

1 SCOPING AND INFORMATIONAL MEETING
2 AUGUST 31, 2021 - 21-191, 21-190, 21-189
3 BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
4 AND DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

5
6 In the Matter of the Application of Xcel Energy for a
7 Site Permit and Two Route Permits for the up to 460
8 Megawatt Sherco Solar Energy Generating System and
9 Associated 345 Kilovolt Transmission Lines in Sherburne
10 County, Minnesota

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1 MR. SCOTT EK: Good evening, folks. I
2 think we're going to get started, if you want to
3 take your seats.

4 All right. Welcome to the public
5 information and environmental scoping meeting for
6 the proposed Sherco Solar Project. My name is Scott
7 Ek. I am an energy facilities planner with the
8 Public Utilities Commission, the Minnesota Public
9 Utilities Commission. And let's see here.

10 The purpose of tonight's meeting is to
11 provide information about the proposed project,
12 answer questions about the project and the
13 permitting process, and receive comments on topics
14 for potential consideration in the environmental
15 assessment that will be prepared for this project.
16 That's part of the permitting process. So the
17 meeting will proceed with me providing a brief
18 summary of the permitting process, the state's
19 permitting process, and the state's role in that
20 process, followed by a description of the project by
21 Xcel Energy representatives. And after that there's
22 a summary of the environmental-review process, and
23 that will be by Mr. Bill Storm with the Department
24 of Commerce. After the presentation we will open
25 the meeting up for questions and comments, as I

1 said.

2 So I'll just touch briefly on the
3 project. As I said Xcel will explain in greater
4 detail the project. But the Sherco Solar Project is
5 a proposed 460-megawatt solar energy-generating
6 system. It would be divided into an east block and
7 a west block. Those two blocks of the project would
8 connect to the electric transmission system at the
9 existing Sherburne County substation by way of two
10 new 345-kilovolt transmission lines, and they're
11 relatively short, 1.7 and 2.3 miles in length
12 respectively. And as I said Xcel will provide a
13 much more detailed description of the project
14 following my presentation. And there will be maps
15 on the slides up here, Xcel will have, and as you
16 noticed when you walked in, there's also two sets of
17 maps in the back of the room for you to look at.

18 So the reason we're here tonight is
19 because the project requires a total of three
20 permits from the Public Utilities Commission. The
21 Public Utilities Commission is the state agency in
22 Minnesota responsible for permitting large energy
23 facilities. And because the project, the solar
24 project, is over 50 megawatts in size, a site permit
25 is required from the Public Utilities Commission.

1 And then because the two transmission lines are over
2 100 kilovolts and greater than 1500 feet in length,
3 each of those require a routing permit, which a
4 routing tells the -- you know, where those
5 transmission lines would go or be routed.

6 So therefore part of the reason for
7 tonight's meeting and the written-comment period
8 that follows this meeting -- it was provided in the
9 notice -- is to seek comments on matters that can be
10 addressed in either of the three permits, if they're
11 issued, or matters that could be addressed in the
12 environmental assessment that's going to be
13 prepared. And Bill Storm will get to that. Also,
14 in this case, typically, a certificate of need is
15 required for a project of this size. But the
16 Commission, in a separate but related docket -- it
17 was Docket 20-891 -- exempted this project from
18 certificate of need requirements because it was part
19 of an already approved bidding process. So that's
20 the reason this doesn't need a need determination.

21 So at the end of this application process
22 -- and I'll get to that. I have a flowchart. But
23 at the end of the review process, the Commission
24 must make a final decision on whether to issue a
25 permit and what the conditions might be in the

1 permits. When making its decision, the Commission
2 considers the whole record of the case. That
3 includes the information provided in the
4 applications; comments received by interested
5 citizens, local governments, county governments,
6 state agencies such as the DNR, MPCA; information
7 that's presented in the environmental assessment I'm
8 talking about.

9 And also, there will be a report prepared
10 by an administrative law judge, and they will
11 prepare findings of fact, conclusions of law, and a
12 recommendation to the Commission. And they look at
13 the whole record when preparing that document. So
14 all the Commission's decisions -- when looking at
15 all that information, the decisions are made in the
16 context of does -- made in the context of the
17 potential human and environmental impacts of the
18 proposed project. You know, the Commission would
19 consider -- these are just a few: Noise,
20 aesthetics, public health and safety, land-use
21 conflicts, historic resources, air and water
22 quality, plants and wildlife. There's a whole list
23 more that will be automatically included in the
24 environmental assessment.

25 The Commission also considers methods

1 that are identified in the record or the
2 environmental assessment that could help minimize,
3 mitigate, or avoid any of the impacts that are
4 identified. And if they can, they would, you know,
5 propose conditions in a permit to assist with that.
6 And lastly, the Commission looks at, you know,
7 whether the project -- the efficiency of the
8 project, the cost-effectiveness of the project,
9 whether it contributes to security of the electric
10 transmission system and so forth. So there's quite
11 a few things the Commission considers at the end of
12 this process, and they look at the entire record.

13 Oh, it did show up. I was worried it
14 wasn't going to show up too well.

15 But up on the screen, you can see, is a
16 timeline, an estimated review timeline of the
17 state's review process for this application. And if
18 you go to that third box down, we're at the public
19 information meeting and scoping meeting, and tonight
20 there will be an in-person meeting that we're here
21 at. Tomorrow there will be an online meeting. It
22 will be the same exact meeting, same information.
23 You're welcome to attend, but what you hear tonight
24 will be exactly what you would hear tomorrow, if you
25 wanted to attend. But if you think of a question

1 overnight and want to propose that question at the
2 online meeting, by all means please join. And that
3 information was in the notice that was provided for
4 tonight's meeting, and I'll have that up at the end
5 of the presentation as well.

6 So after tonight's meeting and the
7 comment period that trails after this meeting, the
8 written-comment period, what would happen is all
9 that information's taken and a scope of the
10 environmental assessment's created. That just
11 outlines the information that will be studied and
12 the matters and topics that would be studied in the
13 environmental assessment. Followed by that, in
14 about January or February, the environmental
15 assessment will be released to the public for public
16 review, and that's a milestone in the project.

17 So once that's issued, a few months after
18 that, we will be back up here in Becker, and we will
19 have a public hearing. It's very similar to what
20 we're doing tonight with the exception that an
21 administrative law judge from the Office of
22 Administrative Hearings will preside over that. So
23 it's a hearing with a judge. And the judge will
24 listen to your comments on the merits of the whole
25 project on items that were identified in the EA or

1 not identified, items that have been missed that you
2 may have commented on and somehow they were missed
3 or items where there's still disagreement, you know,
4 over what's been reported in the EA or by the
5 applicant in its application.

6 So following the public hearing, there's
7 a comment period. And the judge will take a look at
8 all of the information received during the hearing,
9 as well as the record, and as I said prepares the
10 findings of fact, conclusions of law, and
11 recommendation. That's kind of the last piece in
12 the process. And so the Commission will take that
13 report, the EA, and all the information, and around
14 May or June of next year is when the Commission
15 would make a decision on whether to issue the
16 permits and, if issued, what conditions should be in
17 the permits. So that's just a real snapshot of the
18 process. It's a nine- to twelve-month process right
19 now, and this is just a general estimate to give you
20 an idea.

21 But with that, you know, that's -- this
22 is the end of my presentation. I'll be around at
23 the end of the meeting to answer questions about the
24 Commission, the review process. So as I said next
25 up I'll turn it over to Xcel Energy to describe the

1 project, and following that, Bill Storm with the
2 Department of Commerce will describe the
3 environmental-review process. Then we'll open it up
4 to questions. Thank you.

5 MR. WILLIAM RISSE: Great. Thanks,
6 Scott. Yeah, so as Scott mentioned, I'm here on
7 behalf of Xcel Energy tonight. My name's William
8 Risse. I'm a permitting specialist. I actually
9 work for National Grid Renewables. We're partnering
10 hand in hand with Xcel on this project, kind of
11 helping them get through the development process, at
12 which point they'll construct and operate this
13 project for the long-term.

14 I do want to encourage you, as Scott
15 already mentioned, there's maps that are located in
16 the back here. We'll be spread out after this. If
17 you guys do have any other project-related
18 questions, we're happy to talk with you one on one
19 as well.

20 So with that, just to touch on kind of
21 the partnership here. So as I mentioned, National
22 Grid Renewables, we are a kind of nationwide
23 renewable energy developer. We are partnering with
24 Xcel Energy on this project. And Xcel Energy is
25 partnering with us to develop this and construct and

1 operate the project in the long-term.

2 So now that you have a little background
3 of who I am, and I think you're all familiar with
4 Xcel Energy as well, I'll talk a little bit more
5 about the project details here. So overall we're
6 talking, the project size is 460 megawatts with
7 about 230 megawatts in what we're calling the east
8 and west blocks of the project. In total these
9 blocks are about 3500 acres, which Scott already
10 mentioned. And each block will have a transmission
11 line -- which we shortened to HVTL, high-voltage
12 transmission line -- from each block that goes to
13 the point of interconnection, which is a substation
14 within Xcel's existing facility. And so we'll get
15 into the components here a little more as I go on.
16 But as you all know, I think the location of this is
17 -- it's right next door here in Clear Lake Township,
18 Becker Township, and the transmission lines are in
19 the City of Becker.

20 A little bit of background on
21 commercial-operation date here. We're looking at
22 kind of each block being constructed over a
23 little-over-a-year period, with commercial operation
24 as soon as December 31st of 2024.

25 Scott, could you go to the next slide?

1 So just a few details on -- so, like,
2 what does a 460-megawatt project mean? What does
3 that look like when you're talking of, like, homes
4 being powered or something like that? So a project
5 of this size can actually power about 100,000 homes,
6 and that's the equivalent of taking about 60,000
7 cars off the road in terms of CO2 emissions. In
8 terms of actual CO2 emissions, which it's a number
9 to a lot of folks, but so 300,000 tons of CO2 will
10 be avoided each year from this project. And that
11 equates to during construction \$115 million in wages
12 from about 900 union construction jobs and then \$240
13 million in terms of taxes and landowner payments
14 over 35 years of the project.

15 In terms of just studies and things that
16 we've done to kind of minimize environmental impacts
17 for this project, we've completed wetland
18 delineations of the site; we've studied cultural
19 resources across the site; we've also coordinated
20 with the DNR to do what's known as a
21 natural-resource heritage information system review,
22 which kind of looks at sensitive species across the
23 site.

24 And we work closely with the Department
25 of Agriculture. Something that we always look at

1 with each project is developing an agriculture
2 impact-mitigation plan. So looking at what we can
3 do as we develop the project to protect the land in
4 the future for agricultural development
5 post-project. And then lastly, something that we're
6 also working closely with agencies on is a
7 vegetation-management plan. So looking to establish
8 robust vegetation beneath those panels. So in all
9 that consultation with agencies, we really pull that
10 information together and we try to minimize the
11 impacts from these project components that I'll get
12 into here shortly.

13 So here on Slide 12, you guys can see
14 just kind of the basics of a solar project, which
15 I'll go over here in the next few slides. So
16 there's panels that are placed on a racking system.
17 So what you can see here are kind of the basics of
18 those racking systems.

19 First, we'll take a machine, and we'll
20 pile-drive piles into the land. We'll then add a
21 racking system on top of that, and that's this
22 middle photo here. So this is actually what's known
23 as a tracking racking system. So the panels will
24 actually face north-south in rows, and they'll
25 actually track the sun throughout the day. So it

1 will face east in the morning, kind of straight up
2 and down in the -- or noon time, and then west in
3 the afternoon. And then you can kind of see just
4 more robust racking with kind of the full system
5 built out at the right there.

6 So what goes on the racking, I would say
7 that this is probably the most important part of the
8 project, so the solar panels. This is what produces
9 the power on the site. We have a few different
10 solar panels here just because we keep our
11 optionality open as we look to select these panels.
12 Something I like to equate it to is, like, when you
13 go to get tires on a car, you wait till there's a
14 sale to get those tires. So similar here, we're
15 looking at all the available panels and figuring out
16 what the best option is here in terms of price and
17 production. So what I have highlighted here is --
18 it's a bifacial panel. So I like touching on this
19 one. It's kind of cool technology. It actually
20 collects sunlight on both sides of the panel, so
21 anything reflected off the ground also gets
22 collected.

23 If you want to go to the next slide.

24 So from here your panels produce that
25 power. They actually route that, and you can see it

1 on the site-plan maps in the back. They route it to
2 an inverter, which is kind of the upper right of the
3 screen here. So what happens is these panels create
4 something known as DC electricity. It's kind of
5 like a low-voltage electricity. It goes to these
6 inverters, and they actually step that power up so
7 it more easily can be transmitted to the collector
8 substation, which is in the bottom right here. So
9 your panels go to your inverters, and those go to
10 the collector substation, and as I mentioned we have
11 two of those substations located on the site.

12 Just one other thing I like to touch on
13 here, is a question we often get, is kind of how
14 loud is this equipment? Does it give off any noise?
15 When you look at a project, really the inverters are
16 the primary thing that give off any noise at all,
17 and it's relatively minimal. A good way to equate
18 it to is at about 150 feet for, like, a
19 run-of-the-mill inverter, like, the noise given off
20 is not more than, like, a high-efficiency dishwasher
21 at that distance. So we go to great lengths to try
22 to site these in the middle of the project at
23 distances much greater than that. So, like,
24 honestly, you probably wouldn't even know that
25 they're running out there.

1 All right. The next slide.

2 So we've kind of gone over the components
3 now. So what's kind of the phasing of the
4 construction out there? So construction generally
5 consists of a few steps. So first, site
6 preparation; then that pile installation I already
7 mentioned; followed by putting the racking on that
8 piling, which we kind of already went over; followed
9 by installation of the actual modules or panels out
10 there, interconnecting all that into that collector
11 substation; and then following that disturbance,
12 making sure -- as I mentioned with that
13 vegetation-management plan, re-vegetating the site.

14 So to go over these steps in a little
15 more detail. So in terms of site preparation, what
16 are we talking about there? So this site is pretty
17 flat. I mean, a lot of you guys are from the
18 community. So there isn't a lot of grading we need
19 to do out there, but there'd be a little bit just to
20 make sure that our panels are at the best angle they
21 can be at to produce as much energy as possible.

22 And then so following that site prep,
23 which will kind of be that first step, will be that
24 pile-driving installation. People generally ask,
25 like, how long does this pile installation take? So

1 we move kind of from one side of the project to
2 another. So, like, pile installation, there will be
3 a little bit of pile-driving in one area for a short
4 amount of time, but then that will move on to
5 another area. And following that, really most of
6 the install's pretty straightforward, and you'll
7 just have people in, like, small vehicles installing
8 the modules out there.

9 In terms of re-vegetation, I'll just
10 touch on that a little more. Xcel really takes
11 great pride in this in that they're developing a
12 bigger, robust vegetation-management plan. They're
13 looking at using native species across the site and
14 collaborating with the Board of Water and Soil
15 Resources -- BWSER for short, we like to call them
16 -- to actually be a pollinator friendly certified
17 site.

18 So after all these panels are installed,
19 we're looking to vegetate this with pretty high
20 quality vegetation that can potentially have some
21 benefit for the area under the panels and the
22 surrounding area. So this is just a bit more on
23 that re-vegetation. You can kind of see, after
24 those panels are installed, what it might look like
25 out there, just a little bit of vegetation. That

1 middle slide being kind of -- here's a water feature
2 in this case or a waterway where they put down some
3 additional matting to ensure that no erosion occurs
4 and then kind of the end product on the right there
5 of a re-vegetated site and kind of what it will look
6 like for the long-term.

7 So here's just a site overview again just
8 as a reminder. So the west and east block will
9 really be dominated by those solar panels and
10 inverters, as well as access roads to get to them.
11 You can see where those collector substations are
12 and then those high-voltage transmission lines
13 leading from those collector substations. That
14 really carries the power into the grid.

15 So here's just a couple real quick just
16 to take a look at what it will actually look like
17 out there. So these are two pictures we collected
18 from the project area. The bottom right here,
19 you're looking at 115th Avenue facing south towards
20 Highway 8 or River Road, the River Road along there.
21 You can kind of see, this is about a little over a
22 tenth of a mile, just kind of what the panels look
23 like at a bit of a distance. Really looking at
24 this, I feel like they blend in pretty well at a
25 pretty short distance. And then looking at the top

1 left here -- this is actually near the far end of
2 the west block, looking kind of down Highway 8 a
3 little bit, River Road -- just at the panels a
4 little closer up with some just existing vegetation
5 there, just kind of to give you a reference to,
6 after this is established, what it will look like.

7 So we're going to be here for a while.
8 So the proposed project would be 35 years. So
9 what's going to happen during operations and
10 maintenance? So really after all that
11 construction's done, there isn't a whole lot that
12 happens on the site. There will be minimal traffic,
13 probably four to six regular onsite technicians that
14 are just keeping things up and running, making sure
15 things are working well. There will be routine
16 electrical inspections.

17 There will be some drone inspections out
18 there just looking at the integrity of the panels,
19 making sure everything's looking good. If there is
20 anything that looks off, repairing those panels and
21 just maintaining the vegetation out there, making
22 sure that erosion's minimized as much as possible.
23 Last thing to touch on is just that occasional
24 mowing, probably two to three times a year for the
25 first few years. But really the end goal here is to

1 minimize that mowing as much as possible and looking
2 at letting that native vegetation establish and
3 benefit water quality and such.

4 So finally, one last thing I like to
5 touch on is project decommissioning. So at the end
6 of the project's life, there's a few things that
7 could happen. Say, there's a new latest and
8 greatest technology, something new that produces
9 energy even better than these solar panels do. The
10 project could be decommissioned and the components
11 would be removed, reused, or recycled, and the site
12 would actually be converted back to agricultural
13 use.

14 Alternatively, if the site would be
15 repowered, potentially, new panels could be
16 installed, or the existing panels would still have
17 an operational use that could be extended into the
18 future. And something just worth noting with this
19 return to agricultural use for the site to be
20 decommissioned is this native vegetation in those
21 roots would really allow that soil to rest, kind of
22 lie fallow and potentially could help to even
23 improve agricultural use over the long-term, if it
24 was returned to that use.

25 So with that, our contact information is

1 listed up here as I mentioned. Aaron and a couple
2 others from Xcel are here, as well as myself. We're
3 happy to answer questions following this and happy
4 to speak with you more about the project. So very
5 much appreciate your time tonight, and I'll hand it
6 over to Bill.

7 MR. BILL STORM: Thank you. Good
8 evening, folks. Thanks for coming out. My name is
9 Bill Storm. I work with the Department of Commerce.
10 The Department of Commerce does the environmental
11 review, the document that Scott talked about. We
12 produce that document for the Commission, and the
13 Commission, as Scott laid out, makes the final
14 determination.

15 What we're here to do tonight, at least
16 my portion, is to talk about the scope. What is
17 scoping an environmental document? We scope an
18 environmental document because we want the
19 decision-makers to be informed. And the way we do
20 that is we come out to the public and we ask the
21 public do you have concerns? Do you know -- do you
22 have local knowledge? Are there things you want to
23 make sure I cover in the environmental document? So
24 this is all part of scoping as is the comment period
25 that follows.

1 Then the environmental document, the
2 environmental document is basically an assembly of
3 the objective facts so that different parties or
4 different interested people can use the same facts
5 to build their argument or make their comments. The
6 process does not advocate for or against the
7 project. Scoping focuses the environmental
8 assessment on the most relative information. It
9 provides an opportunity for the public basically to
10 give me input into the table of contents for the
11 document.

12 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Please put the
13 microphone up to your mouth.

14 MR. BILL STORM: Oh, sorry. I usually
15 have no problem with hearing me. I'm pretty loud.

16 Anyway, basically, what you do in scoping
17 is you give me input that can be on the potential
18 human and environmental impacts that can be studied,
19 ways to minimize them, mitigate them, or avoid them.
20 And also, if you have -- when I come out -- when we
21 come out to the local community, we're looking for
22 local information. Do you know something that
23 either isn't covered in the application or that you
24 want to make sure I capture and becomes part of my
25 document? Also, if you read the applications and

1 you think there's something that's mischaracterized
2 or not quite right, I want you to bring that forth
3 in your scoping comment so I can capture it, correct
4 it, or at least discuss it in the environmental
5 assessment.

6 The Department of Commerce as I said will
7 prepare the environmental assessment. It will
8 describe the project. It will describe any
9 alternatives. With a large solar project like this,
10 it's very rare that there are alternatives to be
11 described. Transmission lines, they're short.
12 Normally, if we have a long transmission line, we
13 would ask the public are there route segments or
14 alternative routes that you want us to consider and
15 evaluate? Not really applicable to this project
16 here. Also, it assesses the potential human and
17 environmental impacts. It identifies strategies to
18 avoid and mitigate the impacts. The document that I
19 write, the environmental impact that I write, will
20 cover both the solar farm and the two transmission
21 lines.

22 Okay. Following tonight's meeting --
23 actually tomorrow night's meeting, there's a comment
24 period. You can comment in various ways. You can
25 comment tonight on the record. We do have a court

1 reporter here.

2 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Is there a meeting
3 tomorrow night?

4 MR. BILL STORM: There's a remote meeting
5 tomorrow night.

6 AUDIENCE MEMBER: What do you mean by
7 remote?

8 MR. BILL STORM: Webex, through the
9 Internet. It's in the notice, how to do it, if you
10 want to participate in tomorrow's meeting. As Scott
11 said earlier, tomorrow's meeting will pretty much be
12 -- the information will be a repeat of tonight. But
13 it's just another way you can have people -- maybe
14 people aren't comfortable coming out in public just
15 yet with the pandemic and stuff.

16 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Sir, what is scoping?

17 MR. BILL STORM: Scoping is what we're
18 doing right now. I'm going to ask the public are
19 there issues, concerns that you have that you want
20 to make sure I cover in the environmental document?
21 Like, you may have a concern about, hey, Bill, when
22 they -- when this lifetime is over, this 25 years is
23 over, what happens to all the material? Are there
24 hazardous materials in the panels? Where does that
25 go? So you may have concerns. You may have concern

1 of why are we using farmland to produce energy,
2 taking farmland. So you may have these issues.
3 Scoping is an opportunity for the public and local
4 units of government to voice those comments, those
5 concerns to me so I can capture them in the
6 environmental document. So that's what scoping is.

7 After the comment period closes -- Scott
8 went over the process a little bit. But when the
9 comment period closes, I will take those comments
10 and I will put together a recommendation for a
11 scope, basically a table of contents of what the
12 environmental document will be. And I will present
13 that to the Commission, and I'll present it to my
14 commissioner for approval. Once that's approved
15 that sort of locks in the table of contents for the
16 environmental assessment. So that's -- and that's
17 called a scoping-decision document, and we're
18 probably three weeks away from that.

19 You know, so -- so if you want to
20 comment, if you have a concern, if you have local
21 knowledge, there are multiple ways for you to
22 comment. You can use the comment sheets that I put
23 on the desk and leave it at the drop box. You can
24 mail it to me. You can fax it to me, or you don't
25 even have to use my sheet. You can just send me an

1 e-mail or send me a fax from your own stationery and
2 give me your comment. But you have to have it in by
3 the end of the comment period.

4 My information is there. You can also go
5 to our website -- and that's the
6 mn.gov/commerce/energyfacilities -- and make your
7 comment electronically. You go to that website.
8 You'll see the Sherco Project. Click the button,
9 and you can write your comment out, what your
10 concern is, what you want me to make sure I cover in
11 the EA. The comment period closes Wednesday,
12 September 15th. By the end of business day, make
13 sure you have your comments to me so I can consider
14 them as I move towards developing the scoping
15 decision.

16 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Can we write a letter?

17 MR. BILL STORM: You can certainly write
18 a letter, letter, fax, e-mail, any way you want.
19 Tonight -- you can speak tonight if you have
20 concerns too, and you can do it multiple times, if
21 you -- you can speak tonight. And you can follow
22 that up with a written comment to me if you have a
23 concern that you want to make sure gets captured,
24 not only in the record but in my environmental
25 document.

1 Okay. I'm going to turn it over to the
2 public basically to get your comments and questions
3 and concerns. We've got a small group. I'm used to
4 having big groups, so I use cards. But when I call
5 your name, and I'm going to call one person at a
6 time, please don't interrupt them because the court
7 reporter has a real hard time keeping up with
8 multiple people speaking. Be respectful to
9 everybody who's speaking. You may disagree with
10 what somebody says. You may agree. Just be
11 respectful.

12 When you begin, I want you to stand and
13 state and spell your name for the court reporter and
14 also talk slower than I do. I -- court reporters --
15 I talk way too fast for the court reporters. I'm
16 asking you, for me, for my portion -- your comments
17 on the scope -- what you want to see in the scoping
18 document. So focus your comments on that. But
19 also, if you have questions for the applicant, this
20 is the time to ask those questions also. Limit your
21 initial comments to five minutes. Once we go
22 through everybody, we'll circle back if people have
23 additional things they want to say.

24 Okay. Just another reminder of what to
25 focus on: Focus on what you're concerned about,

1 either human health or environmental issues; if you
2 have thoughts on how to minimize, mitigate, or avoid
3 an impact that you think is coming up; anything --
4 any unique characterizations or local knowledge. If
5 you have local knowledge about the area that you
6 want to make sure I capture in the environmental
7 document, please bring that forward. And again, if
8 you've read the application, you went through it,
9 and you have issues with what they present, bring
10 that up in your comments also. Again, remember,
11 September 15th is when the comments are due, mail,
12 fax, e-mail, variety of ways to make comments, and
13 electronically through our website. This is all our
14 information.

15 And what I'm going to do now is I'm going
16 to call on people with the cards. Do you want them
17 to step up to the mic? Okay.

18 Okay, when I call on you, step up to the
19 mic, state and spell your name for the court
20 reporter, and say your piece. And then when I'm
21 done with the cards, I will go by show of hands
22 today. Could've went by show of hands here because
23 it's a small group. Randy Seeley.

24 MR. RANDY SEELEY: Thanks. Do you want
25 me to state my name to her, huh?

1 MR. BILL STORM: Yep. Spell and state
2 your name.

3 MR. RANDY SEELEY: Okay. It's R-A-N-D-Y,
4 S-E-E-L-E-Y.

5 I lived in Clear Lake Township all my
6 life. And if you look at the maps, the Seeley Farm
7 is where they want to start on the west. And I'd
8 gone a lot of years of duck hunting. I used to get
9 the cows back there, and I still like to snowmobile
10 there. And I don't know how to do that if they want
11 to fill it up with solar panels. I don't like
12 looking at solar panels. I'm a farm boy.

13 In 1979 in July, I started at Sherco.
14 And I was a heavy-equipment operator, and I dumped
15 coal trains until January of 2017. So I was there
16 more than 37 years. And I think it's asinine
17 shutting down Sherco and filling our home area with
18 solar panels. I don't like looking at them, and
19 they're a joke. When you drive on County Road 8,
20 you'll see a solar panel with a little bitty wire
21 going to a high line. People need to go back to
22 Sherco and see the humongous power lines coming out
23 of there and tell me who produces the power. And I
24 -- I don't know how -- how much land is it gonna
25 take to replace Sherco? Nobody can answer that.

1 And how do these solar panels produce
2 power when it's December 21st and we only have six,
3 seven hours of daylight? You know, back in 1980,
4 Mount St. Helena blew its top, and the ash came all
5 the way to Minnesota. And at that time I was told
6 that it produced more PCBs and pollutants and carbon
7 dioxide since the beginning of the industrial
8 revolution. So this -- having -- where would this
9 country be without fossil fuels? And -- what was I
10 gonna say? 1980, that was 90 years into the
11 industrial revolution, and these environmentalists
12 just want to destroy our way of life. And I don't
13 like looking at them solar panels, and I've lived in
14 Clear Lake Township all my life. And what else?
15 I'll turn it over to somebody else.

16 MR. BILL STORM: Thank you, Randy. Next,
17 Andy Person.

18 MR. ANDY PERSON: Yep.

19 MR. BILL STORM: State and spell your
20 name please, Andy.

21 MR. ANDY PERSON: Hi. I'm Andy Person,
22 A-N-D-Y, P-E-R-S-O-N.

23 Well, I'm a farmer, and I live right next
24 to the Seeley Farm. And my -- what I want to say is
25 I'm just worried about the environmental hazards of

1 it all with the cadmium and -- what's the other --
2 lead being inside these panels. I've heard that
3 rainwater can rinse it off and go into the
4 groundwater. I've also heard that these panels can
5 also not be recycled after 30 years or 20 years,
6 that they're commissioned. And a lot of these
7 farmers, I've heard them, they're putting these up,
8 are written up. They have -- what was I gonna say?
9 I'm nervous to be talking tonight.

10 AUDIENCE MEMBERS: Don't worry about it.
11 You're all right. You're okay.

12 MR. ANDY PERSON: I'm also worried about
13 how they're all gonna get recycled because I know a
14 lot of them get put into the landfill, and of course
15 we can't even put a battery into the landfill.
16 That's about -- oh, another thing, since I've lived
17 out there, I've seen all the wildlife. And I'm
18 worried about where the deer are gonna go 'cause
19 once you get all these up, there's a big fence that
20 goes around the whole thing, and none of the animals
21 can go in there. I seen my grandpa and my dad and
22 uncle and me now -- I'm gonna acquire the farm when
23 they -- during their passing, and I want to keep my
24 family going out there. And I -- I'm -- I'm just --
25 I'm worried about what kind of things can happen

1 with all that is in the panels. And I guess that's
2 about what I have to say. I don't know what else to
3 say right now. Thank you.

4 MR. BILL STORM: Nathan Runke, please
5 state and spell your name.

6 MR. NATHAN RUNKE: Yep. My name's Nathan
7 Runke. So that's N-A-T-H-A-N and then Runke is
8 R-U-N-K-E.

9 I'm with the International Union of
10 Operating Engineers Local 49. So we cover the
11 heavy-equipment construction industry for the unions
12 in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota. So
13 I'm going to take a different kind of tack than what
14 was being talked about so far.

15 At this point at least, there has been a
16 pledge to use local union labor for this project if
17 it is permitted. So I guess in that way we would
18 like to offer our support because we think that's an
19 important thing for any of these new energy
20 projects; that if they go forward, they should be
21 built with people from the area so the benefits that
22 come from them -- or, like they said, the wages that
23 would be put forward with a project like this --
24 would go back into the community and not be built
25 by, you know, a group of people from Texas,

1 Oklahoma, wherever, and sent back home that way.

2 So, I mean, I guess we -- we're in
3 support of projects that go forward like this. So
4 if it is approved, I guess we support that. The
5 rest of it will be up to you guys. You know the
6 local area a lot better than I do. So just wanted
7 to say my piece that way. So I'll let everybody
8 else get back to it.

9 MR. BILL STORM: Thank you, Nathan. Tory
10 Benstrom or Terry Benstrom. I might be butchering
11 this name. I'm getting old. Tracy Bertram.

12 MAYOR TRACY BERTRAM: I've been called a
13 lot, but that is not one of them.

14 So Tracy Bertram, T-R-A-C-Y, B, as in
15 boy, E-R-T-R-A-M. And I am the mayor of the City of
16 Becker, so welcome.

17 A couple things for you gentlemen this
18 evening. Please allow me to begin with the City of
19 Becker is not opposed to the Sherco Solar Project;
20 however, we are not supportive of the current
21 proposed footprint of the project. Our main concern
22 is, as currently configured, the Sherco Solar
23 Project will landlock the Becker Business Park. A
24 robust business park in Becker is needed to allow
25 the community to survive the decommissioning of

1 Sherco and the coal transition. Landlocking the
2 Becker Business Park will not allow us to have
3 long-term development options.

4 With the closure of the Sherco Power
5 Plant, the city stands to lose as much as 75 percent
6 of its tax base along with 300 well-paying jobs.
7 Furthermore, the combined cycle natural gas plant is
8 no longer slated for the development here in Becker.
9 We had the opportunity to become a national model
10 for coal-transitioning communities, and
11 unfortunately, the current footprint at the Sherco
12 Solar Project jeopardizes a successful
13 coal-transition outcome.

14 In short, our community is posed to lose
15 significant tax base, a wide variety of well-paying
16 jobs, and the direct-indirect and induced economic
17 activity that goes along with our major employer.
18 Our business --

19 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Speak into the mic. We
20 can't hear you back here.

21 MAYOR TRACY BERTRAM: Wow, okay.

22 Our business park is a key part of the
23 strategy to recoup our losses. This project, as
24 currently sited, poses challenging for the city's
25 long-term planning and economic development, which

1 we need to supplement this loss in tax revenue. The
2 environmental assessment needs to account for the
3 impact on the local community and tax base and
4 explore mitigation strategies for the negative
5 impacts.

6 First, no alternative sites have been
7 evaluated for this project. As evidenced in the
8 city comments of the docket, the city has sought a
9 remedy throughout the proceedings on changing the
10 proposed site, including seeking exclusions of
11 parcels immediately abutting the city boundaries.
12 Xcel has mentioned landowner willingness and
13 distance as a reason the other sites have not been
14 considered. For a city to effectively plan long
15 term, we have to consider expanding outside of our
16 city boundaries. This is incorporated into our
17 comprehensive planning process.

18 The project as proposed will derail the
19 city's long-term planning. The project abuts city
20 boundaries where we have long-term plans to expand
21 for economic development, which we are currently
22 installing city services in, preventing the
23 preparation of those sites, as they are being
24 utilized to host solar panels, and limits the use
25 for the utility-expansion investments being made by

1 the city. The proposed land locks the city into the
2 current boundaries where the city has been planned
3 to expand, and we need to consider that -- what the
4 highest and best uses of land are as we plan.

5 As the development begins scoping the
6 environmental assessment and proceeds with the
7 project development, we ask that the following be
8 considered: The long-term impacts that this project
9 will have on the local economy and tax base,
10 especially in light of the decommissioning of the
11 Sherco Plant and that we will now see no tax dollars
12 come into the city from the gas plant; the
13 environmental impacts that this project will have on
14 the proposed conversion of land use. The Department
15 needs to ensure consistency that the state's
16 regulatory goals for municipal development and
17 expansion, Minnesota Statute Chapter 414. Put
18 simply, we propose the footprint of this project be
19 altered to remedy our concerns, which is a bit
20 further from our city boundaries.

21 Last, to achieve these two objectives, we
22 respectively ask that alternative sites be evaluated
23 for this project. We have proposed that specific
24 parcels be removed from the footprint of the plan,
25 and we are planning to provide more detail in

1 written comments that we will submit in the next
2 couple weeks for those.

3 So I'd like to thank you all for
4 listening this evening. Thank you.

5 MR. BILL STORM: Thank you, Mayor Tracy.
6 May I add, Mayor Tracy, when you make your comments,
7 be as specific as you can about your alternative
8 that you'd like to be evaluated.

9 MAYOR TRACY BERTRAM: Sure. Like, parcel
10 numbers? Is that --

11 MR. BILL STORM: Yeah, parcel numbers.
12 If you can hand draw out a map or one of the maps
13 from the applicant, you know, from the application.
14 And anything you can provide me so that I have a
15 viable alternative that I could put forth in front
16 of the Commission and my commissioner.

17 MAYOR TRACY BERTRAM: Okay.

18 MR. BILL STORM: Okay. Just to try to
19 get into making the scope.

20 MAYOR TRACY BERTRAM: Perfect.

21 MR. BILL STORM: Thank you very much.
22 Senator Andrew Mathews.

23 SENATOR ANDREW MATHEWS: Thank you. I'm
24 Andrew Matthews -- A-N-D-R-E-W. Mathews is spelled
25 M-A-T-H-E-W-S -- and I've had the privilege of

1 serving the City of Becker and this area in the
2 senate for the last five years. And I'm basically
3 here -- I want -- I don't -- I'm not going to speak
4 long tonight. I'm mainly here to listen to many of
5 my residents here but wanted to let you know that
6 I'm here to support my constituents and the mayor
7 and the city here. We've been working on this
8 project for many years since -- on the Sherco issue
9 since I came into the legislature five years ago.
10 Representative Mekeland's with me here as well, my
11 house counterpart, and there have been a lot of
12 concerns about the direction that this has gone.

13 Becker is taking a big hit with the loss
14 of the current plant and then the loss of the
15 proposed plant that was going to replace it. And
16 we're being offered a large solar field, four to six
17 regular on-site people working there to replace the
18 hundreds of current jobs here in Becker currently
19 and, to echo what the mayor said, land locking the
20 city and preventing them from doing the expansion
21 they want to do to try to offset the loss of the
22 plant. So I'm here to urge the Commission, the
23 Public Utilities Commission, I'm here to urge the
24 Commerce Department and Xcel that we do need better
25 partnership here with our local area, with the city,

1 with its district.

2 I'm going to keep watching and keep
3 working on this, and I want to urge you to not just
4 take this and file these comments away and keep
5 doing whatever plans you want to do. We do need
6 some changes that are made to this. Please listen
7 to our city. Please work together on what we can
8 make for adjustments to this plan. And I'll
9 continue to be involved and watching and would be
10 happy to speak with any of you if I or my office can
11 be of any help. So thank you.

12 MR. BILL STORM: Thank you, Senator
13 Andrew.

14 REPRESENTATIVE SHANE MEKELAND: Bill, can
15 I just have a quick minute?

16 MR. BILL STORM: Sure.

17 REPRESENTATIVE SHANE MEKELAND: Thank
18 you. Thanks, Bill.

19 MR. BILL STORM: State and spell your
20 name.

21 REPRESENTATIVE SHANE MEKELAND: State
22 Representative Shane Mekeland, S-H-A-N-E,
23 M-E-K-E-L-A-N-D.

24 Everything that Senator Mathews just
25 said, and on top of that, there's also another big

1 component that there has been a committee formed for
2 energy-transitioning communities, which I've been
3 placed on that. Those meetings have not started
4 yet. And I find it really unfortunate that we're
5 jumping into this with a comment period closing in
6 two weeks, when this is what was going to be needed
7 to figure out what these eight communities
8 throughout the state are going to have to go
9 through.

10 So I would like -- and I'll enter
11 comments online. But I think this is a very
12 important thing because there are a lot of concerns
13 on many things including the landlocking of what
14 this is going to do the industrial park that we
15 worked really hard on, trying build that out and get
16 funding for. So it seems like we're kind of putting
17 the cart before the horse. Thank you.

18 MR. BILL STORM: Thank you. Dan McGowan,
19 state and spell your name.

20 MR. DAN MCGOWAN: Hello. My name is Dan
21 McGowan, D-A-N, M-C-G-O-W-A-N.

22 I am with the Laborers' International
23 Union of North America. I'm an organizer with the
24 laborers' union, and because of my job, I travel and
25 work throughout the State of Minnesota and North

1 Dakota. And part of my job is to attend public
2 hearings such as this one, meet with community
3 groups. But I also meet with contractors. I meet
4 with workers.

5 And never at any of these meetings has
6 anyone ever said that we do not need jobs in our
7 area. In fact the opposite is true. And these jobs
8 that we're talking about, they can't compare with
9 what the plant was. But these jobs are going to
10 have excellent pay and excellent benefits, and I
11 speak in support of the project. Thank you.

12 MR. BILL STORM: Thank you, Dan. Jim.

13 MR. JAMES NEWBERGER: I assume that's me.

14 MR. BILL STORM: Yes.

15 MR. JAMES NEWBERGER: My dad had another
16 name for me. My name is James, J-A-M-E-S,
17 Newberger, N, as in Nancy, E-W-B, as in Baker,
18 E-R-G, as in George, E-R.

19 I was a former state representative. I
20 served in the Minnesota House of Representatives for
21 six years. I was the vice chair of the jobs and
22 energy committee. You have some very well-informed
23 legislators in this room. Andrew Mathews, senator,
24 is the chair of the energy committee, and Shane
25 Mekeland, representative -- did I call you

1 Representative? Senator. Shane Mekeland,
2 representative, is also on the energy committee. We
3 are fully versed in these issues, and I'm here today
4 to express my deep, deep disappointment and anger
5 with Xcel Energy.

6 The Obama power plan came in, that whole
7 Obama administration came in and said, simply put,
8 shut down your coal plants. That was a death knell
9 for this community. Myself and Senator Brown are
10 retired. We worked for two years to get some type
11 of alternative in the Minnesota House and the
12 Minnesota Senate. And we worked for two years, and
13 the doors kept slamming in our face. And the whole
14 time I had meeting after meeting after meeting with
15 Xcel Energy in my office, in this community. We
16 need this, Jim. We've got to do this. They're
17 shutting us down. Whatever you can do.

18 Senator Brown retires and Senator Mathews
19 comes in. We keep working. We keep pushing,
20 committee meeting after committee meeting after
21 committee meeting, house floor fights, senate floor
22 fights. And we finally get it passed, a bipartisan
23 bill signed by Governor Dayton to give Xcel Energy
24 the gas plant that this community needs. And now
25 where's it going? North Dakota.

1 You threw us under the bus. What's our
2 consolation prize? Solar fields. Am I angry? You
3 bet. I love this community and I see what's
4 happening. This is bait and switch. And I don't,
5 for a minute now, believe that they were ever
6 intending to really put a gas plant here. There's a
7 few other concerns that I have, and I can be angry
8 'cause I'm retired now. These guys, they can't.
9 They've got to be nice. But I don't have to be
10 anymore. But I know the game because I lived it and
11 I worked it and I was right at the ground zero for
12 all of this.

13 Is it my understanding that some of the
14 land primarily that this solar array is going to be
15 built on is owned by township supervisors from some
16 of the area townships? And will they be voting or
17 have they voted on these projects? Because if they
18 have or if they intend to, this is a direct conflict
19 of interest, and don't think that this is going to
20 be left alone. This is a legal issue. I spoke to
21 the Minnesota Association of Townships about this
22 today, and they said absolutely not. This is a
23 conflict of interest because it's my understanding
24 that these handful of potential landowners could be
25 making up to \$25 million over these 30 years. I've

1 got a problem with that.

2 And jobs, you know, everybody wants jobs.
3 Right now we've got 300 full-time employees at
4 Sherco, 300. Those are production jobs. Do you
5 know what the ratio is, service jobs to production
6 jobs? 7 to 1. So for every production job, you
7 have seven service jobs. Those 300 workers right
8 now at Sherco are supporting 2100 jobs. We're going
9 to lose a big chunk of those, but we were willing to
10 do that because we had no other choice. We had the
11 gas plant. So the gas plant comes in. We have
12 about 50 employees. Still, that's about 350 service
13 jobs. Now we have, what, four to six full-time
14 employees. Really? Folks, if you don't see a human
15 impact here, you need to -- you need to get some
16 glasses because it's staring us in the face.

17 I'm so significantly put off by what's
18 going on here. I can't even begin. The amount of
19 energy, the amount of meetings, the time, what we
20 put into this to get this gas plant here -- and now
21 it's going to North Dakota. Really? My
22 disappointment is just beyond comprehension.

23 So we're getting a solar field. Slide 10
24 showed, what, 900 jobs, and there was these
25 assurances that they would be local jobs. There

1 aren't 900 workers here. They're not going to be
2 local. Some of them might be and God bless those
3 that are. But the majority of them are already
4 contracted workers that go all around the country.
5 The majority of them, I don't believe for a minute,
6 are going to live anywhere within 50 miles of here.
7 So how many local people are they going to hire?
8 And if they do, great. God bless them. But what's
9 going to happen to those people after the job is
10 done? It's not a full-time job.

11 And I'm going to close with this, the
12 annual power production. If you have a solar array,
13 460 megawatts, the annual generation is about three
14 times less than it would be for coal. Coal
15 out-generates solar almost 4 to 1. And if you want
16 -- if there's anyone here that wants to tell me I'm
17 wrong, I dare you. I spent six years on Pat
18 Garofalo's energy committee listening to this
19 argument. I know what I'm talking about. What are
20 we going to do about the power shortage? Well,
21 that's easy, build the plant in North Dakota.

22 Thank you for your time. Thank you for
23 understanding my passion for this because this
24 community just got thrown under the bus. Thank you.

25 MR. BILL STORM: Thank you, Jim. Mark

1 Kolbinger.

2 MR. MARK KOLBINGER: I've been called
3 worse.

4 MR. BILL STORM: Please state and spell
5 your name.

6 MR. MARK KOLBINGER: You bet. My name is
7 Mark Kolbinger, Mark, M-A-R-K, Kolbinger, K-O-L-B,
8 as in boy, I-N-G-E-R.

9 I'm a 50-year resident of Becker. And
10 for the past approximately 20 years, I've worked as
11 a local newspaper reporter, with extensive
12 experience covering local and county government.
13 I'm also a former city council member in Becker and
14 have gained valuable experience working on behalf of
15 our citizens in that role.

16 I am here to speak tonight because I've
17 heard from many local officials that have not been
18 able to have their voice heard, as Xcel is proposing
19 to establish the biggest solar farm project in the
20 history of Minnesota within our county borders. And
21 yet because of the process that has been established
22 by the state and the PUC, this project faces little,
23 if any, local scrutiny of their plans. I am neither
24 pro solar or against solar, but I'm vehemently
25 opposed to the process that's being used. The

1 entire process is flawed, and it ignores the input
2 of local officials in terms of the east block of the
3 project.

4 In the west block, I'm aware of at least
5 one governmental agency that has sent a letter of
6 support for this project, so tonight I'm addressing
7 the east block. The Commission has asked us tonight
8 to keep our comments focused in three areas,
9 including anything that is missing or
10 mischaracterized in Xcel's application. This is
11 where I'll focus my comments.

12 This is gonna be the largest solar
13 project in the history of Minnesota by three and a
14 half times, 3500 acres. I believe the largest one
15 currently is 1,000 acres. I find that incredibly
16 frustrating that a project of this scope has removed
17 all local government oversight.

18 At 3500 acres this project will
19 significantly change the landscape of this area for
20 decades to come, and if any other project was ever
21 proposed such as this anywhere, it should be
22 subjected to local government scrutiny. In this
23 case it's never happened. Xcel has mischaracterized
24 their relationship with several local units of
25 government and testified in the past that they had

1 extensive contact with these units of government,
2 and this is false and misleading.

3 Don't just take my word for it. The
4 Department of commerce, the Minnesota Commerce
5 Department, in a letter, dated August 26th of this
6 year to the Public Utilities Commission, used the
7 following words to describe their dealings with Xcel
8 Energy, quote, "Xcel providing incorrect modeling
9 files," end quote. And the Department also noted,
10 quote, "difficulties in gaining access to needed
11 forecasting skills on short notice," end quote. The
12 PUC did not grant an extension on the comment period
13 despite the fact that the Department also noted in
14 this letter that they, quote, "continue to have
15 difficulty in obtaining timely and accurate
16 information from Xcel Energy," end quote. I could
17 go on, but I won't.

18 But suffice it to say that Xcel is not
19 providing information to the state -- to a state
20 agency, and when it does, it is late often times and
21 many times inaccurate. Xcel also testified in front
22 of the PUC about their extensive contact with local
23 governments, and at least in the case of the east
24 block, that amounted to two meetings at which few,
25 if any, of the local concerns were addressed or

1 answered. As a newspaper, my employer the Patriot
2 has reached out to Xcel Energy several times,
3 requesting interviews and answers to questions in
4 the interest of our nearly 20,000 readers in this
5 area. What we have received back is silence,
6 obfuscation and a lack of response or extremely
7 tardy responses in the form of press releases that
8 did not address our concerns.

9 It's apparent and obvious that Xcel
10 Energy has not provided timely information to the
11 state, some local governments, and the local press
12 regarding this project. I think that strongly
13 suggests there is misleading and mischaracterized
14 information in this application. Because this
15 process is flawed, the east block at a minimum
16 should be paused, and these local units of
17 government should be allowed the chance to give more
18 input into the matter.

19 Just this week the headlines in the press
20 read that the new wind power generators could be 40
21 stories high. Under that same process that's
22 currently being used to site in the largest solar
23 project in the history of Minnesota, that
24 40-story-high wind generator could come to a parcel
25 of land near you, and there would be no local input

1 by townships or the county government. In fact a
2 Sherburne County resident hoping to put in a new
3 septic system or an accessory structure faces more
4 local government scrutiny than does this project.
5 To me, that's astonishing. It's unbelievable. This
6 is wrong, and it lacks an element of transparency
7 that is needed because the applicant cannot be
8 trusted to submit accurate, truthful, or timely
9 filings in this matter.

10 I've tried to direct my comments to the
11 scope of the environmental assessment. The problem
12 is that when the process is flawed, biased, and
13 omits completely the opinions and conditions set
14 forth by local officials, we're left trusting the
15 word and decisions of a mega-million-dollar
16 corporation and an unelected body of commissioners
17 who do not reside anywhere near where these same
18 environmental concerns might happen. So why not do
19 this: Why not treat this as two projects? Why not
20 give each separate project on the east and the west
21 block the individual local attention it deserves?

22 I urge the Commission to put a pause on
23 the process of the east block at a minimum by having
24 more meetings with local government and holding Xcel
25 accountable for their misleading, inaccurate

1 statements on local government cooperation, as well
2 as extending the comment period because of Xcel's
3 inaccuracies, omissions, and lack of transparency.
4 Decision-makers, you said earlier, Mr. Storm, and I
5 agree, need to be informed. The problem is none of
6 us are decision-makers because that's been
7 completely taken away from the local units of
8 government. Thank you.

9 MR. SCOTT EK: I just wanted to clarify
10 real quick. Just -- Mark, just wanted to clarify I
11 understand your concerns. I understand your
12 concerns. I just want to -- I went over briefly the
13 process that we're here tonight. It sounds like
14 you're bringing up other related processes that had
15 happened as well with regards to the coal plant, the
16 gas plant, others items.

17 But I just want to let you know for this
18 process we're focusing on a proposed solar project
19 that Xcel has applied for in their applications,
20 which is the solar site and the two transmission
21 lines. And this is the very beginning of the
22 process. So right now, you know, we're looking for
23 comments of course on the project and questions
24 about the project and the process and, as Bill said,
25 issues that should be addressed in the environmental

1 assessment, such as your comments on the east block.

2 And your comments are relevant. This
3 isn't the -- this is the beginning. There's going
4 to be -- down the line there will be a public --
5 we'll be back here for a public hearing with an
6 actual administrative law judge. And generally,
7 during these processes that's when -- that's when
8 the county, counties, or local governments or
9 townships will raise their concerns with that
10 administrative law judge.

11 And they are a judge, and they will put
12 together findings and put together the arguments of
13 the local government units and put together the
14 judge's own conclusions and a recommendation of what
15 could happen, for instance the mayor's suggestion
16 on, you know, changing the site boundary. You know,
17 that's at play. So I just wanted to let you know
18 that there are -- you may feel the process is
19 flawed, but we're right at the beginning. And I can
20 assure you there's going to be much more process
21 down the line. We have about a year to go.

22 But I just wanted to let you know that.
23 There will be more pieces of -- you'll be able to
24 bite at the apple a few more times here. And the
25 judge's reports provide an important document in the

1 process as well, so.

2 MR. MARK KOLBINGER: Could I quick
3 respond to that?

4 MR. BILL STORM: As long as we're going
5 off script --

6 MR. MARK KOLBINGER: I'll wait till -- I
7 would be happy to wait till the end to give
8 everybody else a chance.

9 MR. BILL STORM: I just wanted to input
10 something as long as we're going off script.
11 When the application is submitted to the PUC, one of
12 the things Department of Commerce does is we review
13 the application for completeness. And what that
14 means is does the application have all the pieces
15 and parts that the rules say it has? Not the merits
16 of them, but does it have the pieces and parts?

17 Also, at that time we comment to the
18 Commission about whether an advisory task force is
19 necessary or not, and that usually hinges on whether
20 -- contested areas of fact -- is there material --
21 and what controversy is there. And my recollection
22 is when the application came out for public review,
23 these issues that the local units of government are
24 bringing up weren't brought into that record at that
25 time. So my recommendation to the Commission was

1 that at this time I don't see a need for an
2 environmental task -- for an advisory task force.

3 I would suggest probably that those of
4 you that are local unit of government officials look
5 at the rule that speaks to an advisory task force
6 for these energy projects, and you may want to
7 consider asking the commission, hey, we need an
8 advisory task force on this. I can't say what
9 they'll do with that. I'm just saying that's
10 something you should look at.

11 Okay. We got one more person, Robert
12 Baker.

13 MR. ROBERT BARKER: Barker.

14 MR. BILL STORM: Barker.

15 MR. ROBERT BARKER: I'll put my comments
16 online.

17 MR. BILL STORM: Okay, Robert. You sure?

18 MR. ROBERT BARKER: Thank you.

19 MR. BILL STORM: And, Bud, do you want to
20 -- okay, you'll give it to Mark.

21 Okay. So that's all the cards. So we're
22 going to go by show of hands. Why don't we have you
23 come up for -- it seems like you have a little bit
24 of rebuttal. Try to stay within the box a little
25 bit.

1 MR. MARK KOLBINGER: Absolutely. I do
2 think my original comments are inside the box.

3 Mr. Ek, I appreciate your comments. I
4 never mentioned the coal plant. I never mentioned
5 the gas plant in my comments. I would just like
6 that noted. I'm talking strictly about this process
7 because as I read through what's happening tonight,
8 we were told to comment on anything that is missing
9 or mischaracterized in the applications. Xcel
10 Energy mischaracterized their relationship with
11 local units of government. I think that's germane
12 to what you're reviewing. They made statements in
13 front of the PUC that we've had constant contact
14 with the townships. That might be true in the case
15 of Clear Lake. It's not true in the case of Becker.

16 I've covered these people. I've known
17 them for decades upon decades. I have experience.
18 I sit at the meetings, and I hear their frustration,
19 and I hear what Xcel says to the PUC and what's
20 reported back, and it doesn't jive. So I think that
21 fits the criteria of mischaracterized or missing
22 pieces in the application, and I'll stand by that.

23 Again, some local units of government
24 feel like they've been heard. Others feel like they
25 haven't. You need to know at these meetings when

1 Becker Township and some of these representatives
2 have told Xcel we would like some of our input to be
3 considered, they've said you're not part of the
4 process. We go to the state. We're gonna do this
5 whether you like it or not. We're here to just let
6 you know what we're doing. Just because somebody
7 can do something doesn't mean they should do it.

8 If I could very quickly, other questions.
9 Because Xcel won't respond to us, I have no other --
10 I can do a one-man protest out in front and probably
11 get locked up and things like that, but they won't
12 answer my questions. They won't respond to us. So
13 are these U.S. made solar panels? The environmental
14 impacts, other solar farms have reported between 5
15 and 7 degrees Celsius increase in the ambient air
16 temperatures. If you've lived in Becker for any
17 number of years, you know what the Sherco split is.
18 It means rain comes to Becker, and then it magically
19 goes to St. Cloud and Monticello. What is 3500
20 acres of increasing the ambient air temperature 7
21 degrees Celsius gonna do to our climate? I thought
22 -- I was pretty sure there'd be some
23 environmentalists here asking that question tonight
24 but apparently not.

25 Emerging research out of Israel talks

1 about leaking solar panels, the toxicity of those
2 heavy metals. And it's seeping into the bones of
3 the people that live near there and work near there.
4 Please include that in your environmental
5 assessment. Recycling fees, 20 to \$30 per panel,
6 and it costs 2 bucks to put into a landfill.

7 I'll end with this. Many people know
8 what the NIMBY syndrome is, not in my backyard. In
9 Becker we have the PIMBY syndrome. We say please in
10 my backyard. When NSP came looking for a place, Elk
11 River said no. Big Lake said no. Becker said yes.
12 When Vonco needed a spot for their landfill, Becker
13 said yes. When Northern Metals needed a place to
14 locate, we opened our arms. And we said PIMBY to
15 all these people because we have rigorous local
16 government oversight into this, which we don't
17 currently have. We do our homework here. We hold
18 our local officials accountable.

19 This process does not give our local
20 officials in Becker -- on the east block is what I'm
21 discussing. It doesn't give them that ability, and
22 I think that fits the third criteria we were asked
23 to comment. Thank you for your time.

24 MR. BILL STORM: Thank you.

25 MR. RANDY SEELEY: Can I talk about --

1 MR. BILL STORM: Yes.

2 MR. RANDY SEELEY: -- Sherco Coal Plant?

3 MR. BILL STORM: Yes, you can -- please
4 step to the mic and state and spell your name again.

5 MR. RANDY SEELEY: Okay. It's Randy
6 Seeley, S-E-E-L-E-Y.

7 I got a little shook up last time. I
8 take personal this whole thing 'cause I was a farm
9 boy where they're proposing them solar panels, plus
10 I worked at Sherco for 37 years and five months.
11 And back in '79 and '80, working in the scrubbers in
12 Sherco, I remember them talking about acid rain
13 destroying the forest. And then about ten, 15 years
14 later, Al Gore came around, and it was global
15 warming. And then we get some 35-below weather.
16 Then they come up with climate change. I believe
17 the environmentalists are destroying our way -- the
18 American way of life with the automobile, with
19 fossil fuels. And I think solar panels are a joke,
20 and I don't like looking at windmills either. And
21 that's my thoughts on that. Thank you.

22 AUDIENCE MEMBER: I beg your pardon,
23 we're having a meeting here.

24 MR. SCOTT EK: Sorry, I had to grab some
25 rule books. I wanted to look at something.

1 MR. BILL STORM: Scott's going to do some
2 research while I continue.

3 Okay. Thank you very much. Anybody
4 else? Show of hands.

5 Sir, please step to the mic. State and
6 spell your name, please.

7 MR. BRUCE AUBOL: Do we need this?

8 MR. BILL STORM: Yeah, give it to me
9 because I can track it.

10 MR. BRUCE AUBOL: Thank you.

11 MR. BILL STORM: Thank you very much.
12 Thank you, Bruce.

13 MR. BRUCE AUBOL: My name is Bruce Aubol,
14 B-R-U-C-E, A-U-B-O-L.

15 Some questions more so than comments.
16 I'm going to assume that the land is currently zoned
17 as ag, taxed as ag. What classification will this
18 land go under, and what rate of tax will it go under
19 once it's a solar field?

20 MR. BILL STORM: I don't know the answer
21 to that. But, Xcel or National Grid, anybody have
22 -- anyone want to take that up?

23 MR. BRUCE AUBOL: It would be nice to
24 know.

25 MR. BILL STORM: Well, I will address it.

1 We will -- we will address that for you.

2 MR. JEREMY DUEHR: Thank you. Jeremy
3 Duehr, J-E-R-E-M-Y, D-U-E-H-R.

4 And I'm actually the attorney for
5 National Grid. I've been working in the renewable
6 industry since 2005. So in solar what happens is
7 it's reclassified from ag to commercial-industrial.
8 So the classification rate changes. So it's taxed
9 at a higher classification rate. So there's more
10 tax money that's going to go to the county because
11 of the change in classification. Does that answer
12 your question?

13 MR. BRUCE AUBOL: That answers that
14 question. Thank you.

15 MR. BILL STORM: Please continue.

16 MR. BRUCE AUBOL: Another question would
17 be what is the current megawatts produced by the
18 current Sherco operation? Say, Plant 3 that will
19 operate the longest.

20 MR. RANDY SEELEY: 2450, all three units.

21 MR. AARON BRIXIUS: 2300, 2400 is our
22 interconnect capacity limit.

23 MR. BRUCE AUBOL: Just for the sake of
24 ease, I'll go to 2500. This is 460 megawatts. Are
25 there another four plants planned to replace that

1 loss of energy?

2 MR. AARON BRIXIUS: Yeah, so we file a
3 resource plan approximately every two years. Oh,
4 sorry, Aaron Brixius, A-A-R-O-N, B-R-I-X-I-U-S.

5 So we do a resource-planning process
6 approximately every two years, where we file with
7 the Public Utility Commission what our plans are for
8 the assets that we have, the assets that are
9 retiring, and the replacement assets that will come
10 in. So I think that some of the comments that have
11 come up today is around the alternate plan that we
12 filed that did not have the Sherco combined cycle in
13 it. So that resource-plan filing, the preferred
14 plan that we have out there and the alternate plan,
15 has the options in front of the Commission that
16 we're recommending for replacement generation as the
17 coal units cease to operate.

18 MR. BRUCE AUBOL: Is there a planned
19 cycle for this, or are we going to add another, say,
20 500 each year to gain back the 2500? My concern is
21 supply. We're being encouraged to plug everything
22 in instead of burn something. In reading there's
23 legislation that is afoot that people would like to
24 replace home furnaces that burn natural gas or
25 propane by just plugging in electrical. That's

1 gonna take an awful lot of electricity if you're
2 gonna start throttling down coal plants and not
3 build nuclear plants.

4 MR. AARON BRIXIUS: Yeah, there's a
5 variety of scenarios that they run in the
6 resource-planning model, and they have different
7 electrical vehicle adoption rates, different
8 electrification of other things just to get different
9 load profiles with what the generation resources may
10 need. And then we work with the Commission other
11 stakeholders to verify what the most likely scenario
12 is for the amount of load that there is out there
13 and then match the generation resources to be able
14 to meet that load need.

15 MR. BRUCE AUBOL: Is it wise to match it,
16 or are you planning to expand it?

17 MR. AARON BRIXIUS: Yeah, so there's a
18 combination of how we're required to match and/or
19 seek resources from the larger market. So they
20 don't require every generator to match 100 percent
21 of their needs to resources, say, from within that
22 area. They look at the entire MISO market and the
23 regional zones to make sure that there's enough
24 generation within those zones to be able to supply
25 the needs in the area.

1 MR. BRUCE AUBOL: Is Xcel rolling the
2 dice on mostly solar, or are they also going wind,
3 we'll say, in this area?

4 MR. AARON BRIXIUS: I wouldn't say we
5 roll the dice on anything. I think --

6 MR. BRUCE AUBOL: Well, from a -- from a
7 public point of view, something is substantial and
8 requires electricity. There's -- it's pretty easy
9 to lose faith in, we'll call it the system. Just
10 because something new comes along, it doesn't mean
11 that everyone's willing to chase it.

12 MR. AARON BRIXIUS: Yeah, I think
13 reliability is a top concern for us. And there's a
14 fair amount of skepticism, within all the different
15 levels of our company, of every technology that we
16 look at and making sure that it's been vetted.
17 We're not doing first-of-a-kind type of technologies
18 and implementing them and relying on them to be able
19 to meet our needs.

20 MR. BRUCE AUBOL: Okay. Thank you.

21 MR. BILL STORM: Thank you, Xcel, and
22 thank you, sir.

23 Okay. Show of hands again. I encourage
24 people at this time to ask questions, voice your
25 concerns. Anybody? Any takers?

1 Yes, sir, please step to the mic. State
2 and spell your name.

3 MR. RUSS ARMSTRONG: My name is Russ
4 Armstrong, R-U-S-S, Armstrong, pretty good phonetic
5 spelling.

6 I've lived here 30 years. I grew up in
7 South Dakota, to the extent that I grew up, which my
8 wife doesn't think is very much. I came to Becker
9 because I wanted this community for my kids to grow
10 up in. When we came here, I think Becker's
11 population was 900, and correct me if I'm wrong, I
12 think it's now 4500.

13 AUDIENCE MEMBER: 48.

14 MR. RUSS ARMSTRONG: 48. So people are
15 describing -- the mayor described, Becker has plans
16 to grow, and one of the places apparently we would
17 want to grow is across the tracks. Maybe we could
18 get rid of the tracks. I doubt that. But if we've
19 gone from 900 to 4500 in 30 years, we're gonna go
20 from 4500 to, what, 50,000? If we -- if this
21 attractive community keeps bringing people in who
22 want to live here at the same rate we've been doing
23 for 30 years, we're gonna keep growing. People like
24 it here, and our growth has gotta go someplace. And
25 if we're gonna take 3500 acres and not be able to

1 expand there, where are we gonna go? I don't know
2 if that's being considered. I'm putting it forward
3 as something that should be.

4 Second, where do they make the solar
5 panels? What nation?

6 MR. RANDY SEELEY: Good question.

7 MR. RUSS ARMSTRONG: China? Taiwan?
8 Where is that national interest that is now coming
9 to the fore? We're not as powerful a country as we
10 used to be. Are we gonna be dependent upon China
11 for our power?

12 Third, the gas plant, the turbine-powered
13 plant that was going to replace the coal plant was
14 -- that's what everybody thought was gonna happen
15 for the last I don't know how many years. And if
16 you didn't see a lot of interest in your plans for a
17 solar field early on, I don't think it came to our
18 attention that Xcel was gonna back out of its
19 commitment for that gas plant, so we weren't as
20 worried about what we were gonna do. And now all of
21 a sudden, we've been blindsided and were told,
22 instead of having a reliable gas plant, we're gonna
23 get electricity when the sun shines.

24 Fourth, if I'm incorrect, I apologize.
25 But people are saying the plant that we were

1 supposed to get here is gonna be in North Dakota; is
2 that right?

3 AUDIENCE MEMBERS: Yes.

4 MR. RUSS ARMSTRONG: What are the line
5 losses? How much electricity are you gonna lose
6 sending our electricity that we get in our homes all
7 the way down from, where, Minot? And what's the
8 expense of carrying all that? Couldn't it be used
9 elsewhere? I think that's it. Thank you.

10 MR. BILL STORM: Thank you. Okay, I'm
11 gonna go around again. Again, I encourage you.
12 This is the moment -- one of the moments. You'll
13 have other moments down the road. But anybody else
14 want to take the opportunity to speak on the record
15 tonight?

16 Sir, please come to the mic. State and
17 spell your name.

18 MR. RICK HENDRICKSON: Good evening. My
19 name is Rick Hendrickson, H-E-N-D-R-I-C-K-S-O-N.

20 I serve on the city council with Mayor
21 Bertram, and I agree with a lot of the comments
22 tonight. For the sake of everybody, I will not
23 repeat them. I'd like to just maybe touch on one
24 point that hasn't been really brought up here
25 tonight so far, and that is one of the rebuttals to

1 what -- we've had plenty of discussions about the
2 siting of the -- where the -- you know, the proposed
3 siting. And one of the rebuttals is that, well,
4 those could be moved if needed. Although it's true,
5 I'd like to just look at that from a practical
6 standpoint.

7 And, you know, when you think of a large
8 company that's gonna come in and possibly site near
9 here in Becker or in the area here, when they're
10 siting, they often have -- they have site selectors.
11 And they have several sites picked out around the
12 country, and those are usually greenfield,
13 brown-field type of scenarios. And so if they were
14 to, let's say, select a location here that currently
15 has a solar field on it, could that be moved? Yes.
16 But when we're competing against other locations
17 that have -- that don't have 18 -- you know, 12 to
18 18 months worth of utilities that need to get
19 uprooted before they can start building, that puts
20 us at a disadvantage already.

21 So wherever this location -- you know,
22 wherever these fields end up, pretty much that's
23 where they're gonna stay probably. I mean, they
24 technically can be moved but, from a practical
25 standpoint, most likely not. You know, there's very

1 few -- rarely would there be a company that's going
2 to come in and say, yes, I'm willing to wait for you
3 the 12 to 18 months to uproot 'cause I want to go on
4 that specific field. When they're a large company,
5 they got locations all around the country where they
6 don't have to do that. I just -- even though that
7 is technically true, I'd just like to consider that
8 as a response to the rebuttal. Thank you.

9 MR. BILL STORM: Okay. Thank you. Back
10 to the pool again. Anybody?

11 Sir, please step to the mic, and state
12 and spell your name.

13 MR. STAN HERKENHOFF: My name is Stan,
14 S-T-A-N, Herkenhoff, H-E-R-K-E-N-H-O-F-F.

15 I just got one question, and maybe
16 somebody can answer. People have touched base on it
17 a little bit, but we had the bipartisan agreement
18 that Governor Dayton signed that the gas plant was
19 going to come here. What happened to that? Why is
20 it not coming here? Why is it going to North
21 Dakota? That's all I have.

22 MR. BILL STORM: If you'd like, Xcel, you
23 can address that if you want.

24 MR. AARON BRIXIUS: So I probably don't
25 have all of your answers. I have a little bit of

1 knowledge of the project, not so much around the
2 regulatory planning part, but I was actually -- I am
3 project manager for the combined cycle project as
4 well. We have rescinded the project. There's an
5 alternate plan filed. So there's a preferred plan
6 and the alternate plan that was proposed.

7 So right now the major issue is gas
8 pipeline, gas infrastructure, and the general
9 population's opposition to running new gas pipelines
10 throughout the state. That's why the Fargo location
11 is being proposed, is because it's right next to a
12 gas pipeline versus here, and their different size
13 and different types of technologies for facilities
14 as well. So that's kind of the general -- my
15 knowledge of the situation around that. I don't
16 know if that answers the question.

17 MR. STAN HERKENHOFF: Didn't they know
18 that back then?

19 MR. AARON BRIXIUS: I don't think that
20 there was quite as much as opposition. I think
21 Line 3 definitely made people more aware to how much
22 that could delay a project to the point where it
23 would be canceled.

24 MR. RUSS ARMSTRONG: Could I ask, is that
25 local opposition, or is that national opposition to

1 gas pipelines?

2 MR. AARON BRIXIUS: I can't speak -- I
3 can speak to we had over 6,000 comments --

4 MR. RUSS ARMSTRONG: From where?

5 MR. AARON BRIXIUS: In our plant. Again,
6 I don't read them all. I don't read all of the
7 comments. We can talk about with our regulatory
8 folks where they came from or we had over 6,000
9 comments negative around the gas line. And that's,
10 I think, one of the reasons why additional looks at
11 other ways to meet that need were looked at.

12 Again, this project was not part of that
13 alternate plan. It was already in the works prior
14 to it coming out of the 2015 resource plan, which
15 the order from the Commission told us to go and find
16 at least 650 megawatts of solar coming out of that
17 resource plan. So this project isn't tied to the
18 recent filing. It was in the works already. So
19 some of the questions around is this going to
20 replace that, this was preceding that.

21 MR. BILL STORM: Okay. Please state and
22 spell your name again, sir.

23 MR. JAMES NEWBERGER: Thank you. James,
24 J-A-M-E-S, Newberger, N-E-W-B-E-R-G-E-R, former
25 state representative of house district 15B.

1 I would like to clarify for everyone
2 that's here. I was there from the beginning. There
3 was no alternate site. This was the site. So I
4 don't know where you're getting your information,
5 but I would highly recommend you go back and look at
6 your sources because I was there. And the reason
7 why this site was chosen is specifically because we
8 wanted something that was PUC friendly. The ability
9 to get an alternative site in Minnesota was zero.
10 So what you're saying -- I'm not going to put words
11 in your mouth.

12 The only site that was approved by law --
13 this wasn't a recommendation. This was signed into
14 law -- was right here in Becker, Minnesota to help
15 offset the job loss and the economic impact when
16 they took Sherco down. Governor Dayton signed that
17 bill. Now, the other comment came up that the
18 general population doesn't want gas. Yeah, the
19 general population of the metro. Greater Minnesota,
20 absolutely not. We welcome it. And there are two
21 -- if I remember correctly, there are two major
22 pipelines, the Gopher Line and the Viking line.
23 Correct me if I'm wrong. Those are the two that --
24 one of the two that we could've tapped into. Both
25 of them would've been adequate supplies.

1 The problem is, is that Xcel Energy lost
2 its nerve. They don't want to stand up to the
3 environmentalists in Minnesota. They don't want to
4 stand up to Melissa Hortman, the speaker of the
5 house, who is hell-bent on shutting this project
6 down because for some reason she believes there's a
7 bubble over Minnesota and if we keep our gas plant
8 out, then our air will be fine. But Xcel Energy,
9 now I understand why you're doing it. You're going
10 to North Dakota, why? It's a red state and they're
11 gonna welcome you. You're not going to have to jump
12 through half as many of these hoops. I get that,
13 but it doesn't change the fact that this city has
14 been thrown under the bus. What greater commitment
15 can you get outside of something carved in stone by
16 God than a law -- than a bill that's signed into the
17 law? By law put the gas plant here. Now it's gone.
18 I am just beyond words.

19 MR. BILL STORM: Yes, sir, please state
20 and spell your name.

21 MR. GREG PRUSZINSKE: Greg, G-R-E-G,
22 Pruszinkse, P, as in Paul, R-U-S, as in Sam,
23 Z-I-N-S-K-E, city administrator, Becker, Minnesota.

24 So we were just having a little
25 conference here. Bill, earlier in the conversation,

1 you had made a comment that local units of
2 government hadn't commented on the docket, and I'm
3 not really sure exactly the context of that. But I
4 did want to make sure that it's captured for the
5 record that we have commented. I was just taking a
6 look here at one of those comments, May 18th, 2021,
7 and it was on the Docket Numbers 189, 190, and 191.
8 So I just want to make sure that that's clear and
9 captured in the record. We have commented. We have
10 been part of the process, and we will continue to do
11 that. So that's all I have.

12 MR. BILL STORM: Thank you. Okay, back
13 to the pool. I'm encouraging anybody, going once --

14 Okay. We'll go with this one first and
15 then you, sir. Please step to the mic, and state
16 and spell your name.

17 MS. WANDA HERKENHOFF: Wanda Herkenhoff,
18 W-A-N-D-A, H-E-R-K-E-N-H-O-F-F.

19 One of my concerns is like California
20 with their rolling blackouts because of lack of
21 energy. When it's 30 below, I don't think we want
22 rolling blackouts here, and I think that should be a
23 big consideration. And also, I'm with Randy. I
24 don't really like looking at solar panels,
25 especially going down Highway 10, et cetera. So

1 rolling blackouts, not good.

2 MR. BILL STORM: Reliability

3 MS. WANDA HERKENHOFF: Right.

4 MR. BILL STORM: Okay, there was somebody
5 in the back. Please step to the mic. State and
6 spell your name.

7 MR. GARY GRAY: Gary Gray, G-A-R-Y,
8 G-R-A-Y.

9 I'm a lifelong resident of Clear Lake
10 Township. I've been on the Clear Lake Township
11 board for 17 years. Currently, I'm the township
12 chairman, and we've supported every solar farm
13 that's came across our desks as a township. We've
14 seen the benefit not only to the township but to the
15 landowners.

16 And as the supervisor of the town board,
17 we support our landowners and what they want to do.
18 And in Sherburne County, solar farms are a permitted
19 use. We're here basically to talk about the
20 environmental issues that come about from solar, and
21 we've seen the benefit from a renewable-energy
22 standpoint. We've also seen from the standpoint of
23 the nitrate levels in water in Clear Lake Township
24 and the hundreds of millions of gallons of water
25 that will not be pumped over the course of a solar

1 farm of this size, plus all of the thousands of tons
2 of fertilizer that will not be put onto the ground.

3 We are an agricultural township, and we
4 plan on staying that way. And we support all of our
5 farmers, myself included as being one, to do what
6 they want with the land to their benefit. And Clear
7 Lake Township has been at the forefront of this
8 because we were the early parts of solar farms in
9 here. We were contacted early on in this by
10 National Grid on the west side 'cause that's where
11 National Grid -- to clarify this, National Grid is
12 on the west side. Xcel Energy has signed up
13 everyone on the east side, and they came to the game
14 later in the date. They weren't at the same time
15 frame.

16 And from a standpoint of locking the City
17 of Becker out, let's just -- you know, I represent
18 all of the residents of Clear Lake Township, unlike
19 our two state representatives that are here and our
20 past representatives. They have not once thought
21 about asking Clear Lake Township what we think of
22 the project. They've never showed up at our
23 doorstep. The City of Becker has said they have
24 plans to expand. The City of Becker has never
25 contacted Clear Lake to expand into Clear Lake

1 Township at all ever in 17 years that I've been on
2 the board.

3 And I just want to make sure that we
4 understand that Clear Lake Township is here, and we
5 support every solar farm, and this is no different
6 going forward. It's just a larger solar farm. We
7 see huge benefit to our landowners and huge benefit
8 to the township, and I just want those comments to
9 be put into play.

10 MR. BILL STORM: Thank you, sir.

11 Yes, sir, state and spell your name.

12 MR. GREG PRUSZINSKE: Again?

13 MR. BILL STORM: Again.

14 MR. GREG PRUSZINSKE: Greg, G-R-E-G,
15 Pruszinske, P, as in Paul, R-U-S, as in Sam,
16 Z-I-N-S-K-E, city administrator in Becker.

17 Just for the record we have had some
18 conversations with one of the town supervisors of
19 Clear Lake. We had talked about an orderly
20 annexation agreement, at least two conversations
21 with one of those township supervisors. So I just
22 want to capture that for the record.

23 MR. BILL STORM: Okay. Thank you. Okay.

24 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Ask him when.

25 MR. GREG PRUSZINSKE: Ask Bud.

1 MR. BILL STORM: Okay, I don't want to
2 have the group fighting among themselves. We have a
3 public hearing for that.

4 MR. BILL STORM: Okay, coming back to the
5 pool. Going once, twice, third --

6 Okay. Please state and spell your name.

7 MR. ROSS IMHOLTE: My name is Ross,
8 R-O-S-S, Imholte, I-M-H-O-L-T-E. I am one of the
9 landowners in this. I also am for it, and to say
10 that the city has talked to me, yes, they did. They
11 talked to National Grid prior to talking to me about
12 a setback for buying land for their utilities that
13 they want to put in. That came after the fact of we
14 had it signed up approximately two years ahead of
15 that. So they have talked to me. It was after the
16 fact. I've tried to reach out to the city since,
17 and I'm being told they didn't know their next move,
18 so. Thank you.

19 MR. BILL STORM: Thank you. Okay, once
20 again into the pool. Anybody want to comment, ask a
21 question?

22 Sir, state and spell your name, please.

23 MR. RUSS ARMSTRONG: My name is still
24 Russ Armstrong. I'm not sure how potatoes are grown
25 because in South Dakota we just grew corn and

1 alfalfa and oats, beans. But I see crop dusters,
2 and I -- I take it that that's an integral part of
3 farming in this community. I'm wondering if the
4 chemicals that the crop dusters use would be an
5 adverse impact on the solar panels and, if that is
6 true, if the crop dusters would be restricted in the
7 area around the solar panels? I'm just -- I'm just
8 doing a what if here. But I wonder if that's been
9 considered as part of the environmental plan, and if
10 not, it should be.

11 MR. BILL STORM: Okay. We can certainly
12 look at drift from crop dusting and its potential
13 impact.

14 MR. RUSS ARMSTRONG: And drift, yeah.

15 MR. BILL STORM: Okay, back to the pool
16 again. And I do appreciate them all. I encourage
17 you people to ask questions. Going once --

18 MR. RANDY SEELEY: You never did answer
19 where are these solar panels made at? The chemicals
20 that are into them, where are they made at? What
21 country?

22 MR. AARON BRIXIUS: So we haven't ordered
23 the solar panels for this project yet, so we don't
24 have the source of origin I can point to. You can
25 look at industry specifics on where they get

1 produced. They get produced in, yes, China. They
2 get produced in South Korea, Malaysia, Vietnam,
3 India, the United States of America. There are many
4 countries that produce them, and we can follow up
5 after we've ordered panels on specifically where
6 these would be sourced from.

7 MS. WANDA HERKENHOFF: Well, it's too
8 late then.

9 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yeah.

10 MR. BILL STORM: Well, if the
11 information's available by the time I release the
12 EA, I'll include it in the EA. If there's not,
13 we'll just include a generic statement about where
14 they -- we'll look at where they're produced around
15 the globe and incorporate that information in the EA
16 so you can get a sense of the countries that are
17 producing the solar panels.

18 Okay, back to the pool again. Again, I
19 encourage you. I've got all night.

20 MR. MARK KOLBINGER: Ten seconds

21 MR. BILL STORM: Sure, yep.

22 MR. MARK KOLBINGER: Mark Kolbinger,
23 K-O-L-B-I-N-G-E-R.

24 Based on the letter dated August the 26th
25 from the Department of Commerce to the Public

1 Utilities Commission with the words I indicated
2 earlier, do you have any comment from the Department
3 of Commerce about Xcel's inability to give you
4 timely accurate information?

5 MR. BILL STORM: Specific to the letter
6 that you wrote, I'm not familiar with --

7 MR. MARK KOLBINGER: I didn't write it.

8 MR. BILL STORM: Not that you wrote but
9 the letter that you referenced, sorry. The letter
10 that you referenced, I'm not sure what docket that
11 was in. In the Department of Commerce -- there are
12 different divisions in the Department of Commerce,
13 one division that deals with forecasting and need
14 and the issues around whether a project is needed,
15 and then there's our group, which assists the
16 Commission in the environmental evaluation and
17 gathering the objective data that goes into the
18 environmental document, whether it be an EIS or an
19 EA. So I can't speak specifically to your comment
20 because I don't know the docket. I don't know the
21 context of how that came up, so.

22 Okay, we're back again. Going once,
23 twice, okay, third time.

24 I really appreciate everybody coming out.
25 Remember, your comments -- get your comments to me.

1 If your comments are about your concerns, great.
2 Get them to me. If you have issues, put them in
3 your comments so I can address them. Also, during
4 the comment period, if you have questions, my card's
5 on the table. Give me a call if you need help in
6 working your way through a comment. Feel free to
7 call me, and we can talk about it. Other than that,
8 I do appreciate you coming out. Okay, that's it
9 then.

10 (Meeting concluded at 7:49 p.m.)
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