company's  
4 insurance? Or does the company have to have  
5 insurance?  
6 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** Our insurance.  
7 **MS. MAKAYLA NEPP:** So you guys -- so no  
8 one would have to worry about nothing?  
9 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** No.  
10 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** Ideally, we  
11 wouldn't want power cut off for the community as  
12 well, so it would be helpful for the applicant to  
13 address it if something happens.  
14 **MS. MAKAYLA NEPP:** So, that's another  
15 good question. So, we talked in our county, or at  
16 that meeting, not county, you know, will we get to  
17 use this power? And they said, yep, it goes  
18 anywhere that it's needed. And then we had our  
19 second meeting with them, just a small meeting at a  
20 coffee shop, there was six to eight of us there.  
21 And the tune changed and they said, well, we're  
22 going to sell our power to -- I can't recall what  
23 company, and they said you have to talk to that  
24 company. But they did say if you guys lose power,  
25 you can get power off the BESS system in that moment

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1 while your town is out of power.  
2 So, again, that was kind of another  
3 wishy-washy answer, yes, the power goes everywhere  
4 to, well, you gotta talk to the company who's going  
5 to buy it from us. Ultimately, it's not on us, it's  
6 on the power company.  
7 So can this project say that these  
8 residents are for sure going to get that power?  
9 **MR. KARSEN RUMPF:** Karsen Rumpf. I had  
10 the same question with a concerned neighbor the  
11 other day, and I've always explained that it's like  
12 a drop of water in a bucket. Once that drop of  
13 water goes into the bucket, it's just part of the  
14 whole system. And where the spicket is, where the  
15 road is, it's going to be dropped off where the road  
16 is, so if it goes to Fairmont, it'll go to the next  
17 town. But in certain cases like you're talking  
18 about, does it go to Illinois? A company like  
19 Amazon can build a facility in Illinois, and it's  
20 part of the MISO system, who regulates all the  
21 transmission power coming on and off the grid. So  
22 they could potentially say, hey, they're consuming  
23 400,000 megawatts a year at their facility in  
24 Illinois, this solar facility is creating 200,000  
25 megawatts hours a year, they could buy essentially

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1 we've seen so far here.  
2 **MS. MAKAYLA NEPP:** All right. That  
3 sounds good. Thank you.  
4 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** All right. So  
5 is there anyone else who has any more questions or  
6 comments?  
7 This will be the last one and then we're  
8 taking a break.  
9 **MR. DARWIN ROBERTS:** Darwin Roberts,  
10 D-A-R-W-I-N, R-O-B-E-R-T-S.  
11 Just a couple of comments. I'm familiar  
12 with private units, and in Faribault County,  
13 although I live in Martin, a family put five big  
14 units in. We did not have a rough winter here in  
15 Minnesota last year, their units tilted to the sun,  
16 tipped, so on and so on. The little bit of winter  
17 we had, they had over \$85,000 worth of damage on the  
18 units. Yes, the family had their own insurance  
19 because, again, it's private.  
20 So are you people able to deal and carry  
21 the amount of insurance that would be needed to  
22 cover your different installations if we had a  
23 severe tornado or a severe, severe ice storm?  
24 Because our insurance industry here in Minnesota,  
25 they have to have a two for one equity for every

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1 the credits off the grid. And say, hey, we're  
2 buying energy, not that energy is shipped directly  
3 to that facility, it's just part of they're buying  
4 power off the grid and won't be producing as much.  
5 But it goes where it's needed, you know, it's taken  
6 off like a highway system, so it'll go where the  
7 largest load is, and if it's five miles from here,  
8 it'll go to the next town or go where it's needed.  
9 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** There's also a  
10 point of interconnection that connects to the energy  
11 system within this community as well.  
12 **MS. MAKAYLA NEPP:** And do you guys --  
13 windmills have increased energy prices, what's the  
14 thought on solar? Is it more expensive?  
15 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** I can't speak to  
16 what this project will do, but overall trends, I  
17 think Minnesota has been seeing a decrease in energy  
18 prices.  
19 **MS. MAKAYLA NEPP:** Okay. Because I just  
20 talked to a politician Tuesday night and he said  
21 he's all for clean energy, but it has to be  
22 affordable. And what he's done, the research he's  
23 done, he says solar is not going to lower our energy  
24 costs by any means.  
25 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** That is not what

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1 amount of insurance they sell. I don't know how  
2 that works in green energy.  
3 **MR. KARSEN RUMPF:** Yes. We have to carry  
4 a very expensive insurance policy to cover our  
5 projects. This is our financial model to make the  
6 project work. So, yes, it's part of the project.  
7 **MR. DARWIN ROBERTS:** One more question.  
8 Now, you, in producing the energy, are  
9 you going to be a distributor and are we going to  
10 need additional transmission lines to carry this  
11 energy? It looks like they're going have one  
12 substation. And so are more lines going to be set  
13 across our area to whatever point, and so -- or will  
14 you be selling to a wholesaler who in turn will  
15 determine where the energy is going to be used?  
16 **MR. KARSEN RUMPF:** So, with this project  
17 design, we have to build what you call a collection  
18 substation. So we bring the power in from all the  
19 panels at a lower voltage all into our collection  
20 substation, which will be placed directly adjacent  
21 to the existing substation. There will be one  
22 overhead line that's required with FERC requirements  
23 and how the system is actually completed. Yeah,  
24 it's a couple hundred feet just to take it  
25 from our --

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1 **MR. DARWIN ROBERTS:** Is that already in  
2 or planned for? Is there additional transmission  
3 lines?  
4 **MR. KARSEN RUMPF:** It'll be part of the  
5 interior of the project, just directly adjacent to  
6 the existing substation, just one permanent line.  
7 **MR. DARWIN ROBERTS:** Thank you.  
8 **MR. KARSEN RUMPF:** In regards to the  
9 power, it goes back to the same situation, where we  
10 put it on the system operator's grid, and it is  
11 taken off in the area, but there could be a case  
12 where we enter into a power purchase agreement  
13 with -- it could be anybody, John Deere or Amazon or  
14 Facebook, to where they buy the credits off the grid  
15 if they build a facility in that Midwest Independent  
16 System Operator area, which spans from North Dakota,  
17 South Dakota, Iowa, and parts of Illinois, parts of  
18 Wisconsin, so I think there's seven across the  
19 country.  
20 **MR. DARWIN ROBERTS:** We know some of the  
21 coal manufacturing of energy ends up clear down in  
22 New Mexico.  
23 **MR. KARSEN RUMPF:** They might have  
24 entered into a power purchase agreement of some  
25 sort.

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1 that in addition to the property taxes paid by the  
2 farmers or is that replacing what the farmers are  
3 already paying, and you guys are going to be paying  
4 all the property taxes? Or is that going to be  
5 really an increase, or is it just going to be a  
6 toupee and that's what you pay? And you guys are  
7 paying us, you know, property taxes, or how is that  
8 going to benefit us or is it going to be a benefit  
9 to the county or the township or whatever?  
10 **MR. KARSEN RUMPF:** Yeah, I'll take the  
11 property tax situation.  
12 So in our lease, the landowner pays the  
13 real estate taxes, but their property will be  
14 rezoned commercial, as commercial real estate. So  
15 it will be taxed commercially and we pay the  
16 increase in that rate from residential to  
17 commercial. We're also charging energy tax as well.  
18 So based on the megawatt capacity of our project, so  
19 we pay the addition of the taxes that the landowner  
20 has to and we pay the energy tax and that's where  
21 the numbers are coming from.  
22 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** So that 36 million is  
23 extra money that the county is going to be  
24 realizing.  
25 **MR. KARSEN RUMPF:** Yes, from the energy

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1 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** All right. So  
2 thanks, everyone, who has commented so far.  
3 I'm going to say, is there anyone else  
4 who would like to provide a comment in the next 15  
5 minutes?  
6 All right. Then we'll come back and open  
7 it back up for more public comments.  
8 (Break taken from 7:50 to 8:09.)  
9 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** All right,  
10 everybody. Thank you for your patience.  
11 We will open it back up for the next  
12 public comment.  
13 Thank you.  
14 **MS. DEB WALLACE:** My name is Deb Wallace.  
15 I have two questions. One is about the  
16 water runoff. There's a couple of places along the  
17 residences of Charlotte Oak Drive that when there's  
18 a heavy rain, it gushes, and it impacts a lot of the  
19 field trash, whatever, whatever. And will the  
20 vegetation be enough to absorb that or restrict it  
21 or will there be something to stop that from  
22 draining or increasing as the project is being  
23 built?  
24 And my other question is about the tax  
25 revenue. You cite \$36 million over 20 years. Is

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1 tax of the project.  
2 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** I can address  
3 the question about stormwater runoff and drainage.  
4 That is something we'll be looking at and the DNR  
5 and anyone who has jurisdiction over the water  
6 system will be involved in. So, they mentioned that  
7 they have formed water facilities in the design of  
8 those plans, so it seems to be issues with runoff or  
9 increased participation in the area that will be  
10 addressed before the permit is given as well.  
11 Are there any other questions or  
12 comments?  
13 Please state and spell your name for the  
14 court reporter.  
15 **MR. STEVE BLAUFUSS:** My name is Steve  
16 Blaufuss, S-T-E-V-E, B-L-A-U-F-U-S-S.  
17 I'm a resident of the city of Northrup,  
18 and I've got a couple of questions, actually. Most  
19 of these are regarding the environmental impacts.  
20 The first to start with is what kind of  
21 containment do the battery storage facilities have?  
22 The landowners, they may themselves be willing to  
23 accept the risk of leaching for \$2,000 per acre a  
24 year, but there's a lot of citizens that live close  
25 by with the proximity that share the same runoff

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1 that may not benefit at all with this. That's the  
2 first one.  
3 The second one is, with the landscape of  
4 plan for the south side of Northrup, which is an  
5 appreciation that that's being considered. Is there  
6 any plan in place to ensure the long-term  
7 maintenance of that over the 25-year lifespan of  
8 this project?  
9 Next one would be, considering the makeup  
10 of these panels, although the fire hazard itself is  
11 low, because of the makeup, if a fire were to occur,  
12 the off gassing of materials from within the panels  
13 themselves, is there any kind of potential risk  
14 regarding the air quality and any potential  
15 long-term effects that people --  
16 **COURT REPORTER:** Just a second, please.  
17 **MR. STEVE BLAUFUSS:** So my concern there  
18 is the off gas of any kind of materials that would  
19 burn, being as though -- and the city of Northrup is  
20 in very close proximity to this project. In terms  
21 of air quality, if it were to happen, any kind of  
22 long-term effects that have been measured or  
23 understood? And obviously mitigation for something  
24 like that is not possible. And so it would really  
25 be more of a concern about if that is even

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1 the vegetation, so the vegetation management plan  
2 that was submitted with the application is  
3 throughout the life of the project. That includes  
4 construction, operation, and decommissioning. And  
5 what the maintenance over the entire life of the  
6 project will be, so it will be taken care of. I  
7 think there are specific plans for each year of  
8 different maintenance activities to make sure that  
9 the vegetation gets established so we see the  
10 benefits that we're anticipating to see from  
11 planting native perineal under the soils.  
12 In terms of leaching, the water leaching,  
13 the materials leaching into the water system. So we  
14 do look at drain tiles, like I said. We look at  
15 surface water impacts, though we also look at water  
16 quality impact. So, if there's drain tiles  
17 connected to septic systems or aquifers, that's  
18 something that we would look in to. We also look  
19 into wells, so if there's any local wells,  
20 residential or whatever, we would also take that  
21 into account as well.  
22 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** I'll answer. You asked  
23 about the best containment, there is -- they are all  
24 sealed batteries. And in addition to that, they're  
25 in secondary containment within the cabinets that

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1 considered within this environmental impact.  
2 And my last one regarding the  
3 environmental impact is if the intent were to keep  
4 the tile in place as Marta, you had mentioned, that  
5 because the landowners spent a lot of time and money  
6 putting that in, wouldn't that negate the idea of if  
7 there is a potential at all in any case, whether it  
8 be some leaching -- I know how tile works and I  
9 imagine that would increase the risk as far as it  
10 being able to travel to or from one place, and I  
11 can't see how any kind of emergency plan you put in  
12 place would help mitigate that without removing or  
13 capping such tile. And so I don't know if that has  
14 been considered or not. Because I know runoff is  
15 one of the concerns you guys have, and I understand  
16 that, but with tile, that's its job, is to take it  
17 away. Although your runoff, I should say rain water  
18 into retention ponds, that makes sense, but it  
19 doesn't seem to be addressed, in that if any kind of  
20 leaching is there, anything to mitigate its movement  
21 under the soil.  
22 So that's all I have. Thank you.  
23 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** I will let the  
24 applicant speak on the drain tile.  
25 I will say that for the maintenance of

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1 house the batteries.  
2 You spoke about the melting of panels.  
3 First Solar has tested these panels in fires and  
4 grass fire settings. And, you know, a grass fire is  
5 not typically hot enough to melt the glass, and the  
6 majority of the makeup of these panels is glass.  
7 The components that make it, you know, photovoltaic,  
8 are the thickness. I believe it's 3 percent of the  
9 width of a hair, so that's how thin the coating of  
10 the semiconductor is. And it's all encapsulated  
11 within industrial glass that is designed to weather  
12 the elements.  
13 **MR. KARSEN RUMPF:** There's been a lot of  
14 talk on leakage and our operations manager would  
15 describe it as the toxic chemicals, you know, as  
16 cadmium is used, it's built in a way for inert  
17 material, it's covered in a specific substance where  
18 it's not flammable. So it's an inert material. So  
19 with these panels, you think there's fluids running  
20 through them or liquids or toxins, they break, you  
21 know, they just break like glass. And it's an inert  
22 material, it's not a leakage, it's not a fluid, is  
23 how our operations team and the guys that build the  
24 panels would describe it to you. It's inert, it's  
25 not a liquid.

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1 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** All right. Are  
2 there any other questions or comments from the  
3 public at this time?  
4 **MS. JENNIFER MOELLER:** Jenny Moeller.  
5 Jennifer Moeller. I just want to add to the  
6 drainage thing.  
7 My house is the farthest south house.  
8 When it rains, there's a river that is created that  
9 comes through there. So it's not like you won't see  
10 it. I have video and pictures over the years and  
11 it's very big, it takes up a large piece of the  
12 property. So there is a lot of drainage that comes  
13 off of there. I just wanted to add that.  
14 **MR. BRADLEY WALLACE:** Brad Wallace.  
15 It's been discussed that there would be  
16 approximately three employees, possibly more, with  
17 this solar farm. I was wondering what the  
18 qualifications would be or kind of job description  
19 of what these employees would be involved in.  
20 Again, addressing the economic situation  
21 of how does that compare to the number of people  
22 involved in farming this 1,300 acres of land,  
23 residents of the county, of the surrounding counties  
24 that are involved, and how is that going to affect  
25 housing, taxes, schools, retail sales? Has this

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1 catch on fire. You know, but as far as toxins being  
2 released into the air, those specific materials that  
3 are a catalyst are encapsulated, so as I mentioned  
4 earlier, they are inert, there is no toxic chemicals  
5 that are sent into the air.  
6 **MR. BRADLEY WALLACE:** My concern is more  
7 when rain water enters this panel, what's going to  
8 be washed out?  
9 **MR. KARSEN RUMPF:** In the case of  
10 cracking, it cracks, as I said, specifically, but it  
11 would just crack and it would be solid materials,  
12 there wouldn't be liquids coming out of the solar  
13 panel.  
14 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** The construction of the  
15 panels that we're talking about, the glass is, you  
16 know, industrial glass. And then between that it's  
17 a mini-layered sandwich. There's an industrial  
18 capsule laminate that seals all of the electrical  
19 producing components between the panel, panels on  
20 the outside, the industrial and laminated  
21 encapsulate, and then in the middle are the  
22 components that, you know, make it photovoltaic.  
23 **MR. BRADLEY WALLACE:** I understand that  
24 part of it, but still there's something in this  
25 product that is hazardous, that the public or the

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1 been studied in other areas with solar farms  
2 replacing farmland? I wonder if this is a win/win  
3 situation for Martin County.  
4 And I have one other question that we  
5 were discussing a little earlier on in the evening.  
6 These electrical panels, the solar panels, anything  
7 that's produced to go in the outdoor environment has  
8 an IP rating, which is an ingress protection rating.  
9 I'm wondering what the rating is on these panels and  
10 are they really susceptible to a hailstorm that it  
11 could damage these panels? And, if so, is there  
12 something in these panels that is contaminant that  
13 we should worry about being released?  
14 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** I can speak to  
15 the fact that we will be looking at job impacts and  
16 socioeconomic impacts of the project in the area.  
17 We also will be looking at farmland impacts as it  
18 relates to both the county and the state overall.  
19 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** And I can get with you  
20 on the IP rating. I can get that.  
21 **MR. KARSEN RUMPF:** One comment on the  
22 solar panels and contents being released by the  
23 solar panels. One of the questions brought up is  
24 are these flammable? There are very few components  
25 in a solar panel that is flammable, but, yes, it can

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1 environment protection agency has to be dealt with  
2 in disposing of them. You can't just grind it up  
3 and spread it on your front lawn.  
4 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** No, the tests that are  
5 done on these and, you know, they're found to not  
6 leach, the inner materials.  
7 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** All right. Are  
8 there any other questions or comments from the  
9 public?  
10 And if there are no longer any questions  
11 at this time, I would like to remind everyone that  
12 you still have the opportunity to provide written  
13 public comments until September 17th. So that can  
14 be done digitally on the website, via email, right  
15 to me in the mail. Any way that works for all of  
16 you. You have about two more weeks to get your  
17 comments in on the scope of the environmental  
18 assessment.  
19 The next steps for this project will be  
20 for me to write the environmental assessment and  
21 then three months from when the scoping decision is  
22 issued around February to get all of your input,  
23 that if there's anything that you would like extra  
24 attention being paid to in front of the Commission,  
25 that would be your opportunity to bring those topics

1 up again.  
2 And then we will see you all again in  
3 February. Thank you for taking time today for  
4 attending our meeting today.  
5 (Meeting concluded at 8:27 p.m.)

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**In The Matter Of:**

*Lake Charlotte Project - 25-205 25-206*

*Virtual Info & Scoping Meeting - 9-2-25*

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*September 2, 2025*

*Lake Charlotte Project - Virtual - 25-205 25-206 - 9-2-25*

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*Shaddix & Associates*

*7400 Lyndale Avenue South*

*Suite 190*

*Richfield, MN 55423*

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1 PUBLIC INFORMATION AND SCOPING MEETING - 25-206 & 25-205  
 2 Webex - September 2, 2025 - 6:00 p.m.  
 3 BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION  
 4  
 5  
 6  
 7  
 8 In the Matter of Lake Charlotte, LLC's, Joint Application  
 9 for the Lake Charlotte 150-MW Solar Facility and 150-MW  
 10 Lake Charlotte Battery Energy Storage System (BESS)  
 11 located in Rutland Township, Martin County, Minnesota  
 12  
 13 MPUC DOCKET NOS. IP-7159/GS-25-206  
 14 IP-7159/ESS-25-205  
 15  
 16 Meeting held remotely via:  
 17 Webex and Telephone  
 18  
 19  
 20 September 2, 2025  
 21  
 22  
 23  
 24  
 25 COURT REPORTER: Christine Simons, RMR, RPR

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1 **MR. CEZAR PANAIT:** Welcome to the public  
 2 information and environmental assessment scoping  
 3 meeting of the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission  
 4 on the application of Lake Charlotte Solar, LLC, for  
 5 a -- for the 100-megawatt battery -- solar  
 6 project -- 150-megawatt, pardon me, and 150-megawatt  
 7 energy storage facility located in Martin County.  
 8 We have the docket numbers listed on the screen  
 9 here. The first one pertains to the site permit  
 10 application for the solar facility itself; the  
 11 second one pertains to the battery energy storage.  
 12 My name is Cezar Panait. I'm an engineer  
 13 with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission, and  
 14 we have here tonight Jessica Livingston from Energy  
 15 Infrastructure Permitting. And we have, also,  
 16 representatives from Geronimo Power, the applicant  
 17 for the Lake Charlotte Solar project.  
 18 We met in person on Tuesday in Fairmont,  
 19 and this is the second and last of the two-series  
 20 meetings. And the information presented here is  
 21 exactly the same, just like we presented on Thursday  
 22 evening. And also we are seeking comments and  
 23 questions from members of the public or any local  
 24 government representatives that may be present for  
 25 the scoping of the environmental review, and Jessica

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1 will talk about that scoping and what goes into that  
 2 document.  
 3 The agenda meeting -- the meeting agenda  
 4 for tonight, I've made already some introductory  
 5 comments about the permit, the application at hand  
 6 here, the permit application for a site permit --  
 7 two, actually, two site permits. And the Commission  
 8 conducts the public review process on these two  
 9 applications.  
 10 Lake Charlotte, LLC, will talk about the  
 11 project specifics and timeline for the construction,  
 12 and then the, formerly, Department of Commerce,  
 13 currently Public Utilities Commission Energy  
 14 Infrastructure Permitting Unit, Jessica Livingston  
 15 will talk about the environmental document. And  
 16 then, finally, but not the least, the purpose for  
 17 tonight's meeting is to gather input from members of  
 18 the public and answer any questions that you might  
 19 have.  
 20 So the -- this particular project is  
 21 being reviewed by the Minnesota Public Utilities  
 22 Commission, which overall manages the application  
 23 review process and issues site and route permits for  
 24 large energy facilities in Minnesota.  
 25 We have the newly established Energy

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1 Infrastructure Permitting Unit, which combined the,  
2 formerly, Energy Facilities Permitting Unit -- which  
3 was part of the Commission staff, which was part of  
4 my unit prior to July 1st, 2025 -- and then,  
5 formerly, the Department of Commerce, Energy  
6 Environmental Review and Analysis, they joined us by  
7 new legislation that was passed during the last  
8 legislative session. That particular unit from the  
9 Department of Commerce was moved to the Public  
10 Utilities Commission for the purpose to streamline  
11 the permit application for energy projects in  
12 Minnesota.  
13 Later we will have the designated  
14 Administrative Law Judge from the Court of  
15 Administrative Hearings. And that judge will be  
16 presiding over a public -- formal public hearing,  
17 and then will be asked by the Commission to compile  
18 a summary of the comments received during the public  
19 hearing. And, also, write a report with findings of  
20 fact and conclusions of law and a recommendation to  
21 the Commission. So that judge has not been named or  
22 assigned yet, but that will happen in the next  
23 month.  
24 I will not talk too much about the  
25 project specifics because that -- that is the

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1 being proposed or developed by independent  
2 developers, such as Geronimo Power.  
3 We have on this slide a summary of permit  
4 considerations. So when a -- when a company makes a  
5 permit application for an energy project to the  
6 Commission and is seeking the approval, is seeking a  
7 permit, the Commission is tasked by statute to look  
8 at some factors before they would decide whether  
9 that particular application should be granted and  
10 the site permit should be -- should be issued or  
11 not.  
12 So some of the factors that are found in  
13 Minnesota Rule 7850.4100, including -- include the  
14 potential human and environmental impacts of the  
15 project. For example, the rules call for any  
16 impacts related to noise, aesthetics; public health  
17 and safety, and any land-use conflicts; any cultural  
18 or historical resources that may be present in the  
19 project area and may be impacted; air and water  
20 quality; and the impact on plants and wildlife.  
21 Also, the Commission is required to look  
22 at any suitable ways to minimize, mitigate, or avoid  
23 any identified impacts. This project is being  
24 proposed as part of an overall grid, and the  
25 Commission looks like -- looks at maintaining that

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1 specialty and the -- they are prepared to talk about  
2 project details of Lake Charlotte, LLC. Again,  
3 Geronimo Power is the company that submitted this  
4 particular application.  
5 I already mentioned in the beginning that  
6 for this particular solar project, the applicant has  
7 requested two site permits. One for the solar  
8 facility, and the statutes require any large power  
9 plant -- which this is considered a power plant, the  
10 power generated with energy from the sun -- exceeds  
11 150 megawatts in a nameplate capacity, and that is  
12 the threshold for requiring a permit from the Public  
13 Utilities Commission.  
14 More -- in the more recent years, the  
15 legislature also started regulating battery energy  
16 storage projects, and the statutes for those  
17 particular projects require a site permit for any  
18 project greater than 10 megawatts nameplate  
19 capacity, alternating current, and this is a  
20 150-megawatt project. So as a result, both of these  
21 projects require site -- two site permits, one for  
22 each facility.  
23 Lastly, a few years back the legislature  
24 also exempted energy projects powered by renewable  
25 energy from the certificate of need and -- which are

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1 electrical grid reliability in the State of  
2 Minnesota and also interconnected with the  
3 neighboring states.  
4 Some of the factors that the Commission  
5 looks at also are related to the cost --  
6 construction cost of the project and operating costs  
7 and maintaining the facility, which all these  
8 factors discussed are affected by the designated  
9 route or site that the Commission issues for the  
10 project.  
11 And when I say the cost is important,  
12 because ultimately this project will be -- will be  
13 sending the power into the grid, and ratepayers, all  
14 of us, residential, commercial, industrial, who  
15 depend on electricity for everyday life or to  
16 maintain -- to operate their businesses, pay for  
17 this project. A portion of this project affects the  
18 overall rates. That's why it is important for the  
19 Commission to consider cost considerations also in  
20 making the permit decisions.  
21 We have here a table showing the overall  
22 schedule for the project. So from the time the  
23 application was accepted -- which was recently,  
24 July 22nd, and then we are at the highlighted phase  
25 of the review process. Namely, we are doing --

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1 conducting the public information and environmental  
2 scoping meetings: We had one last week, this one  
3 today. And then there's an associated comment  
4 period which closes on September 17th. People are  
5 being invited kindly to consider making comments  
6 either today -- verbal comments -- or in writing.  
7 And then we have a later slide that shows the few  
8 options to provide those comments.  
9 And then later this year there will be  
10 a -- the scoping of the environmental document being  
11 issued and then the document itself, and Jessica  
12 will talk about that. And then in the  
13 wintertime time frame, February, we will have a  
14 public hearing, again, held in the project area.  
15 Which from -- most likely will be the same place  
16 like last week in Fairmont, Minnesota.  
17 That will be a formal type of hearing  
18 presided over by an Administrative Law Judge, and  
19 then that judge will be writing a report, submitting  
20 it to the record. And by springtime, April time  
21 frame, the Commission will be ready to meet one last  
22 time in an open meeting. We call those agenda  
23 meetings. They're held on every -- most Thursdays.  
24 And then the Commissioners will have an  
25 opportunity at that meeting to deliberate on the

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1 and then they pertain to, again, going back to what  
2 kind of environmental impacts or human impacts the  
3 project has. And, also, if there are means by which  
4 those impacts could be mitigated or avoided or  
5 potentially -- I mean, minimize, mitigated, or  
6 avoided, if possible. And also if there are any  
7 unique features that this project has that should be  
8 considered in that environmental document.  
9 We -- on the right side, we have a link  
10 to a website where you can find out more information  
11 about this particular project. Or if you would like  
12 to access the complete record, we have the eDocket  
13 system, which is an electronic database filing  
14 system. And once you go to that -- to the  
15 Commission's website, you go to eDockets, and then  
16 you enter in the year 25-206 or 25-205. And hit  
17 enter, and then you will see a list of documents.  
18 All the documents, beginning with the application  
19 and everything that has been filed ever since.  
20 If you would like to get information -- a  
21 notification, I should say, every time there's a new  
22 document that arrives in the docket, you could --  
23 you could subscribe, and you could -- that's like a  
24 self-serve action. You go visit the website listed  
25 there, eDockets.state.mn.us/eFiling, and then you

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1 merits of the project and ask questions of the  
2 applicant, of the parties involved, and, finally,  
3 decide whether to issue the site permits that are  
4 being requested.  
5 And these are the three ways by which we  
6 kindly ask people to provide comments. One is to  
7 access the website of the Public Utilities  
8 Commission, and then there's a link. Follow that  
9 link, "get involved/provide comments," and then  
10 provide comments specifically for this project.  
11 And any time you provide comments, it is  
12 important to identify the docket numbers for the  
13 project. So at least one of the two so we will know  
14 which project those comments go to. So in this case  
15 the docket numbers that are important, and you don't  
16 need to list the entire lengthy docket number, it's  
17 just 25-206 for the solar facility or 25-205 for the  
18 storage facility. Another way Jessica is receiving,  
19 also, written comments will be e-mail, and her  
20 e-mail address is listed there. And, also, comments  
21 received via U.S. Postal Service via regular mail.  
22 When making comments, we would like to  
23 remind people about the overall questions that were  
24 part of the notice for the meeting tonight, and  
25 those questions are listed here, also. And then --

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1 choose the button that says "subscribe to eDockets."  
2 And then follow the prompts by providing your e-mail  
3 address and name and basic information.  
4 The state agency contacts for this  
5 application are Jessica Livingston, and she will  
6 introduce herself; and then myself, Cezar Panait.  
7 My contact information is there. You can contact me  
8 by e-mail or by phone. And also we have a  
9 designated public advisor, and our -- his role and  
10 my role is to answer any questions related to the  
11 process.  
12 So what -- what is the next opportunity  
13 for public comment, when is the next public meeting,  
14 and -- or we will not have any more public meetings,  
15 we will have the public hearing. Which is the same  
16 thing as a public meeting, but under a more formal  
17 structure because it is being run by a judge as  
18 opposed to Commission staffers.  
19 With that, I believe we are ready to move  
20 to Lake Charlotte, LLC, to talk about project  
21 specifics.  
22 Marta.  
23 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** Thank you, Cezar.  
24 Hello. My name is Marta Lasch. I'm a  
25 permitting lead with Geronimo Solar -- I'm sorry

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1 Geronimo Power. We are headquartered in  
2 Bloomington. We were founded in 2004 by our late  
3 founder. He was approached by a wind developer and  
4 thought that he could do a better job of developing  
5 wind.  
6 And so he developed the Odin wind project  
7 on his family's farm in the Mountain Lake area, and  
8 from there, we built a business of developing wind  
9 across the Midwest. We grew and branched into  
10 community solar projects in Minnesota and in other  
11 states in the Midwest as well.  
12 In 2019, we were acquired by National  
13 Grid and became National Grid Renewables. During  
14 that time, we began developing utility-scale solar  
15 and storage projects. And since then, we were  
16 acquired this year by Brookfield Asset Management  
17 and have gone back to our roots as Geronimo Power.  
18 Next slide.  
19 We have, as I said, a lot of experience  
20 developing in Minnesota. Lake Charlotte Solar and  
21 Storage is one of many projects we have developed  
22 and will own, and plan to own and operate here. The  
23 solar portion of the project is proposed to be  
24 150 megawatts, with a matched storage -- the -- with  
25 a four-hour duration battery, which gets us to that

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1 Next slide.  
2 The battery projects add a lot of value  
3 to solar. They're able to store energy when there  
4 may be excess on the grid, and are able to deploy it  
5 when there is high demand.  
6 The battery storage facilities are made  
7 up of weatherized cabinets. These are intended to  
8 be outdoors 24/7, 365 days a year in all weather  
9 conditions. The cabinets house the battery modules  
10 and all of the supporting electrical and cooling  
11 systems, along with monitoring systems and fire  
12 suppression.  
13 The BESS area will be fully graveled  
14 within a fenced area separate from the solar  
15 facility. The batteries will be mounted on concrete  
16 pads. I would say the batteries, with all of their  
17 supporting systems, are 10 to 12 feet tall and about  
18 as wide and a bit shorter than the average  
19 semi-truck trailer.  
20 Next slide.  
21 We have some snapshots of what  
22 construction may look like, show an access road,  
23 a -- some equipment driving piles. The piles act as  
24 the foundation for the racking, which the panels are  
25 mounted into. And in the lower left shows some

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1 600-megawatt hour.  
2 We have 1,300 acres under site control,  
3 1,000 of those are within the fenced area of the  
4 proposed design. We are interconnecting into the  
5 Southern Minnesota Municipal Power Agency Rutland  
6 substation, which is located within the proposed  
7 project area. We would not require a route permit  
8 as the proposed transmission line is only 365 feet  
9 long. We are anticipating a construction start in  
10 the fall of 2027 and an operation -- an operational  
11 date in the winter of 2028.  
12 Next slide.  
13 Here is the proposed design of Lake  
14 Charlotte Solar and BESS. The green and tan blocks  
15 represent the solar array, with the tan representing  
16 alternate array. The pink box in the center left of  
17 the project area is the proposed storage facility,  
18 and the blue box is the proposed substation.  
19 Next slide.  
20 There are some key components to solar  
21 projects and battery storage projects. Here's a  
22 list of, I would say, the most critical. Solar has  
23 been a relatively common technology in Minnesota for  
24 about ten years, but battery projects are relatively  
25 new here.

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1 equipment delivery of an inverter.  
2 Next slide.  
3 This being an electrical generating, you  
4 know, power plant, there are quite a few wires and  
5 cabling systems involved. The direct current cables  
6 from the panels will all be gathered underneath them  
7 and above ground. They'll be routed to combiner  
8 boxes, where they will then be trenched from the  
9 combiner box to the inverter. And, again, below  
10 ground from the inverter to where infrastructure  
11 will pop up to enter the substation.  
12 Next slide. Thank you.  
13 So we have some pictures here of  
14 construction, restoration and vegetation and  
15 operations.  
16 Next slide.  
17 Here you can see a simulation of what --  
18 how the vegetation will evolve over the first few  
19 years of the project's lifespan. We typically see  
20 full establishment around year three of operations.  
21 Next slide. Thank you.  
22 We are proposing a vegetative buffer  
23 along the northern boundary where we overlap with  
24 the -- the city of Northrop. Not shown in our  
25 landscaping plan, but will be added to our plan is

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1 an additional landscape buffer along Charlotte Oak  
2 Drive. This picture here shows what the buffer may  
3 look like once it's established.  
4 So before submitting the joint site  
5 permit applications, we conducted a lot of due  
6 diligence to identify possible resources that could  
7 be impacted by the project so that we could factor  
8 those into our design and minimize or mitigate those  
9 impacts.  
10 We have conducted wetland delineations,  
11 cultural resource surveys. We have coordinated with  
12 the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to review  
13 our proposed agricultural impact mitigation plan.  
14 We've submitted a vegetation management plan as  
15 well. Some other approvals that we have sought out  
16 for the project is a generation interconnection  
17 agreement with MISO, which was approved last year,  
18 and review and approval by the FAA.  
19 We've done, you know, a lot of research  
20 on these resources, which can be found in the  
21 application, but we're here to listen to the topics  
22 that our neighbors and the community feel need to be  
23 addressed. And the unique characteristics,  
24 resources, and attributes you recommend be  
25 evaluated, and if impacted, how you propose or how

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1 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** Okay. Thanks,  
2 Marta.  
3 **MR. CEZAR PANAIT:** Okay. Go ahead,  
4 Jessica.  
5 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** Okay. Thanks,  
6 Cezar.  
7 Yeah. Thank you, everybody, for  
8 attending the public information and scoping meeting  
9 for the Lake Charlotte Solar project tonight. As  
10 Cezar mentioned, we were here on August 28th to do  
11 the in-person scoping meetings in Fairmont, and now  
12 we're here to do the virtual meeting to give anybody  
13 who wasn't able to attend the in-person meeting an  
14 opportunity to hear about the project and ask any  
15 questions they have or provide public comments.  
16 My name is Jessica Livingston, and I am  
17 the environmental review manager for this project on  
18 behalf of the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission.  
19 Next slide, please.  
20 So I'm going to talk to you today by  
21 first introducing who Energy Infrastructure  
22 Permitting is and describe what we do. That's what  
23 my team at the Public Utilities Commission is  
24 called. Then, I'll talk about what environmental  
25 review is and describe the different ways that it'll

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1 to mitigate or minimize those. We want to do the  
2 right thing and to be good neighbors in our  
3 community.  
4 Next slide.  
5 We feel there are some benefits that the  
6 project brings to the community. Those being  
7 primarily construction jobs, the full-time operating  
8 positions needed to support the solar and storage  
9 projects. As well as the revenue from the  
10 production tax that will go to the county and  
11 township.  
12 During development and this permitting  
13 process, we have introduced ourselves to our  
14 community. We continue to offer ourselves as a  
15 resource to our neighbors, and our outreach and  
16 presence doesn't end with this permitting process.  
17 We will be a long-term and active neighbor and  
18 partner in the community, and we look forward to --  
19 to working with Martin County and Rutland Township  
20 and the city of Northrop and our neighbors.  
21 And here are Karsen and I's contact  
22 information. Please feel free to reach out to us  
23 with any questions or concerns that we may not be  
24 able to address here or anything that comes up  
25 after. Thank you.

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1 be done for this project and the topics that will be  
2 included in the environmental review. Then, I will  
3 go into the ways that you can comment on the  
4 environmental review for this project, and then open  
5 it up to questions and comments at today's meeting.  
6 Next slide, please.  
7 So, first, an introduction to my team,  
8 Energy Infrastructure Permitting. So as Cezar  
9 mentioned, we are a new team at the Minnesota Public  
10 Utilities Commission, and my role as the  
11 environmental review manager on the EIP team is to  
12 prepare an environmental assessment for the Public  
13 Utilities Commission as they decide if this project  
14 gets a site permit.  
15 The purpose of the EA is to provide an  
16 objective analysis of the project. So that includes  
17 looking at anything that may be impacted by the  
18 construction, operation, or decommissioning of the  
19 projects related to potential human or environmental  
20 impacts. So that can include things like impacts to  
21 air pollution, it can also include things like  
22 wildlife or socioeconomics.  
23 We also want to identify any strategies  
24 to avoid, minimize, or mitigate any potential  
25 impacts. So if you have ideas on ways that

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1 something could be avoided, like installing a  
2 stormwater pond, that would be something that we  
3 would want to hear about.  
4 As a neutral third-party, the role of the  
5 EA is not to advocate on behalf of anyone in  
6 particular, but to present the facts and to create  
7 informed decision-making by both you, the public,  
8 and the Commission as we decide the next steps for  
9 this project.  
10 Next slide, please.  
11 Today I'm here to talk to you about what  
12 the EA should include, and that is called the  
13 scoping meeting. So we're looking to get input on  
14 the most relevant information to allow the  
15 Commission to make an informed decision on this  
16 project. Specifically, we're looking for public  
17 input on the table of contents that will be included  
18 in the environmental assessment.  
19 So like I described before, that would  
20 include any human and environmental impacts that you  
21 are looking to see studied by the project. There  
22 are quite a few things that we standardly look at  
23 for these projects, that includes things like I  
24 mentioned before, like air pollution, air quality,  
25 socioeconomic impacts.

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1 environmental review.  
2 Next slide, please.  
3 Now I'll talk about the different ways  
4 that you can comment. So we will be providing -- or  
5 we will be providing an opportunity for you to have  
6 a verbal comment captured by a court reporter at  
7 today's meeting. So if there's something related to  
8 the environmental assessment that you want to make  
9 sure it gets included or that the Commission sees  
10 related to the environmental assessment for this  
11 project, now would be the opportunity to have that  
12 comment documented by the court reporter, and then  
13 it will be included as a scoping comment for the  
14 project.  
15 You can also complete and submit a  
16 comment sheet by just writing a letter and mailing  
17 it to me. My address is provided on the slide, and  
18 I can read it in a minute here. You also can  
19 comment online on the public utilities webpage,  
20 which is available on  
21 MN.gov/PUC/getinvolved/publiccomments. You would  
22 want to scroll to the "filing a comment" tab and  
23 find this project listed under there.  
24 And then, like I said before, you can  
25 mail, you can also fax or e-mail a comment -- or I

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1 We also look at really project-specific  
2 information. So specifically looking at the soil in  
3 the site, looking at the water quality, looking at  
4 what animals and plants currently live there, how  
5 they may be impacted by the project. But if you  
6 have any ideas of a topic that's particularly  
7 interesting to you or that you think is important to  
8 this area, we would want to hear about that tonight.  
9 We also want to hear about strategies to  
10 mitigate or avoid the impacts. So if you have any  
11 ideas for a permit condition that can be included,  
12 for example, if there's a tree that you are aware of  
13 that has a nest of a bird, we can make sure that  
14 there is a permit condition included to avoid  
15 impacting that specific bird. So if we wanted to do  
16 a specific thing related to when construction can be  
17 done to avoid impacting the bird that was  
18 identified, that's an example of a permit condition  
19 that can be brought up when something is identified  
20 through the environmental assessment.  
21 And I have a draft scoping document, but  
22 that was a note from the in-person meeting, and I  
23 don't have it currently at this virtual meeting.  
24 But just like I said before, it just included the  
25 standard things that are provided in the

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1 don't know if we have a phone number on there for  
2 fax anymore, so just mail and e-mail would be the  
3 main ways. So my address would be Jessica  
4 Livingston at the Minnesota Public Utilities  
5 Commission, 121 Seventh Place East, Suite 350, in  
6 St. Paul, Minnesota 55101, and my e-mail address is  
7 Jessica.Livingston@state.mn.us.  
8 The comment period for this project will  
9 end on September 17th. So please submit any  
10 comments you have to related to the scope of the  
11 environmental assessment before the end of the day  
12 then. If you provide a comment after this date, we  
13 may be able to still consider it in terms of looking  
14 at the content, but it's not ensured that the  
15 Commission will have it as part of their record  
16 review process. So please try and get it in by the  
17 end of the day on September 17th so it can be  
18 provided in the official record for the document.  
19 Next slide.  
20 Now before we open it up to the public  
21 for comment, I would like us all to acknowledge that  
22 we took time out of our day to be at this meeting  
23 and we would all like an opportunity for our voices  
24 to be heard as it relates to this project. So,  
25 please, as you are called on to provide a comment,

1 one person at a time, and state and spell your name  
2 for the court reporter.

3 We want to limit our comments to only a  
4 few minutes, and we want to maintain respect for  
5 everybody as we're providing comments for this  
6 project. And like I said before, we're looking for,  
7 specifically, comments and questions related to the  
8 scope of the environmental assessment that will be  
9 done for this project.

10 Next slide.

11 So just a reminder on what the topics for  
12 comment include, the scope of the environmental  
13 assessment is looking at the table of contents, or  
14 what we need to know in order to make informed  
15 decisions related to the human and environmental  
16 impacts for this project. We'll also look at  
17 strategies to mitigate impacts, and we're also  
18 looking to hear about unique characteristics of the  
19 project area that can help inform and guide what the  
20 study will look at for this project.

21 Next slide.

22 And that is all I have for you today. So  
23 we're going to now open it up for public comment. I  
24 believe that you need to send a message to Cezar as  
25 the host either with the chat button or the raise

1 in Fairmont. The -- the solar -- the solar energy  
2 power station that you're proposing is about 600 or  
3 700 feet from my front door.

4 I guess I hadn't received any information  
5 from the power company at all on this project to  
6 date, other than what I've heard in the community.  
7 So that's a little frustrating to me as a homeowner  
8 who has invested, you know, a lot of money into my  
9 home. I did not move out to the country to live in  
10 a -- to live next to a solar farm. I moved out  
11 there to live next to crops and animals and birds.  
12 So I am concerned about what this will do to the  
13 resale value of my home.

14 I'm also concerned about the battery  
15 system being so close to Charlotte Lake. I actually  
16 grew up on Charlotte Oak Drive, so I've lived in  
17 that area for many years. What -- what kind of  
18 precautions are there in place to ensure that this  
19 battery system is not going to contaminate the  
20 waters or the land that it sits on, I guess, would  
21 be my first question to you.

22 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** Yes. So the battery  
23 system is totally enclosed. It's -- you know, if  
24 it's not functioning, then we are repairing or  
25 replacing -- replacing parts. And so, you know,

1 hand button, and then you will be called on and  
2 unmuted to provide comments.

3 And if you're on the phone --

4 **MR. CEZAR PANAIT:** Yes.

5 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** Oh, Cezar, were  
6 you going to mention that?

7 **MR. CEZAR PANAIT:** Yes. Yeah, it's \*3  
8 from the keypad on your phone. And that is the same  
9 as raising your hand, and we'll be able to unmute  
10 you. We have 16 attendees here and all of whom are  
11 muted, but if anyone is interested in providing any  
12 comments, I'll certainly be able to unmute you. No  
13 already-raised hands yet, so maybe people need a  
14 minute or so to think about what to ask.

15 And, again, if people don't feel  
16 comfortable speaking, making comments, they have the  
17 same importance to us, so either way is perfectly  
18 acceptable to us. And we value and appreciate any  
19 and all comments that we can get.

20 We do have a raised hand, Mr. Wallace,  
21 and I will unmute him right now. There we go. Your  
22 line is unmuted.

23 **MR. ISAAC WALLACE:** Yes. Hello. My name  
24 is Isaac Wallace. My name is spelled I-S-A-A-C;  
25 Wallace, W-A-L-L-A-C-E. I live at 1535 210th Avenue

1 we're monitoring the function of the batteries 24/7,  
2 and if something is awry, we are addressing that as  
3 quickly as possible.

4 **MR. ISAAC WALLACE:** As far --

5 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** I also -- oh,  
6 sorry, I was just going to note that the Public  
7 Utilities Commission will also be looking into  
8 property values and water impacts related to this  
9 project for the environmental assessment.

10 **MR. KARSEN RUMPF:** Yeah, Karsen Rumpf,  
11 senior project manager for Geronimo Power.

12 So these solar panels are designed in a  
13 way where they're inert material. So they  
14 encapsulate a lot of those elements that, you know,  
15 you worry about them breaking panels or anything  
16 from water quality. We also work with, like, local  
17 EMS and fire departments and train them through our  
18 operations as we're progressing the project. It's  
19 part of just one of our plans that we do with the  
20 county.

21 In the local sense, we progress our fire  
22 prevention plan, you know, stormwater drainage  
23 plans, all of the above. So those are things that  
24 are constantly evolving as the project progresses,  
25 and as we get to certain levels of the project, we

1 continue to work with local officials and EMS and  
2 fire departments to make sure that we have  
3 everything covered from our teams on-site, to  
4 suppression systems, anything needed to address an  
5 issue if it does come up.

6 **MR. ISAAC WALLACE:** As far as the panels  
7 themselves, if we have a major hailstorm or  
8 windstorm that comes through the area and smashes  
9 all these panels -- and I know you just said they're  
10 made up of inert materials, but will there be a  
11 bunch of glass, basically, in the ground with all  
12 this inert material in it?

13 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** No. So these panels,  
14 you know, they're made with industrial, like, safety  
15 glass. And so they won't shatter like, you know,  
16 your house window. And they are bonded to the  
17 laminate that encapsulates the semiconductor, and so  
18 the glass is bonded with, you know, what it  
19 sandwiches, if that makes sense. And so it may  
20 appear, like, crushed or the glass may crack, but it  
21 won't break and shatter like glass found in your  
22 home's windows.

23 **MR. KARSEN RUMPF:** It's more like a  
24 windshield. If your windshield were to shatter, it  
25 stays in, like, solid materials. It's easy to pick

1 plans describe different ways that the land will be  
2 maintained.

3 The vegetation management plan  
4 specifically outlines the different type of  
5 vegetation that will be planted under the panels.  
6 So I think they're planning to use native perennial  
7 vegetation, which is usually beneficial for soil  
8 health. So we're expecting over the life of the  
9 project, as long as the land is maintained in the  
10 way that the plan describes, there should be an  
11 overall benefit to the land, so that in the case of  
12 decommissioning, it could be restored back to  
13 farmland.

14 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** Yeah, Jessica hit on  
15 the key points that I was going to bring up.  
16 These -- the panels will not be contaminating soil  
17 over their lifespan. And like Jessica said, we  
18 anticipate that perennial, you know, stable ground  
19 cover will improve soil health over time.

20 **MR. ISAAC WALLACE:** You mentioned -- you  
21 mentioned there was going to be additional setbacks  
22 or some sort of buffer along Charlotte Oak Drive.  
23 What type of setback from that private lane will  
24 there be, and what is the buffer going to look like?

25 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** So the buffer we're

1 up and easy to clean up.

2 **MR. ISAAC WALLACE:** Has there been -- has  
3 there been any long-term studies about any effects  
4 of living close to solar? Like, does it put off any  
5 type of low radiation? Does it contaminate soil  
6 aft- -- for so long? Like if they decommission this  
7 thing at some point and they're able to remove it,  
8 all this stuff, will -- can somebody get back on  
9 this land and farm it right away, or will it be some  
10 sort of solar contamination in it?

11 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** Yeah, that's a  
12 good question. So the PUC has been doing the  
13 permitting of these projects for a while. We have  
14 projects -- or we have processes in place to ensure  
15 that things like soil health and the land and the  
16 ability for the land to be put back into farmland  
17 use is taken into account when we look at these  
18 projects.

19 So we do specific analysis to see what  
20 the soil impacts are and how things like rutting or  
21 compaction will impact the future capabilities of  
22 the soil to be turned back into farmland. We also  
23 have a vegetation management plan that's provided at  
24 the time of application, in addition to an  
25 agricultural impact management plan. Both of those

1 proposing will be similar to -- to what we've  
2 proposed along the north side where we abut  
3 Northrop. The setback, we are still evaluating that  
4 at this time. The panels are 250 feet away from the  
5 residences. The fence may be closer -- the fence is  
6 closer than that, but it would be pushed back to  
7 accommodate the -- the space that the landscaped  
8 buffer would need.

9 **MR. ISAAC WALLACE:** I would hope that you  
10 guys would extend that -- that setback further.  
11 Those are lake homes. Those are high dollar value  
12 homes in our county that people have worked their  
13 whole life to put their blood, sweat, and tears into  
14 buying those homes and making a home for themselves.  
15 To have a solar farm come sit right next to it is  
16 just, kind of, utterly ridiculous, I guess, in my  
17 opinion.

18 So I hope you are truly going to, you  
19 know, play that good neighbor like you said you want  
20 to be and move that setback significantly far back  
21 so that it's not impacting the value of those homes.

22 Another question, where is this power  
23 going? Is this power going to stay local in  
24 Minnesota, or does it just hit the grid and go to  
25 California, or where? Like, how does this project

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1 really benefit us locally?  
2 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** Yeah. So as I  
3 mentioned, kind of, at the end of my presentation,  
4 this project produces -- or pays into, like, a  
5 production tax. And so, you know, the energy that  
6 the project produces is taxed at -- I think Karsen  
7 can tell you the rate, but that is paid to the local  
8 community. So that is paid to Rutland Township and  
9 to Martin County.  
10 As far as where the energy goes, we're  
11 connecting to the Southern Municipal -- Southern  
12 Minnesota Municipal Power Agency substation, so  
13 wherever they are sending their energy. You know,  
14 it's like water, it goes where -- to the -- it goes  
15 through the path of least resistance. Once it's on  
16 the grid, we can't control the transmission owner  
17 and operator. It goes where it's needed.  
18 Karsen, you may have some more eloquent  
19 answers to that.  
20 **MR. KARSEN RUMPF:** No, exactly, it goes  
21 where demand is needed. You know, it's not reliable  
22 for us to ship it to Chicago. We'd lose all of it  
23 by the time it got to Chicago, unless you're talking  
24 about a high-voltage direct current line. So it  
25 goes -- it goes where demand is needed.

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1 You could potentially purchase this power at a fixed  
2 rate as opposed to a volatile energy price of  
3 natural gas. Natural gas prices has gone up over  
4 the years, they've gone -- you know, coal generation  
5 has gone extremely higher.  
6 So if Minnesota is providing energy at a  
7 higher rate from an older coal generation plant,  
8 it's much more economical for their consumers to  
9 purchase energy from a fixed rate asset such as  
10 solar farms or wind farms so you can get a fixed  
11 rate for energy over 15 to 20 years.  
12 So I think that's the point of what  
13 Minnesota is trying to become, is a more -- they're  
14 never going to be able to decrease energy prices,  
15 but they're trying to stabilize them, or the  
16 long-term effects. Or, you know -- for instance,  
17 you know, Iowa, they provide 65 percent of their  
18 energy needs from wind, and our energy prices from  
19 2024 to 2025 actually came down over that year.  
20 Because we cover 7 percent of our state with  
21 renewables, while Minnesota's went up roughly 5 to  
22 10 percent is what I saw over the course of 2024 to  
23 '25. So that's -- that's the goal here is to  
24 stabilize energy prices over the long run.  
25 As well as bring in tax revenues to the

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1 And, Marta, I like to use the reference,  
2 it's like a drop of water in a bucket. It's just  
3 part of the whole system, and you don't know where  
4 that water goes. It's just part of the whole  
5 system.  
6 Some of the discrepancy that we've gotten  
7 is we can enter into power purchase agreements with,  
8 say, Amazon or Facebook or Google, and they could  
9 build a facility, you know, as I mentioned, kind of,  
10 in the previous meeting, in Illinois. That's part  
11 of this Midwest Independent System Operator grid, or  
12 Iowa, that is part of the Midwest Independent System  
13 Operator grid, or parts of Wisconsin, or parts of  
14 North Dakota. They could say they're consuming  
15 300,000 megawatt hours a year, and we're producing  
16 from this solar facility 200,000 megawatt hours a  
17 year. They could basically buy the credits off the  
18 grid at a fixed rate for energy for 15 to 20 years.  
19 That's why you call it a power purchase agreement.  
20 And Xcel could do the same thing, and come in and  
21 want to purchase the energy, and they could use it  
22 for their resources, or, you know, any offtaker.  
23 But the point of purchasing this energy  
24 is kind of more in reference to how it benefits, you  
25 know, the local area, the State of Minnesota is.

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1 communities from, like, an energy tax. As Marta  
2 mentioned, job creation during -- during the work  
3 time. Local contractors, we're going to need, you  
4 know, buying gravel, buying cement, anything needed  
5 for the project over the course of the construction.  
6 Those are the benefits that we're trying to bring  
7 into the community and how it actually impacts the  
8 community as a whole. So that's where we're trying  
9 to get to.  
10 **MR. ISAAC WALLACE:** Yeah, I can see the  
11 benefits during construction for sure. Yeah,  
12 there's going to be a lot of job creation and use  
13 of, hopefully, local contractors and services here  
14 locally. I guess, my point is the long-term benefit  
15 to anybody that has to live around this and look at  
16 this thing. Essentially it -- like a -- I mean, a  
17 fence with barbwire around the top of it reminds me  
18 of living next to a prison or something. Nobody  
19 wants this in their backyard.  
20 The only people that this is going to  
21 benefit long term is those landowners that you guys  
22 are paying a crazy amount of lease-per-acre fees to,  
23 \$1,200, \$1,400-plus, is what I've heard, over  
24 30 years. So is this going to benefit anybody  
25 locally long term? I don't think so. Not in my

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1 opinion, but I guess that's just my opinion.  
2 **MR. CEZAR PANAIT:** Jessica, if you are  
3 ready to -- for the -- we have three more questions  
4 so far.  
5 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** We can move on  
6 to the next one.  
7 **MR. CEZAR PANAIT:** The next one comes  
8 from Catherine Jane Bartz. Your line has been  
9 unmuted.  
10 **MS. CATHERINE SOBELL BARTZ:** Are you --  
11 am I speaking?  
12 **MR. CEZAR PANAIT:** Yes, ma'am. We can  
13 hear you loud and clear.  
14 **MS. CATHERINE SOBELL BARTZ:** This is  
15 Catherine, C-A-T-H-E-R-I-N-E; Sobell, S-O-B-E-L-L;  
16 Bartz, B-A-R-T-Z, and I'm a lifelong resident of  
17 Martin County.  
18 I was at the last meeting, but I do have  
19 some additional questions that were not answered. I  
20 did bring up that there are some toxic metals and  
21 heavy metals that are incorporated into the  
22 production of these solar panels and the hardware  
23 beneath them. And these can leak into the soil and  
24 to the water system. And the only one that was  
25 discussed by you was the cadmium, which can be a

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1 that you are using within that study?  
2 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** I'm not sure of the  
3 pressure. What I've seen is testing done by  
4 crushing the panels with heavy landfill compactors.  
5 **MS. CATHERINE SOBELL BARTZ:** Again, I'm  
6 requesting from you guys the specific pressure per  
7 square inch so that I can relate it to hail and the  
8 size of hail that hits the ground.  
9 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** I will make sure  
10 that we'll look at things like hail and severe  
11 weather for the EA. I don't have an answer for you  
12 in terms of the pressure study. That's not a study  
13 that the Commission specifically looks at. But in  
14 terms of what the research that we have, we will be  
15 looking at severe weather, what hail impacts are  
16 expected to be.  
17 And, also, the likelihood of the soil to  
18 contain -- like to allow the toxins to leak through  
19 indicate that there was any sort of exposure to  
20 toxins. Like I said, the amounts should be below  
21 the MPCA level, but there are very thorough steps to  
22 make sure that even if there was the presence of  
23 these materials, they wouldn't be impacting public  
24 health.  
25 **MS. CATHERINE SOBELL BARTZ:** My next

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1 carcinogen. You did say that that is safe.  
2 But what about the lead and the arsenic  
3 and the selenium and the silver and the copper and  
4 the nickel?  
5 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** Thank you, Catherine.  
6 So, yes. Yeah, we talked last time about the -- you  
7 know, the leaching that was -- that was discussed.  
8 These panels do go through the TCLP testing, and  
9 it's found that these are not hazardous materials  
10 when they are, you know, crushed and put through  
11 that -- I'm spacing on the acronym there for the --  
12 for TCLP, for T-C-L-P testing. But, yeah, it's  
13 found that it is not toxic and not hazardous.  
14 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** I also -- sorry,  
15 I wanted to add that we've also had projects in the  
16 past where this has come up, and I wanted to ensure  
17 you that the Commission makes sure that the  
18 components of those materials is below the MPCA  
19 requirements for hazardous materials for this type  
20 of project. So even if there is the presence of the  
21 materials, it's going to be contained within the  
22 amounts that's deemed safe for public health.  
23 **MS. CATHERINE SOBELL BARTZ:** Okay. I  
24 would like to know, when you talk about crushing the  
25 material, the PSI, the pressure per square inch,

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1 question has to do with the buffer on the east side.  
2 It looks like the whole solar field goes right up  
3 against Highway 15. Is there any plans to beautify  
4 and protect us as we're traveling up and down  
5 Highway 15? Are there going to be trees planted  
6 there, or is it just going to be the solar panels?  
7 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** At this time, there are  
8 not plans to provide any more vegetation than what  
9 we're proposing to be planted, the perennial, like,  
10 ground cover along Trunk Highway 15.  
11 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** If there was  
12 interest in some sort of visual screening plan along  
13 the roadside, that's always something that can be  
14 considered in the environmental assessment. It's  
15 pretty common for us to include visual screening  
16 plans as a special condition for these type of  
17 projects.  
18 Specifically if they're on state highways  
19 or county highways or townships, we would work  
20 directly with whoever has jurisdiction over that  
21 area to make sure that the screening plan is safe  
22 for the highway operation, it doesn't impact any  
23 scenic byways. If there's somewhere that's  
24 identified as a scenic byway, in terms of roadside,  
25 we would want to maintain that for the state.

1 **MS. CATHERINE SOBELL BARTZ:** My final  
2 comment is that you say that this is all safe and  
3 good for the whole county of Martin County and for  
4 Northrop and for all the landowners, if that is  
5 true, why would you not simply purchase the land and  
6 save your project \$50 million?

7 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** Our landowners did not  
8 want to sell us the land, and they wanted to lease  
9 it. And it's still a good business opportunity for  
10 us to lease it.

11 **MS. CATHERINE SOBELL BARTZ:** Do they --  
12 okay. I just want it on record that since you are  
13 leasing, that is costing -- the cost of this cheap  
14 renewable energy an additional \$50 million over  
15 25 years. And that land could have been resold and  
16 put back into savings on the -- the dollar value of  
17 the electricity. That's all I have to say.

18 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** Okay. Thank  
19 you.

20 Cezar, we can move to the next commenter.

21 **MR. CEZAR PANAIT:** Yes, we have Jacy  
22 Kosbab.

23 **MS. JACY KOSBAB:** J-A-C-Y, K-O-S-B-A-B.  
24 I do live along Charlotte Oak Drive, so the impact  
25 for me is immense. I do want to -- I have a few

1 factor of, like, the transmission capacity. You  
2 know, older lines or where they're taking their  
3 power, you know, they had fixed times where they had  
4 to curtail or shut down turbines at certain times.  
5 There's a number of variables that play into account  
6 on why wind farms are taken offline sometimes.

7 And demand is just, obviously, a large  
8 thing. When demand is too high -- or, sorry, demand  
9 is too low and production is too high, where they do  
10 have to shut down because the grid can't handle it.  
11 But there are a number of factors that are beyond my  
12 control of how the Midwest Independent System  
13 Operator operates their transmission capacity going  
14 on- and offline.

15 **MS. JACY KOSBAB:** My next comment or  
16 question would be, we talked a little -- you talked  
17 a little bit about the BESS system out here, and a  
18 fire suppression system, is that contained with --  
19 inside that containment, so the panels? And what  
20 does that consist of?

21 Because in talking with Mr. Duehr before  
22 the Thursday night meeting, it was clearly stated  
23 that no water or foam can be or will be used to put  
24 out these -- if the fire would happen within that  
25 containment, that battery storage center, that it

1 comments, if that's okay. I'll try and go quick.  
2 I'd like to revisit, Karsen had mentioned that the  
3 power goes where the demand is needed. I'd like to  
4 know -- or point out if anybody has drove on I-90  
5 across the State of Minnesota and has seen the  
6 immense amount of solar -- or, excuse me, wind  
7 turbines, and a lot of times they're not moving  
8 because the demand is already built up.

9 So I'm curious as to know what the demand  
10 for solar is in our area when we have all of this  
11 wind-generated power already across southern  
12 Minnesota.

13 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** Yeah. So there is --  
14 you know, congestion is a problem, you know, in this  
15 area. That does affect the wind projects. Solar  
16 has -- is at its peak at a different time than when  
17 wind is typically at its peak.

18 The storage component to this project  
19 adds additional flexibility and its ability to take  
20 that power when there is excess load, when there is  
21 congestion, it does free up some capacity on the  
22 grid. And then when demand is high, but production  
23 may be low by wind or solar, then the battery is  
24 able to deploy energy during those times.

25 **MR. KARSEN RUMPF:** It also could be a

1 just has to burn out. It would just -- that they  
2 let it burn until it's burned out.

3 Recently, there's been some solar farms  
4 that have had fires within those containment  
5 centers, and the Moss Landing one, in particular,  
6 has had three fires: One in '21, one in 2022, most  
7 recently January of '25. All of which have had an  
8 evacuation protocol because of the toxicity or the  
9 toxins in the smoke coming from that fire. And then  
10 a recent one at Parkfield Junction, Parkfield solar  
11 plant, which also required an evacuation protocol  
12 within a two-mile radius.

13 So my question is, one, does the fire  
14 suppression system put that fire out, or do we just  
15 let it -- or does it just burn? And, two, what is  
16 the protocol or evacuation plan that will be put in  
17 place? And will that be made known to all the  
18 residents in a two- or three-mile radius what that  
19 plan is and how long we could be displaced from our  
20 property?

21 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** So Moss Landing uses a  
22 different technology than -- than what we're  
23 proposing. It's a unique facility in that it's a  
24 battery facility within a building that was built  
25 for a different purpose than housing battery storage

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1 systems.

2 This battery is designed to stand alone,

3 and -- and, yes, the -- the strategy for these is

4 to -- when, you know, a battery module begins to act

5 up, we are -- we are shutting it off before, you

6 know, it can create a thermal event. If that were

7 to occur, then, yes, the strategy is to let it burn

8 and to contain and keep things cool around it.

9 The contents of the smoke and the plume

10 from these newer technology batteries are on par

11 with what you might see in a house fire these days

12 with all of the batteries and plastics and other

13 materials that we find in our homes nowadays.

14 We will be --

15 **MS. JACY KOSBAB:** Sorry, go ahead.

16 Sorry, Marta, go ahead.

17 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** Thank you. Yeah. We

18 will be working with our local first responders to,

19 you know, educate them on this -- on the solar and

20 the battery technology, and work with them to

21 create, you know, emergency response plans, and so

22 that is something that we commit to.

23 Beginning, you know, during construction,

24 prior to operations, and throughout the life of the

25 project, we are conducting annual drills or

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1 safety of a project of this size? Do you have

2 documentation about the safety of the panels and the

3 safety of the BESS information that is a written

4 history that has some information in there that can

5 be shared with us? Or is this a new enough

6 technology that there isn't any past history to

7 follow it or to precede it, I guess?

8 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** Yeah. So First Solar

9 has been our partner in the past to supply panels,

10 and they have been studying their panels with the

11 National Renewable Energy Laboratory for, I think,

12 going on 25 years. And so there is a lot of

13 information for the First Solar panels.

14 **MS. DEBBIE WALLACE:** And the -- for this

15 particular panel that is going to be in the Lake

16 Charlotte project?

17 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** Yeah. We can provide

18 the -- the safety and reliability information from

19 the manufacturer.

20 **MS. DEBBIE WALLACE:** And -- and where are

21 these manufactured? I missed the name of the

22 company that you said was the manufacturer.

23 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** First Solar is who

24 we've partnered with in the past to procure panels

25 from. They're located -- they're headquartered in

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1 education or training alongside our first responder

2 partners. And so that's the relationship, that we

3 understand there is a high level of importance for

4 clear and transparent communication with them.

5 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** I also wanted to

6 add that those plans are required for a permit with

7 the Public Utilities Commission, and they will be

8 filed with the Commission, so that will be

9 addressed.

10 **MS. JACY KOSBAB:** Are they lithium

11 batteries?

12 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** They -- these are

13 lithium ion. Our engineers can provide more details

14 on the -- on the makeup of the batteries. We can

15 supplement the docket with that information.

16 **MS. JACY KOSBAB:** That would be great,

17 thank you.

18 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** Certainly.

19 **MS. JACY KOSBAB:** Do I have time for

20 another comment, or is there others waiting?

21 **MR. CEZAR PANAIT:** We have two people.

22 One would be a repeat speaker, so next we have

23 Debbie Wallace.

24 **MS. DEBBIE WALLACE:** Debbie Wallace.

25 Just with -- excuse me, what is the history of the

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1 Arizona, but they have manufacturing plants across

2 the U.S. and across the world as well.

3 **MR. KARSEN RUMPF:** Yeah, I believe it's

4 Toledo, Ohio, is where we get them from. I'm pretty

5 certain that's where the nearest location is, but

6 don't quote me on that, but I believe it's Toledo.

7 **MS. DEBBIE WALLACE:** Okay. And the BESS

8 and all of that business, is that the same -- same

9 company or a totally different outfit? And do they

10 have a -- what is their track record as far as

11 safety and reliability? I mean, how -- how prone

12 are they to burst into flames, or not really? Or is

13 that an issue?

14 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** Yeah, thermal events

15 are very, very rare. I mean, we do see them in the

16 news, but they are -- they are rare. We have worked

17 with several different battery manufacturers in the

18 past, and so who we ultimately purchase the

19 batteries from is to be determined. And so we

20 can -- once that selection is made, you know, that

21 will be -- that can be provided.

22 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** Okay. Okay. So

23 I believe everyone who has initially raised their

24 hand have provided their comments. It looks like we

25 have people who have spoken already that would like

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1 to provide additional comments.  
2 So, Cezar, I'll hand it off to you to  
3 guide who should comment first.  
4 **MR. CEZAR PANAIT:** I'm not sure if these  
5 are leftovers from before or new intentions to  
6 speak. So maybe we should lower all hands and then  
7 ask people to have a second round of questions or  
8 who have never asked a question to raise their hand  
9 now.  
10 Okay. Here they are. We have one new  
11 renewed raised hand from -- two of them, from Brad  
12 Wallace and Isaac Wallace, and Jacy would like to  
13 speak again, so we have three.  
14 So the first one would be Brad. I  
15 believe Brad has not spoken tonight, so let's unmute  
16 him. Okay. Your line is unmuted.  
17 **MR. BRAD WALLACE:** My name is Brad  
18 Wallace.  
19 (Audio feedback.)  
20 **MR. BRAD WALLACE:** Shut your sound off.  
21 And Brad Wallace, last spelled  
22 W-A-L-L-A-C-E. Since the last meeting on the 28th,  
23 I have read, yes, the smoke and fumes from a burning  
24 lithium battery are highly toxic, impose immediate  
25 and long-term health risks. The fire releases a

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1 I'm wondering how many tons of lithium  
2 batteries will be on the site for the battery energy  
3 storage facility for Lake Charlotte Solar farm? Can  
4 you please explain the fire suppression systems that  
5 are contained in the lithium -- lithium battery  
6 containers? What kind of container can withstand a  
7 2,900-degree Fahrenheit fire? Steel melts at that  
8 temperature. And is water to be used in the control  
9 of a battery energy storage fire? And where would  
10 this quantity of water come from? Would it come  
11 from the Lake Charlotte body of water?  
12 And one other question for the PUC, I  
13 guess, is you mentioned that the cost of building  
14 one of these farms is under your review. What is  
15 the current PUC guidelines for cost per acre or cost  
16 per megawatt to build a solar farm? You mentioned  
17 that you act as a fiduciary of our tax dollars here,  
18 does this proposed farm fall within those  
19 guidelines?  
20 **MR. CEZAR PANAIT:** Yeah, I'll attempt to  
21 answer that. So we have a separate department at  
22 our Commission, it's called the -- it is called the  
23 regulatory analysis unit, and they are the ones who  
24 work on the rate cases.  
25 So they perform a financial analysis

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1 dangerous mix of toxic gases, heavy metals, and  
2 particulate matter that can be more hazardous than  
3 the fire itself. When a lithium battery undergoes  
4 thermal runaway and burns, it can release quite a  
5 cocktail of hazardous chemicals.  
6 The first one I'd like to address is  
7 hydrogen fluoride. This is one of the most  
8 dangerous compounds released. It's highly corrosive  
9 and forms hydrofluoric acid upon contact with  
10 moisture in your lungs, eyes, and on your skin,  
11 which can cause deep tissue damage and potentially  
12 fatal pulmonary edema. The reaction of the  
13 electrolytes in these batteries is often lithium  
14 hexafluorosulfate [sic], with water produces this  
15 hydrogen fluoride.  
16 The second one is hydrogen cyanide, and  
17 this is a fast-acting asph- -- I apologize,  
18 asphyxiating type of gas that can impair the body's  
19 oxygen supply and damage the respiratory,  
20 cardiovascular, and neurological system.  
21 This being said, my research has come to  
22 the conclusion that lithium battery fires cannot be  
23 extinguished with water. However, large quantities  
24 of water can be used to cool the batteries and to  
25 help reduce and contain the blaze.

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1 every time a regulate -- and the Commission has  
2 jurisdiction, first of all, over investor-owned  
3 utilities, such as Xcel Energy, Minnesota Power,  
4 Otter Tail Power. And so when these regulated  
5 utilities -- we call them regulated utilities --  
6 come before the Commission with a request to raise  
7 the rates. And the reason they do that is because  
8 they undertake additional projects, they build new  
9 power lines, new power plants, for that reason, so  
10 they have a very detailed set of analyses done.  
11 And parties representing various, like,  
12 environmental groups, Attorney General's Office,  
13 everybody participates and weighs whether the rates  
14 being proposed or asked for are just and reasonable.  
15 So the Commission does not -- I mean,  
16 they do look in aggregate in these projects, but,  
17 again, I'm venturing outside of my expertise. We do  
18 have a separate department, regulatory analysis  
19 division, that looks at any financial aspect in  
20 terms of recovering the investment cost for this and  
21 other similar projects. But, yeah, so this project  
22 will be proposed -- is proposed by an independent  
23 power producer and -- which is not regulated by the  
24 Commission, other than to regulate the project  
25 itself, the site permit.

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1 But if the company decides that this  
2 project is beneficial to them, the Commission does  
3 not -- does not counter that. I mean, they -- this  
4 project is being proposed, and will have an  
5 oftaker, or the energy will be delivered to the  
6 grid directly. And that has a built in -- any  
7 benefit to cost is built in as part of the project.  
8 The Commission does not regulate this particular  
9 developer's cost considerations.  
10 So I hope I was able to at least attempt  
11 to answer that -- that question, but overall the  
12 Commission is tasked to make sure that the rates, as  
13 charged by the regulated utilities, again, are just  
14 and reasonable.  
15 **MR. KARSEN RUMPF:** In regards to the fire  
16 prevention plan you were alluding to, Brad, we  
17 constantly evolve that prevention plan over the  
18 project's development period. So until specific  
19 details are ironed out with the specific batteries  
20 and what the local EMS want to see from our plan and  
21 what the fire departments want to see from our plan,  
22 those details are constantly evolving. So I don't  
23 have them with me at this specific time, but they  
24 are ironed out through the stage of developing the  
25 project as part of our fire prevention plan for its

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1 regards to hail damage on this specific project.  
2 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** Catherine, I don't know  
3 that exact number. We do hold a very large  
4 insurance policy, and that isn't something we  
5 typically obtain until we are closer to  
6 construction.  
7 **MS. CATHERINE SOBELL BARTZ:** Could you  
8 give me any -- a dollar amount of a 1,200-acre solar  
9 farm somewhere else in Minnesota and the dollar  
10 value that you have in the insurance, the bond, or  
11 the surety that Geronimo Power or Brookfield Asset  
12 Management has in case of hail?  
13 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** I do not know those  
14 numbers for other, you know, similarly-sized  
15 projects, but that is something that I can follow up  
16 with you.  
17 **MS. CATHERINE SOBELL BARTZ:** Okay. And I  
18 will be asking that question about -- specifically  
19 about tornados and about floods and other natural  
20 disasters. I will -- I will enter them in writing  
21 and send them to you -- to Jessica.  
22 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** Yeah. I just  
23 wanted to address, in terms of, like, insurance and  
24 policy coverage, that is outside of the scope of the  
25 environmental assessment that the Commission will

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1 exact details in how we do things and how we protect  
2 the public from potential fires.  
3 **MR. BRAD WALLACE:** Again, in my exploring  
4 this, I haven't found any fire chiefs or department  
5 chiefs that seem to know much about this project,  
6 and they just say that you can't smother or  
7 extinguish a lithium-based battery fire. All you  
8 can do is watch it burn and kind of cool it down  
9 with large quantities of water.  
10 **MR. KARSEN RUMPF:** I think it would be  
11 helpful, you know, to maybe go offline with this  
12 conversation. I can bring in our operations team  
13 and get their inputs on how we handle things and  
14 kind of relay the exact, you know, answers to your  
15 questions more -- you know, more --  
16 **MR. BRAD WALLACE:** That would be good,  
17 Karsen. That's fine. Thank you.  
18 **MR. CEZAR PANAIT:** So with that, moving  
19 to the next person, which again is a repeat speaker,  
20 Catherine Bartz.  
21 **MS. CATHERINE SOBELL BARTZ:** Okay. There  
22 was one more question I wanted to ask, and that has  
23 to do -- I'd like to know the specific dollar value  
24 of the insurance, the bond, or the surety that  
25 Geronimo Power or Brookfield Asset Management has in

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1 look at. We'll definitely look at, like,  
2 environmental impacts and health impacts related to  
3 severe weather, how that might impact other related  
4 parts of the project. But in terms of insurance  
5 coverage, that is out of the scope of the PUC.  
6 **MS. CATHERINE SOBELL BARTZ:** That is  
7 related directly to the ongoing project, in that, it  
8 will not fail and that the land will be returned, as  
9 you say, to how it should be, able to grow crops in  
10 the future.  
11 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** Yeah, we --  
12 **MS. CATHERINE SOBELL BARTZ:** So it's  
13 specifically definitely within the scope.  
14 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** The PUC's  
15 environmental assessment will not look at dollar  
16 amounts for insurance. That's not within the scope.  
17 **MS. CATHERINE SOBELL BARTZ:** I -- I would  
18 like to comment that I still feel that this project  
19 is being put into place at the detrimental aspect of  
20 the community, and that there is no real long-term  
21 commitment by this company or the asset management  
22 company. I really feel that they are going cut and  
23 run as soon as there is a -- hail, tornado, flood,  
24 or other natural disaster. They are going to --  
25 everything you're telling me, or not telling me,

1 says that this -- you're just going to cut and run.  
2 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** Catherine, so I think  
3 something that might -- I can't answer your question  
4 about the insurance, you know, that we hold right  
5 now, but as far as if the project is -- is damaged  
6 and it cannot operate, then under the  
7 decommissioning plan, if we don't have, you know, a  
8 plan in place to get it back up and running within a  
9 year of that event occurring, then I believe we  
10 would be required to decommission the project.  
11 **MS. CATHERINE SOBELL BARTZ:** Okay. Then  
12 what is the dollar value of the surety, the  
13 insurance, or the bond? The exact dollar value of  
14 the decommission?  
15 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** So at this point, we  
16 only have, like, an estimate of the -- the value of  
17 the materials we'll be installing, and that's --  
18 that's part of our application. The -- the  
19 financial surety we are required to make available  
20 to the PUC or to the county in the case that the  
21 owner and operator is unable to -- for, you know,  
22 whatever reason, unable to decommission the project  
23 themselves. That decommissioning surety is  
24 125 percent of the cost to ensure decommissioning ,  
25 and that that plan is updated every five years after

1 constantly changing. And it's all based on final  
2 numbers of the project, so it's a plan that -- those  
3 costs are constantly changing over time.  
4 **MS. CATHERINE SOBELL BARTZ:** But you can  
5 understand from our viewpoint that every time you  
6 say things like that, it just sounds like you're  
7 trying to not answer the question.  
8 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** Catherine, the number  
9 we have for the cost is roughly \$19 million.  
10 **MS. CATHERINE SOBELL BARTZ:** Okay. So  
11 the dollar value of 24 million decommissioning that  
12 someone mentioned at the previous meeting, it would  
13 be about that amount?  
14 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** I believe so.  
15 **MS. CATHERINE SOBELL BARTZ:** Okay, okay.  
16 Thank you.  
17 **MR. CEZAR PANAIT:** Okay. Thank you.  
18 We have two more speakers left. We'll go  
19 to Jacy Kosbab again.  
20 **MS. JACY KOSBAB:** Thank you. I'd like to  
21 reference Geronimo's slide number 21 that Marta went  
22 over regarding the threatened and endangered species  
23 reviews and coordination that's been completed.  
24 What species were being looked for, who completed  
25 that, and are those studies available to the public?

1 the tenth year of operations.  
2 **MS. CATHERINE SOBELL BARTZ:** 125 percent  
3 of what?  
4 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** The cost to  
5 decommission.  
6 **MS. CATHERINE SOBELL BARTZ:** Who -- who  
7 determines the cost to decommission?  
8 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** So we've partnered with  
9 a third-party engineering company who has extensive  
10 experience in crafting these decommissioning plans.  
11 **MS. CATHERINE SOBELL BARTZ:** But you  
12 can't give me a dollar value?  
13 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** The -- I can pull up  
14 the decommissioning --  
15 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** The cost  
16 information should have been included as part of  
17 their site permit application, which is publicly  
18 available on eDockets and on the Commission's  
19 website as well.  
20 **MS. CATHERINE SOBELL BARTZ:** Okay.  
21 **MR. KARSEN RUMPF:** It's difficult --  
22 **MS. CATHERINE SOBELL BARTZ:** No other  
23 questions.  
24 **MR. KARSEN RUMPF:** It's difficult because  
25 costs are constantly changing, material costs are

1 My concern would be around the Blanding's  
2 turtles that have been found and located in Martin  
3 County, and we do have a very large turtle  
4 population in our wetlands in this area. And not  
5 that I've seen a Blanding's turtle, but I would be  
6 very concerned that they do exist, and they have  
7 been found in Martin County.  
8 So I was wondering if those sources are  
9 being provided and if we can review those studies  
10 that were done to prove that there are not  
11 Blanding's turtles in our wetland areas, in our  
12 sloughs, and our marshes.  
13 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** Yeah, so our -- our  
14 consultants did conduct a site characterization  
15 analysis or a biological resources review. And I'd  
16 have to refresh my memory if Blanding's turtle was  
17 something that they identified as having a low,  
18 moderate, or high risk of occurring within the  
19 project area.  
20 We -- you know, Geronimo does have  
21 experience constructing solar projects in areas  
22 where Blanding's turtles, you know, have been  
23 identified and seen. And so there are best  
24 management practices that can be put in place during  
25 construction to protect them and to, you know,

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1 minimize impacts. As well as, you know, operational  
2 practices that we can put in place to -- to do what  
3 we can to protect the Blanding's turtle, if they're  
4 identified as, you know, having a moderate  
5 likelihood of occurring here.

6 **MS. JACY KOSBAB:** Sure. So on the State  
7 of Minnesota website, the State of Minnesota  
8 definitely takes all efforts to delineate, protect,  
9 and restore the habitats of this particular species.  
10 So I would like to just make sure that we are being  
11 provided with any studies that have been done or  
12 will be done to ensure that that is not disrupted,  
13 along with any of the other nesting habitats of our  
14 area.

15 We have a large Blue Heron nesting here  
16 on Lake Charlotte. We're very blessed with our Wood  
17 Ducks that nest in this area. And we have a very  
18 healthy ecosystem, and so I would just like to  
19 make -- ensure that that is not going to be  
20 disrupted.

21 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** Yeah. Thank you  
22 for bringing that up. I also wanted to note that  
23 part of the environmental review process includes  
24 consultation with the Minnesota Department  
25 of Com- -- Minnesota Department of Natural

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1 addresses that species. So it will talk about  
2 different ways that the applicant needs to  
3 coordinate with the DNR or local environmental  
4 groups to make sure that the -- if there is an  
5 identified Blanding's turtle within the area, that  
6 those habitats can be retained and that that can be  
7 addressed through best management practices during  
8 construction.

9 And then in terms of habitat, that will  
10 be taken into account for all nesting birds. If  
11 there's an important bird area or a wildlife  
12 protection area, those all get maintained and won't  
13 be impacted by the project. So all of that stuff  
14 goes through extensive review with our state  
15 departments as well.

16 **MS. JACY KOSBAB:** And if I could just ask  
17 one more question, when the solar panels are built,  
18 you know, you guys plant the wild flowers and -- so  
19 who -- who maintains the noxious weeds in those  
20 areas? We do have a very high concentration of  
21 ragweeds. And if anybody's in the -- from an  
22 agriculture family or knows anything about ragweeds,  
23 they're very noxious. They grow 10 to 12 feet tall.  
24 You can come out now to Charlotte Oak Drive and see  
25 a really nice area of them. And they also contain

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1 Resources, in addition to the Department of  
2 Commerce, but I'm talking about the DNR here.

3 So part of what they provide is a Natural  
4 Heritage Information System Review letter. It's  
5 called an NHIS letter. And that looks into any  
6 specific species, natural plant communities, high  
7 value biological resources that the state has  
8 provided -- that we're providing protection or  
9 special -- special projects that retain -- that can  
10 retain those biological resources, essentially.

11 So there's coordination with the DNR.  
12 They'll provide a letter, if they have not already.  
13 There should be some sort of coordination between  
14 the applicant and the DNR to do a review of this  
15 project, provide that letter, and then all of that  
16 is taken into account when I do the environmental  
17 assessment for this project. So we'll look at all  
18 the things that the DNR mentioned. We'll also look  
19 at if there's certain, like, protections for the  
20 federal species, like the bald eagle is one that  
21 comes up a lot.

22 In terms of the Blanding's turtle, that's  
23 a pretty common species that we see within these  
24 projects. So a lot of times the Commission will do  
25 a special permit condition that specifically

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1 thousands and thousands and hundreds of thousands of  
2 seeds that regenerate, repopulate every year.

3 So I just would like to know a little bit  
4 more about the plan to rid the -- rid the area of  
5 those without killing the pollinators that is said  
6 to be beneficial to our area when the native grasses  
7 and flowers are planted.

8 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** Yeah, so --  
9 Jessica, if you think you are ready for a  
10 response.

11 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** I was just going  
12 to say, just bringing it back to the vegetation  
13 management plan that was referenced before, so  
14 within that plan, included will be an invasive  
15 species protection plan, which addresses control of  
16 noxious weeds.

17 That vegetation management plan is very  
18 specific. It lays out the different steps in the  
19 first couple years of establishment of the  
20 vegetation under the solar panels. It also talks  
21 about maintaining the vegetation throughout the life  
22 of the project. So how certain things, like  
23 herbicides, if those will be used. Specifically  
24 where and when those are going to be used.  
25 That VMP will also go through review of

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1 the -- with the vegetation management working group,  
2 which is an interagency working group. We have  
3 representatives from the Board of Water and Soil  
4 Resources, the Department of Natural Resources, the  
5 Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the Department  
6 of Ag. It's a very diverse collection of state  
7 agencies that look into the prevention of noxious  
8 weed spread and the establishment of that native  
9 perennial vegetation as it's laid out in the plan.  
10 **MS. JACY KOSBAB:** Thank you.  
11 **MR. JEREMY DUEHR:** And, Jacy, this is  
12 Jeremy Duehr. Just weighing in, in the background I  
13 did find that the Department of Natural Resources  
14 was consulted, and the letter that Jessica mentioned  
15 is included in appendix A in the site permit  
16 application.  
17 So you can go look at that letter. It  
18 provides the information that the DNR has weighed in  
19 on. There was a meeting, as well as a written  
20 correspondence, and the DNR did not have -- did not  
21 believe the proposed project will negatively affect  
22 any known occurrences of rare features. So they did  
23 review the site and did provide that correspondence.  
24 **MS. JACY KOSBAB:** Thank you for that  
25 information.

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1 will be looking at impacts to prime farmland for  
2 this project, and also looking at impacts to prime  
3 farmland in comparison to the county as a whole as  
4 well. So that will be studied within the EA.  
5 **MR. ISAAC WALLACE:** Thank you. The  
6 second question, Faribault County is dealing with  
7 the possible expansion of an existing solar site, I  
8 believe. Is there any intention for multiple phases  
9 to this project?  
10 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** There are not any plans  
11 that I know of to expand, or any additional phases  
12 here.  
13 **MR. KARSEN RUMPF:** I'm not part of any  
14 expansion process for this project, or know of  
15 anything to that matter.  
16 **MR. ISAAC WALLACE:** So there's no, like,  
17 10-year, 15-, 20-year plan out there that, you know,  
18 potentially we would expand this thing to double the  
19 size or anything like that?  
20 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** In the site  
21 permit application provided, there should be a  
22 section that addresses future expansion of the  
23 project as well. So that's something that the  
24 Commission looks into for these projects.  
25 **MR. ISAAC WALLACE:** Thank you. And my

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1 **MR. CEZAR PANAIT:** Okay. With that,  
2 we'll go to Isaac Wallace next.  
3 **MR. ISAAC WALLACE:** Yes. Thank you. My  
4 understanding is that the State of Minnesota has  
5 some protection in place for prime farmland. I  
6 believe there was some study completed. I saw it on  
7 the E-documents. I didn't get a chance to read  
8 through the whole thing.  
9 But could you explain a little bit more  
10 on that protection and how it relates to this  
11 project? And, kind of, from what I got from reading  
12 that very quickly was that, this is basically the  
13 easiest site to do it. So they basically said that  
14 they should use this prime farmland for this  
15 project. Is that -- is that accurate, can you  
16 explain that prime farmland protection?  
17 **MR. KARSEN RUMPF:** I'm not aware of it.  
18 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** Yeah. Sorry, I was  
19 having trouble finding the mute button there. Yeah,  
20 so the prime farmland assessment does take into  
21 account, you know, efforts to secure land elsewhere.  
22 But, ultimately, yes, like the -- you know, the  
23 willing landowners and its proximity to existing  
24 infrastructure do weigh in this project's favor.  
25 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** The Commission

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1 final question is, where can I find how much state  
2 funding goes into this project? Whether it's  
3 initially in the form of grants, or however the  
4 funding is, but how can I find out how much taxpayer  
5 dollars is going into this project?  
6 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** Karsen, do you have any  
7 insight there?  
8 **MR. KARSEN RUMPF:** I don't have an answer  
9 for that with what we've been able to obtain from  
10 the State. I know, obviously, a lot of these  
11 incentives are expiring, as you well know, from the  
12 current administration. I would have to look into  
13 that offline to understand if there was any money or  
14 grants we got from the State. I'm not aware of  
15 anything, but I can -- I can track down that  
16 information and try to provide it to you, or give  
17 you an answer either way.  
18 **MR. ISAAC WALLACE:** Thank you. I guess  
19 my follow-up question to that is, if you weren't  
20 receiving any State or grant funding for this  
21 project, why does it make sense to put this in  
22 southern Minnesota versus putting it somewhere  
23 you're going to get a lot more sunshine for more  
24 hours of the day?  
25 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** We do install temporary

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1 meteorological stations roughly two years before  
2 permitting, and so that measures the sun and the  
3 irradiance. You know, the -- how much sunlight, you  
4 know, we can anticipate the project area receiving.  
5 And we plug that into a financial model, and they  
6 tell us that this site would produce a sufficient  
7 amount of energy. And so the financial whizzes,  
8 they feel that this is still, you know, an area that  
9 would, you know, be profitable for a solar facility.  
10 **MR. KARSEN RUMPF:** And from a number of  
11 development standpoints, you know, developing  
12 projects, people mention all the time, why don't you  
13 put it out in the middle of Arizona where there's  
14 nothing? And that's exactly the problem, there's  
15 nothing out there. There's no transmission line  
16 infrastructure, there's no way to get the power onto  
17 the grid, there's no load demand. There's no demand  
18 for energy out there.  
19 And so those are things that we run into  
20 all the time, trying to find the right variables for  
21 potentially finding off-take and purchasers of  
22 energy in the current transmission operator system  
23 that we're in. Infrastructure is important, the  
24 substations, obviously, saves costs not having to  
25 build a whole new one. Transmission capacity,

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1 be economical. And so there are -- just the  
2 financial risk alone, this is being looked at very  
3 closely.  
4 And that goes back to a prior question as  
5 well about making sure there's adequate insurance in  
6 the event of a storm or damage. There is so much  
7 money invested. That's why Karsen mentioned at the  
8 last meeting, that it's a very expensive insurance  
9 policy to make sure that the project can be repaired  
10 if there are some damages during a hailstorm or  
11 something like that.  
12 **MR. CEZAR PANAIT:** Okay. And our last  
13 speaker appears to be Debbie Wallace.  
14 **MS. DEBBIE WALLACE:** Thank you. And just  
15 to chime in on that last little discussion, the  
16 transmission lines and all of that that don't exist  
17 in Arizona, we haven't had transmission lines here  
18 forever. They weren't planted by the farmers. They  
19 were built, and they were built at a cost.  
20 And I don't know that the cost of  
21 building them here would be so much less than  
22 building them in Arizona where the sun shines so  
23 much more and they have so much unproductive land  
24 that's doing nothing. So that's what I wanted to  
25 say about that. Those transmission lines didn't

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1 upgrade costs, you know. If you want to put  
2 something out there in the middle of Arizona, you  
3 are going to have to pay extravagant amounts of  
4 money for upgrading the system to get your energy  
5 onto the grid, which makes the project not viable  
6 from a financial standpoint.  
7 The big thing is willing landowners and  
8 wanting to, you know, do a project like this because  
9 it works for their -- you know, for their future  
10 family plans on farming or whatever's -- you know,  
11 they see their future being. So there's plenty of  
12 variables that go into developing a project. It's  
13 not just finding a sunny piece of ground and getting  
14 the project built, so it's a number of those  
15 variables.  
16 **MR. JEREMY DUEHR:** And this is Jeremy  
17 Duehr. I'll just add that the application includes  
18 the estimated project costs, which at the time the  
19 application was submitted were between about \$360 to  
20 \$435 million.  
21 And so when you look at the -- the  
22 significant amount of cost that's being invested  
23 into a project like this, this -- the applicants and  
24 the investors that are helping to finance the  
25 project take it very seriously whether it's going to

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1 grow here. They were built here by companies.  
2 That being said, I've got to -- oh, does  
3 Minnesota -- I'm going back to the setback to the  
4 panels from private properties or homes. When  
5 Minnesota charged into this "we're going to green by  
6 2040," did they set up any -- or did they establish  
7 any setbacks to protect citizens for this?  
8 And I -- there are -- some states have  
9 them, and apparently Minnesota doesn't by how this  
10 is progressing, but how did -- how did the company  
11 determine what a safe setback from the solar panels  
12 is for private citizens and private homes?  
13 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** Yeah. So we looked at  
14 Martin County's current solar ordinance, and we used  
15 that to inform our design. 250 feet from residences  
16 is an average, you know, setback distance that we've  
17 seen in many areas where we're active. And so  
18 because -- from my recollection, the Martin County  
19 ordinance didn't -- I would have to look back if  
20 they specified the 250 feet from residences or if  
21 that was a setback that we set for ourselves.  
22 **MS. DEBBIE WALLACE:** Okay. So Martin  
23 County might have an ordinance on the books for  
24 this, or --  
25 **MR. JEREMY DUEHR:** They do. This is

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1 Jeremy Duehr. Yeah, it is in the application. It's  
2 set forth, but the Martin County -- Martin County  
3 does have a renewable energy ordinance that talks  
4 about large solar energy systems. And it also  
5 provides the setbacks, and those setbacks are --  
6 that are required in that ordinance are being  
7 followed.

8 **MS. DEBBIE WALLACE:** And is -- I take it  
9 then the setback is arbitrary to what -- whatever  
10 any county in the state wants to set, is that what  
11 the -- what the deal is? But the state didn't do  
12 anything but say we're going to go green, and they  
13 turned it over to the counties to make the  
14 determination on the setback and the protection of  
15 the citizens?

16 **MR. JEREMY DUEHR:** Yes, this is Jeremy  
17 Duehr. The State of Minnesota and the legislature  
18 has prescribed over time that the Public Utilities  
19 Commission has to consider and follow local  
20 ordinances to the extent practicable. And so I  
21 think it's this way of allowing -- or acknowledging  
22 some of that local interest and local control in  
23 setting forth the standards.

24 Now, some standards that local  
25 communities put forth just aren't workable with the

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1 you're saying? So that the distance to the solar  
2 panels from my door or Jenny's or Jacy's or Ken and  
3 Rhonda's includes -- doesn't include the wetland  
4 basin -- or the basin?

5 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** No. Based on Martin  
6 County's ordinance, the setback applies to  
7 structures, which they define as, like, permanent  
8 erected features. It does exclude fencing from that  
9 definition of structures, and so that informed the  
10 distance that we set the panels back.

11 Other features of the project that  
12 don't -- that didn't fit the Martin County  
13 ordinances' definition of structure, we did site,  
14 you know, beyond that structure setback.

15 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** I also just want  
16 to note in terms of impacts to water resources, the  
17 applicant does have to abide by permitting related  
18 to water resources. So for the water conservation  
19 act, there's specific jurisdiction for who is  
20 supposed to be consultat- -- what agency does  
21 consultation for impacts to wetlands. So there are  
22 processes in place to make sure that there won't be  
23 resulting impacts to local water resources as well.

24 **MR. CEZAR PANAIT:** Okay. That was --  
25 thank you for the questions and answers. That was

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1 policy of promoting renewable energies across the  
2 state, and so sometimes the PUC does not follow  
3 them. But in most cases, in cases like setbacks,  
4 they -- the PUC does want to -- applicants to follow  
5 those as much as they can.

6 **MS. DEBBIE WALLACE:** Okay. Thank you.  
7 And now with that setback, I'm looking at the site  
8 map and there's a couple of places where there are  
9 wetlands along Charlotte Oak Drive. And is that  
10 setback from the protected wetland area or from --  
11 where does the setback measurement begin, I guess,  
12 is my question?

13 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** So there are no  
14 delineated wetlands along Charlotte Oak Drive. What  
15 you may be seeing are the proposed stormwater  
16 basin locations.

17 **MS. DEBBIE WALLACE:** Yeah. Okay.  
18 Um-hmm.

19 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** Sorry, my office's  
20 overhead lights just went off.

21 So the stormwater basins are manmade  
22 features that we would implement to control runoff.

23 **MS. DEBBIE WALLACE:** So -- so since that  
24 is part of the project area that the setback  
25 begins -- includes that water basin, is that what

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1 the last raised hand. Checking one more time. We  
2 don't have any.

3 I'm going to show the "comment period  
4 deadline and how to file comments" slide. So,  
5 please, if you decide to send us comments, please  
6 try to address the comments to Jessica. And also  
7 the topics that have been touched on before, the  
8 main topics that we would like comments to focus on,  
9 and various means to comment. And, also, the  
10 deadline is important, September 17th, 2025, by  
11 4:30 p.m.

12 And it looks like Brad Wallace would like  
13 to ask another question. We do have time for  
14 another question for sure.

15 Go ahead, sir.

16 **MR. BRAD WALLACE:** Brad Wallace, again.  
17 Just one question for clarification, the map that  
18 Geronimo presents with the wetlands on it, wetland  
19 areas and water basins, are they considered by the  
20 DNR or other -- or the Public Utilities Commission  
21 as designated wetlands, or are they just plain wet  
22 spots in the farmer's field?

23 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** So the wetlands  
24 that are being constructed by the applicant would be  
25 considered constructed wetlands, which is part of

1 the project construction. So we would actually look  
2 at how the construction of those wetlands interplay  
3 with the current water systems, which the DNR and  
4 the Board of Water and Soil Resources would be  
5 involved in the review of the construction of those  
6 stormwater basins.

7 So we wouldn't -- since they wouldn't be  
8 constructed yet, there's no way for us to look at  
9 them now. We would just look at the anticipated  
10 impacts of the construction of those on water  
11 resources.

12 **MR. BRAD WALLACE:** Okay. I understand.  
13 Thank you.

14 **MR. CEZAR PANAIT:** Okay. Thank you.

15 And that was the last raised hand.  
16 Again, checking one more time. No more raised  
17 hands.

18 Jessica, would you like to make any  
19 closing remarks?

20 **MS. JESSICA LIVINGSTON:** Yeah. Thanks,  
21 Cezar.

22 Just one last thank you to everyone for  
23 your questions and comments at today's meeting. And  
24 if you have any other questions or comments related  
25 to the scope of the environmental assessment, please

1 make sure you get those in before September 17th.  
2 You can either do a written comment, and  
3 send that to me in the mail, send it to me as an  
4 e-mail. And you can also comment online at the  
5 PUC's website, which I saw Marta just threw in the  
6 chat. So you should all have access to the  
7 different ways you can comment. And like I said,  
8 we'll be collecting those until September 17th.  
9 Thank you, everyone.

10 **MR. CEZAR PANAIT:** Thank you.

11 Jeremy, the team, Marta, or Karsen, any  
12 final comments?

13 **MS. MARTA LASCH:** No. We appreciate  
14 everyone's involvement.

15 **MR. KARSEN RUMPF:** Thank you, all. Thank  
16 you very much.

17 **MR. CEZAR PANAIT:** Thank you. Have a  
18 good night, everyone.

19 (Public comment included.)  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

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