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1	JULY 19, 2021 - PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING - 07-839
2	BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
3	AND DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
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6	In the Matter of the Application of Xcel Energy for an
7	Amendment to the Site Permit for the Grand Meadow Wind
8	Farm Repower Project in Mower County
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12	MPUC DOCKET NO. IP6646/WS-07-839
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17	Dexter Community Building
18	107 Main Street South
19	Dexter, Minnesota
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22	July 19, 2021
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25	COURT REPORTER: Bridget E. Kelly

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MR. MICHAEL KALUZNIAK: Hi. I'm Michael Kaluzniak with the Minnesota Public Utilities

Commission. Thanks for coming out tonight. We appreciate it. We're here for the meeting on the Grand Meadow Wind Farm.

So we're here for the Grand Meadow Wind Farm Site Permit Amendment Project. The Commission originally issued a site permit for this project a while back, and we're here to look at the permit amendment. I'll be doing an overview of the meeting process itself and talking about how the Commission handles permit-amendment applications. I have to say that this is my first public meeting in about 18 months, so I'm pretty rusty and not on top of my game.

But anyway, after I finish, I'll turn it over to Matt Langan from Xcel Energy. Matt's helping out at the table over there. Matt is with Xcel. Xcel is the owner of the project now, the applicant for the site-permit amendment. He also has some people here who can help you with your questions. They have maps over here on this side as well, if you want to point out a particular property or ask questions about that.

After that time, I'll turn it over to

David Birkholz. David's with the Minnesota

Department of Commerce, our sister agency that

handles environmental review, as well as some of the

process pieces for our review, and makes analysis

and recommendations to the Commission.

And finally, of course we want to hear from you. We'd like your questions, comments, input. We can be very informal here. We can stay afterwards, and I'll talk a bit about that later too.

I won't go through this too much. I'm going to upload these slides tomorrow too. I should mention also, as I get started here, we're having a meeting tomorrow as well. It will be basically the same meeting as we're having tonight; however, it will be held online. And that's on our website, which should be on here somewhere, and that will be at 6 p.m. as well.

The Commission has responsibility for several things related to energy, electricity, natural gas, and telephone in the State of Minnesota. Part of its responsibilities includes energy-facility permits. I'm within the energy-facility permit unit. I'm a staff person with the Commission, which is composed of five

individual members. It's a bipartisan group. They don't make decisions behind closed doors. We have open-meeting laws, and you're certainly welcome to come and see one of our meetings anytime in St. Paul, Minnesota. Our calendars are online.

So part of the permits that we handle within the permitting unit, wind farms, pipelines, transmission lines, solar facilities, nuclear energy, and the like, those sort of things. The Commission reviews the full docket that we're developing in this process. We have these open meetings so that we can collect information from the public and certain parties, proponents or opponents, citizens groups, and so forth. We'd like to hear all of your input on that.

This is the process that we'll be going through for reviewing the site-permit amendment. The amendment was filed a while back. I think it was in May of this year. In June of -- June 24th, the Department of Commerce filed a draft site permit for comments and recommendations. I have a copy of that here, if you'd like to review it, so you can take it home if you'd like.

Basically, a draft site permit doesn't authorize anything. It's just for discussion

purposes. So if you have a question about a particular item, say, soil erosion and sediment control, this is not what is being proposed. This is certainly not written in stone. Any of this -- any and all of it may be modified by the Commission as they deem appropriate and if they have reason for doing so.

After this meeting we'll continue to have a comment period that goes on through August 3rd.

Yes, August 3rd, we'll allow comments to be taken.

You can give them here tonight. You can write them down. I have information about the public advisor on the table there. This is his business card. If you want to call, get in touch, e-mail, we're happy to help you whichever way is convenient.

We'll have our comments sent to David over at the Department of Commerce, and that was included in the project notice. So once those are all collected, the comment period will end. We'll hear from the applicant and the Department of Commerce. I will take all that information and bring it to the Commission for an analysis of everybody's position, and they will make a decision on the matter.

This is the tentative schedule. We're

here today. Again, tomorrow we'll have another meeting online, which you're welcome to attend as well. The comment period, and if you remember nothing else, again, is August 3rd. After that time we don't accept comments. We anticipate comments from the Department on the 17th of August and about ten days later from the applicant. The Commission will probably make a decision sometime in September or October, in that timeframe.

Again, these are the ways you can submit comments: Online, e-mail, U.S. mail. You can even call directly if you have a comment that you need help with, and one of our staff members will do whatever it takes to get your comments and help you get those on the record. The Commission considers all comments equally. It doesn't matter how you comment.

These are the types of questions that we're looking for. We're happy to answer any questions you may have about the project itself.

What are the changes? How will that affect you as landowners or citizens? What methods can be used to minimize, mitigate, or avoid potential impacts of the project? And are there any unique characteristics that we don't know about?

So there was an application filed by Xcel Energy, and that's in front of our case record here. It's on the Department of Commerce's website. You can get there by our e-mail address here, and you can see the full docket record including the applications. Everything that's been filed to the docket; every comment that we've received; the filings from the Department of Commerce, other agencies -- all go through our filing system.

And the important thing to note there is the docket number, 07-839, and you can just kind of find that on our website too. If you pull up that docket record on our eDockets system, it will give you that list of each and every docket. There's probably 50 or 60 different dockets so far including the applications and this draft site permit as well, and as I mentioned, I'll put this on there tomorrow too so that that will be available for anybody who cares to look at it.

You can also subscribe to the docket if you register on that site, and every time something's filed, you'll receive an e-mail. I get dozens of these a day. It can be a lot of reading. It's kind of annoying if you're trying to do other things, but you're certainly welcome to do that. We

encourage you to do it if you want to get every document.

Again, my name is Michael Kaluzniak. I'm the staff analyst. Charley Bruce is our public advisor. I left Charley's cards in the back of the room and the front if you want to look at it. Charley is not available. He's normally our public advisor here. He is not available today for questions. So if you have any questions, we will be happy to answer them. And I'm going to turn it over to Matt Langan from Xcel who will talk about the project itself.

MR. MATT LANGAN: Okay. Thank you, Mike for that introduction. My name Matt Langan. I'm with Xcel Energy. I work in a group called siting and land rights. We work with our state agencies to secure the approvals needed to build a wind farm or in this case rebuild a wind farm.

One important note about all the information that Mike gave you, there was a lot of information of course on the screen there. What we try to do is make sure that we develop a really good landowner mailing list when we start out these projects. We want to capture all the landowners of record within the project area and adjacent to it as

well, to a certain extent.

And so hopefully, you all received in the mail notice of tonight's meeting, notice of this comment period that Mike is describing. And if you didn't receive that mailed notice, all of that information is in there, every website that you want to check for project information, where to send your comments in, who to call if you have a question.

And so I'd refer you to that notice.

But I also mention that because if there are folks that you happen to know of in the community that are not receiving these e-mails that should be, please let us know and we can get them onto the project contact list so they can follow along with the review -- the state review process. But otherwise, hopefully, you all received that notice, and if you did not, definitely let us know after the meeting. We'll get you all that information.

So we're here tonight to talk about the Grand Meadow Wind Repower Project. The project itself of course has been operational for a number of years since 2008. There are 67 turbines within this particular project that we're talking about. When it was first developed, it was termed the

Wapsipinicon Project, Wapsipinicon South if that rings a bell. So now it's called Grand Meadow. It's those 67 turbines south of the interstate. They are 1.5 General Electric -- 1.5-megawatt General Electric turbines. After the repower those will be 1.6-megawatt wind turbines, and we'll talk about how those will increase energy production, how those will run more efficiently all the time once the repower is complete.

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But first, a little bit about Xcel Energy. We operate in eight different states. We provide electricity to 3.6 million customers and natural gas to 2 million customers. We are a recognized leader in energy efficiency, carbon-emission reductions, storm restoration, innovative technology, and of course wind energy. The wind-energy portfolio is a big part of our future vision that we want to achieve by 2030, 80 percent lower carbon emissions when compared to 2005 levels on our system. And we've outlined a 2050 vision of 100 percent carbon-free electricity, and so that is really -- this is one of the pieces of that legacy and that ability to reach that carbon-free electricity future.

So to get to that future, we proposed to

the Public Utilities Commission upgrading four of our existing wind farms; that is, Nobles, Pleasant Valley, Grand Meadow, and Border, which is a wind farm in North Dakota. So Grand Meadow is part of that. We proposed to the Commission that this will save customers money. This will increase our energy produced. This will result in additional and longer-term payments to landowners in the area and then help support local governments along the way.

And so when we proposed that, that's kind of a first step to the Commission. And they say, okay, that plan looks solid. You can go forward. We're going to approve you to do that. And they did that in December of this year. And the next step is what we're doing here tonight, is to look at how to build this within state standards to reduce impacts to the extent possible and to meet all of the permitting objectives from the Public Utilities Commission.

So to the project itself, again, built and operational in 2008, 67 turbines within the project area. After the repower the proposal is to still have 67 turbines, still have them in the same locations. No turbines are moving at all. They'll be in the exact same locations. They will be just

retrofit with different blades, a different hub -excuse me -- different blades and some different
components within the nacelle. And we'll talk about
that in a slide or two here. We are also proposing
to develop an aircraft-detection lighting system.
So instead of the constant red light on top of the
towers, those will only turn on when the aircraft
are coming through the area. So that's part of the
proposal here today too.

Okay. So here's the details around the repower. You can see the different components of the turbine where you've got the foundation; the down turbine assembly; and the tower; the nacelle, which is this piece right here at the top of the tower; the hub, which attaches the blades; and then the blades themselves.

Currently, those blades are -- there's a 77-meter rotor diameter to those blades. So basically, that is 33 1/2 -- excuse me, that's wrong -- 37 1/2 meters per blade, and we are going to increase that rotor diameter to 97 meters. So each blade, if you think about it that way, is about 10 meters longer, about 35 feet longer than the existing blades. Hub height stays the same. That's 80 meters tall. Foundation stays in place, some

components changed out within the cell. And that is the proposal.

Now, there are 52 of the -- 52 of the 67 turbines will get the 97-meter blade -- rotor diameter blades. There will be 15 of the 67 turbines that will just have the 91-meter rotor diameter, okay, so that increase will just be 14 meters. Overall, the 7 meters per blade, about 20, 25 feet longer blades. So those are the components that would be replaced as part of the repower.

So the construction, in order for that to happen, our proposal is that construction would take about six to eight months to retrofit or to repower each of the 67 turbines. That's in the second quarter. The proposal is second quarter of 2023 right to the end of 2023, December of the year 2023.

We replace the components in the air by moving a crane from turbine to turbine. One of the things that we definitely hear from people is their concerns around soil compaction and tile lines out in the fields. What we've found to be a useful mitigation for both instances is to lay down construction matting all along the path from turbine to turbine as we walk the cranes from turbine to turbine. And so that's what we've proposed as part

of our application to the state here, is that we'll use construction matting wherever we drive a crane for the project during those six to eight months.

Workspace at each location, of course we'll have to place components -- new turbine components near the foundations and then take down the old blades and hub and replace with new. The area around each turbine is estimated to be about a 400-foot radius. That will be in the temporary workspace around each turbine.

What we would like to hear is if there is any concerns that -- if you host a turbine on your land and you're concerned that a 400-foot radius might impact a parcel of your land, a piece of your land, and that would be problematic, we'd like to hear about that and see if we can make arrangements to adjust and reduce or eliminate any impacts at those parcels. But right now for what we've supplied to the state, it will be a 400-foot radius around each turbine, and we'll need a temporary workspace during those six to eight months. We also will do some local road improvements if necessary.

We're going to enter into a road-use agreement with the county and townships where the project exists to make sure that we're using the

public roads properly; we understand traffic-flow patterns; we understand where improvements might need to be made; and are certainly set up for any kind of restoration work that the company would be responsible for after construction is complete. So again, that will be a road-use agreement working with the townships and county.

And at Xcel we have project information up on our project-specific website on our -- online for our website. We have an e-mail that you can send directly to us if you have questions or concerns or just want to talk about the project, and then we've got a phone number also that you can call into. Very likely if you call into that number, you'll be leaving a message and a representative will be getting back to you within about 24 hours or less to answer your question or to give you a call back.

I know there's a lot of e-mails and phone numbers and websites to keep track of, but I want folks to make sure that they have this information -- if you've got a note, a pen and a paper -- to take us up on this, because these aren't only up and operational while we're doing this permitting process with the state, but rather this will be up

for -- throughout the process and beyond during construction. So if you want to get in touch with us, this is the best way to do that specific to the Grand Meadow project. Did everybody get a chance to jot that down if they wanted to? Okay.

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And with that, I think that is what I wanted to say for this piece. I'm going to ask David to come up and talk about the Department of Commerce's review, but we'll be available for questions obviously after David's presentation as well. Thank you.

MR. DAVID BIRKHOLZ: Good evening. I may have met some of you if you to see you all. were out here in 2007 or 2008 because I did work on the original project and did the environmental review for the whole Wapsipinicon Project. Interestingly enough, at least for me, is that these repowering projects are a practical and sensible idea for us when we look at it from an environmental and economic review. We don't have to break new We don't have to change for instance -ground. well, let me -- let me introduce myself. I did this incorrectly for the court reporter. When I ask you -- when you ask your questions or make your comments, I'm going to ask you to present your name

and spell it to the court reporter. So it's David Birkholz, B-I-R-K-H-O-L-Z, with the Department of Commerce.

All right. I'm back. We did a -- we did a meeting out at Grand Meadow, at least a couple of them. There were several because there was a certificate of need. These are not changing.

There's no certificate of need necessary. And what's the name of the little town that's south? It starts with an E.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Elkton.

MR. DAVID BIRKHOLZ: That's it. That was -- that was back when I was just a kid. The difference here is that everything stays put. So when we first conceive of repowering projects, you know, what -- that's all we know. That much we know, and what else do we need to know in order to make a change this big? Well, it's -- it's 10, 12 years later, and there are a lot of things to change.

So what we've done is basically asked for a whole new application. The process is speeded up because some decisions are more straightforward about the application and the data we wanted. We wanted to know everything that's changed since the

original project. So there are new bird studies. There's new studies for all sorts of DNR issues. There's new studies for noise monitoring and modeling. And so those all take place.

it's -- they are staying in the same place, the turbines, but they're longer. That means to make that 3 by 5, sometimes that's going to go beyond what the company has in their contractual agreement with them. I was on this project before Xcel was actually. We don't advocate for projects, but I've just been working on it. Xcel, at the end of the building permit, took over control of the Grand Meadow Wind Farm and has been operating it ever since.

Matt told you a lot about the things that are changing. The lighting's changing. The noise has been modeled and should be -- it should not be more, and it will be less than the noise that's currently out there. That's the way it's designed, and that's the way it's been modeled. We will do, after the fact, as we did the first time, post-construction monitoring of the noise. There's monitoring ahead of time. There's monitoring afterwards. So we will test out how that monitoring

works out. And Matt discussed about the aircraft-detection lighting. I'm sure anyone who's ever noticed, if you're driving down 90, that's one really distracting thing to see, is lights coming on and off for as far as you can see into the distance. So this is a good -- this is a good move, and the Commission's been requiring some kind of light mitigation in all of its new permits.

These are available. I just mentioned them because you should know that they're available to go look at. They came in along with the application. There's a new bird and bat conservation strategy, and that's updated regularly. And then there's an updated decommissioning plan that comes with this. That will be reviewed continually. We anticipate in five years, come back and look at it, see if it's funded, see if it's -- see if it's going to make sure that nothing is left behind.

Now, we do have a draft site permit. It is online already for you to read. It's filed in the eDockets, 07-839, under EERA comments and draft site permitting, so. That is the real number that you need to write down, 07-839. The contact numbers are fine, but if you know that number and docket,

you can find everything because the account of the discussion tonight will be online.

The draft permit is online, and I think it's really important that you go and look at that because I took the old permit from back in 2008 when it was issued and updated it to standards of all the permits that the Commission is issuing now. So a lot has changed, you'd be surprised, in the last several years. And also, take a look at what are specific things that should be in this particular permit. For you to make your comments -- you can make comments on anything or questions on anything, but it will help to go online and look at these documents because it will help you see actually what is being proposed and what the state is proposing to allow.

When you go on that other website, you don't need to write these numbers down because they'll be there as well, because when this is done, these web presentations will be posted on the eDockets page as well. You can use this link to go to the documents that I'm talking about that the Department of Commerce has posted on there as well. So we'll make it as easy for you to get to the meat of the matter as possible.

Okay. Now we're going to get to the meat of the matter of why we're here. Again, these are the questions the Commission is going to be asking. So if you have questions or comments on these items, this is the kinds of things that they're going to have to know to make an educated decision. Are there additional human or environmental impacts that aren't in those papers? Are there additional impacts that are changing with the project changing, or are there just issues that you think have just been forgotten about or need to be addressed more thoroughly? Those kinds of comments are great.

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You know, you can comment here tonight, or you can comment online, or you can comment by sending an e-mail or letter or whatever you'd like. After you've looked at that draft permit, consider more what kind of permit conditions should be added, and then of course you can make your own -- you can make your own opinion on whether the Commission should move ahead and okay this project. Repowering basically improves the efficiency of energy production. It improves the economics for the area and for the company, but that doesn't mean the Commission or the Department think it's an automatic or a free ride. Ask the questions, or you might

begin to imagine that perhaps you might have forgotten something.

So that's enough of us. I'm going to ask you again when you come up -- well, I'm going to ask you first to come up because otherwise we won't hear you in the back and the court reporter won't hear. So I'm going to ask you to come up. I'll give you the mic before you speak. State your name for the reporter. We always put up a slide like this. Limit your comments to a few minutes, and if there's time at the end, you can come back. But this is a pretty small group, so I think we have time to be here to hear everything that everybody wants to say.

With that, I will just try to bring you the mic as close as I can, so you may have to stand when you comment. So please, who would like to be the first to comment?

MR. MARK OSMUNDSON: I don't need to come up there. They can hear me. I got a question for you.

MR. MATT LANGAN: Okay.

MR. MARK OSMUNDSON: You're the owner of the project. White just got done -- Oh, Mark Osmundson. I didn't say that. So they just got done down there. There's garbage all over the

1 place, in the ditches. Oh, O-S-M-U-N-D-S-O-N. 2 There's garbage -- there was trash all over the ditches. Ask him about his field. All over in the 3 field, they tried to bury trash. The digger goes 4 through, brings up cups of trash that they tried to 5 bury, and it just pissed me off that it was all 6 there, and it's still all there except your field. 7 8 Yeah, but, I mean, they just left them there. 9 totally left a stinking mess. MR. MATT LANGAN: Loud and clear. 10 Thanks for letting us know that. 11 12 MR. DAVID BIRKHOLZ: There is a system 13 with an existing permit and the new one, and when you're online, you can check that. 14 It's correct when you run into a problem to bring it to the 15 company, and if the company corrects it, great. 16 Ιf 17 the company doesn't correct it, then there's a 18 process that we can continue and follow up on so it's good. 19 20 MR. MARK OSMUNDSON: Your Commission has 21 the -- their permit too. 22 MR. RYAN GEHLING: My name is Ryan 23 Gehling, G-E-H-L-I-N-G. Part of what Mark was 24 talking about, White Wind did leave one terrific 25 Right now we're in negotiations -- we're in mess.

negotiations on that reparation for the mess they left behind. They worked on my tower -- I believe they finished it on November 17th through the 20th. They turned my property into a secondary staging site beyond where they initially placed material. It was brought to their attention, and right now we're having conversations about their mistakes. But Mark is right 100 percent. We had garbage blowing across the river 20 acres. We've been picking it up.

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MR. MARK OSMUNDSON: Everywhere.

MR. RYAN GEHLING: But I have also been visiting with WSB, I think it is, and I've brought that to their attention. And they're well aware of the mistakes made down there, and you can bring your concerns to WBS or Xcel. They listen. The problem with White and NextEra is I haven't seen the drunks on Saturday night have as much fun at making a mess. But anyhow, Xcel, I've been visiting with them quite a bit, and they've seemed very responsive. And we'll see if they follow through with what they've promised. So I have -- everybody knows where they're at. Minnesota nice went out the door with White construction.

And I'm also curious on -- you said some

of the turbines are gonna have 7-foot blades and some were longer. What's the reason for that?

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First of all, thank you MR. MATT LANGAN: for the last comments. That's the type of thing that we take really seriously, and I can just say that in front of you now, but we're just going to follow up and demonstrate that we won't leave a site looking like that. David's right. We have an That's spelled out in the obligation for cleanup. permit that the Commission gives us, and so we take -- whether that were in the permit or not, we would want a site to look responsible and cleaned up for the community. So thank you for the comments. That's reenforcement for us and our team to pay attention to what happens after construction. So thank you both for the comments.

In terms of the blade length, so the current 00 so we always talk about rotor diameter, and so right now the rotor diameter of the existing wind farm is 77 meters in diameter. So the -- so they will move some to 97 meters, some to 91. The 91-meter rotor diameters are a little more quiet than the 97-meter rotor diameters. So what we're finding -- what we're doing there with those 15 turbines is making sure that those are in compliance

with the state noise standard as we model it and as 1 2 we will be monitored after the construction is So it's to achieve that noise standard 3 and make sure we're in compliance at all times of 4 day with the state noise standard. 5 MR. RYAN GEHLING: Where's the 6 7 aircraft-detection system gonna be located? 8 MR. MATT LANGAN: So that requires a 9 power or perhaps more than one. MR. RYAN GEHLING: I've got the original 10 on my property on this last project, so I know what 11 12 it is. Just curious on locations. 13 MR. MATT LANGAN: Sure. I'm going to ask one of my teammates here if we have identified a 14 location for that or if we are still looking. 15 Still looking for the location for that, but diligently 16 17 looking for that. That's something that we're 18 trying to implement with each one of our projects that we're developing. 19 20 MR. RYAN GEHLING: I think I'm good. 21 MR. DAVID BIRKHOLZ: Thanks, Matt. Like 22 I said, we have a fairly small number, so you can 23 have all the time you want to speak. Again, we're

interested in your comments and on the details of

the permit 'cause that's where the -- that's where

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it hits the road basically. It's what's going to be done exactly and how are the mechanics going to be enforced and how are we going to turn this into a successful project if it's approved. That usually only happens best when we have a lot of public participation in the entire project. Mike and I have been out here more than once for the project, but we don't live out here, so we're happy to hear from you.

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Well, I'm not going to force anybody to come here, but I don't want to -- I don't want to dash into town and dash out either, so keep thinking if you want to speak. But again, the Commission and myself and the company will all be hanging around here if you want to talk individually. The important part is to keep tabs on the commenting because to keep the project process turning, there has to be an end date to the comments so that we can get them to the Commission and they can make a good decision. We're happy to hear from you at any time tonight, tomorrow. Go online to see what we put It's all there in black and white. there. I don't think I'm cutting anybody off here. I'm not going to force you, but we are here. Speak with us.

Appreciate you coming out. Hope this was

helpful. Hope this encourages you to keep participating in the project.

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MR. MICHAEL KALUZNIAK: All right. David mentioned we'll be here tearing down for a little bit, so if you have any questions or want to talk to us, let us know. Again, we have a copy of the draft site permit here. We encourage you to look at that, especially if you have questions about For example there's a provision in here that requires weekly updates -- or routinely -monthly updates on complaints received, and those are tracked, and we do reach every one of those and make sure that they are resolved. We have a process for resolving unresolved complaints as well. bear that in mind. But I think that generally the approach that seems to work best for people is to simply contact the applicant because maybe they didn't realize that they were required to do this under the permit.

So we encourage you to look at the draft site permit online and any other information. Our website address is on Charley's cards here. You can go through our calendar and find this presentation, the meeting notice, links to the docket itself with all the information and applications. And we do

1	appreciate you coming out here, and if you have any
2	other questions, feel free to stick around. If you
3	have any more questions now, it will be last call.
4	Well, thank you very much for being here.
5	We do appreciate it. Thanks. Good night.
6	(Meeting concluded at 6:50 p.m.)
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