

**From:** [Executive Director](#)  
**To:** [Staff, CAO \(PUC\)](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comment in Support of Midwater Battery Energy Storage System  
**Date:** Sunday, March 15, 2026 9:55:40 PM  
**Attachments:** [03152026 - Letter of Support - Midwater BESS Project.pdf](#)

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**PUC Docket Numbers:** IP-7138/ESS-24-294 and TL-24-295

**OAH Docket Number:** 25-2500-40799

Please find our letter of support for this project attached.  
If you need any additional information, please let me know.

Thank you!

**Valerie Lockhart**

Executive Director  
Albert Lea - Freeborn County Chamber of Commerce  
132 N Broadway Ave.  
Albert Lea, MN 56007  
(507) 373-3938  
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**To:** Minnesota Public Utilities Commission

**Email:** consumer.puc@state.mn.us

**Re:** Public Comment in Support of Midwater Battery Energy Storage System

**PUC Docket Numbers:** IP-7138/ESS-24-294 and TL-24-295

**OAH Docket Number:** 25-2500-40799

**Dear Administrative Law Judge McKenzie and Members of the Public Utilities Commission,**

On behalf of the Albert Lea-Freeborn County (ALFC) Chamber of Commerce, I am writing to formally express our strong support for the Midwater Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) proposed by our member, Spearmint Energy. As an organization dedicated to the economic vitality of Freeborn County, we advocate for business development and modernization projects that strengthen our local economy, benefit our community, and improve our regional infrastructure.

While public hearings naturally bring forward questions about new technology, we urge the Commission to weigh the substantial, fact-based benefits this facility will bring to our region:

- **Strengthening the Local Tax Base:** This project represents a multi-million dollar capital investment that will generate significant commercial tax revenue for Freeborn County. Crucially, it provides this financial boost, which can help fund local schools and infrastructure, without adding new strain to our public services or road networks.
- **Job Creation and Local Spending:** The development and construction phases will bring dozens of well-paying jobs to our area. These crews will be eating at our restaurants, staying in our hotels, and purchasing supplies locally, providing an immediate injection of capital into our small businesses. Long-term, the facility creates specialized, high-tech maintenance jobs.
- **Stabilizing Energy Costs:** High energy costs are a major threat to the bottom line of our local businesses and farms. By acting as a shock absorber, storing energy when it is cheap and deploying it during peak demand, the Midwater project reduces the need for expensive "peaker" plants, putting long-term downward pressure on the electric rates our community pays.

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**Albert Lea-Freeborn County Chamber of Commerce**

132 North Broadway Ave. Albert Lea, MN 56007

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- **Keeping Freeborn County Competitive:** Modern, resilient power grids are essential for attracting new industries and supporting the expansion of existing manufacturers. Hosting this project signals that our county is ready for the future.

Furthermore, we are confident in the rigorous engineering and safety standards Spearmin Energy has implemented. The project includes robust, redundant safety measures designed specifically to protect our local environment, including the Shell Rock River watershed. Features like automated 24/7 leak alerts and 100% capacity sealed containment trays for the cooling glycol demonstrate a proactive commitment to risk mitigation that meets or exceeds regulatory standards.

The ALFC Chamber supports our members' business decisions and relies on facts, engineering standards, and the rigorous PUC process. The Midwater project is a safe, necessary, and economically beneficial addition to Freeborn County.

We respectfully request that the Commission approve the permit for the Midwater Battery Energy Storage System.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "V. Lockhart".

Valerie Lockhart  
Executive Director  
Albert Lea-Freeborn County Chamber of Commerce