

PUBLIC MEETING - LITTLE FALLS - SEPTEMBER 7, 2011

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STATE OF MINNESOTA
ENERGY FACILITY PERMITTING

In the Matter of the Application for a HVTL Route Permit
for the Little Falls 115 kV Transmission Project

PUC DOCKET NO. ET-2,E-15-TL-11-318

Little Falls Township Hall
15132 Gordon Circle
Little Falls, Minnesota

Met, pursuant to notice, at 6:00 in the evening,
on September 7, 2011.

COURT REPORTER: Angie D. Threlkeld

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I N D E X		PAGE
SPEAKERS		
Ken Miller		3
Jack Smith		9

1 MS. STEINHAEUER: And now we'll open it up
2 for comments and questions. And I'm trying to think
3 of the least obtrusive place to be.

4 So ground rules. We have a court
5 reporter, so if you can just please stand up and --
6 if you're able to do that, and state and spell your
7 name. We don't need to know your address. But so
8 the court reporter can have an accurate record of
9 that. I really do look at that. I was very glad
10 that I had that for another project that I was
11 doing.

12 So I'll open it up for comments,
13 questions.

14 MR. MILLER: I'll start it off. Ken
15 Miller. And I have been questioned a number of
16 times why Minnesota Power isn't going down 27
17 through the substation rather than going all the way
18 around. And I tried to tell them that, well, they
19 probably don't have room on the line, the poles
20 right now. They wondered where was the long-range
21 planning a few years back when they put that new
22 line in.

23 MS. STEINHAEUER: I'll let somebody from
24 the utility answer that question. I guess what I'd
25 like to know, then, is would you propose looking at

1 that, reviewing that in the assessment, or do you
2 just want an answer to your question right now?

3 MR. MILLER: Well, I'd like to have
4 Minnesota Power comment on it.

5 MS. STEINHAUER: Okay.

6 MR. MCCOURTNEY: Dan McCartney,
7 Minnesota Power. The line on 27 there, that's --
8 there's a distribution line that belongs to
9 Minnesota Power. But what's being proposed here,
10 the 115, is actually not our line, the
11 newly-proposed line. Minnesota Power's line is this
12 half-mile segment. The remainder of that is Great
13 River Energy. And so I'm -- I would defer to
14 someone from GRE to talk about those other portions.
15 If you have a question about the first, you know,
16 half mile of that line, you know, we can --

17 MR. MILLER: That's just comments that I
18 hear that people are wondering about.

19 MR. MCCOURTNEY: Okay.

20 MR. MILLER: So -- I don't have a problem
21 with it myself, but...

22 MR. MCCOURTNEY: Okay.

23 MR. LUKKARILA: I'm Chuck Lukkarila,
24 project manager for Great River Energy. And we were
25 just looking at the different routes when it first

1 came out, and it just looked more congested on 27
2 from our perspective, so we chose to look at another
3 route that was less congestive with poles and so
4 forth. Also, when you're building a line, if
5 there's -- it's easier to build not on a busier road
6 as well. That's another consideration. But, you
7 know, we're open to, you know, suggestions. But
8 it's -- I think that's why we had chosen --

9 MR. MILLER: The real question was four
10 or five years ago when they put the new line in,
11 could they have worked with GRE at that time and
12 built -- put in a higher line to accommodate the
13 transmission line now going through the substation
14 to the other substation?

15 MR. LUKKARILA: I guess I would defer to
16 the planners as to what they were proposing back
17 years ago, but --

18 MR. MILLER: It seemed like it would have
19 been simple to do it that way at that time.

20 MR. Kemp: Dave Kemp, Great River Energy,
21 transmission planner. That line you see there,
22 there's two different lines. One, we're proposing a
23 transmission line, and that was an MP distribution
24 line. There -- at the time we did not have the
25 funding for this project, and we were looking at

1 alternative routes into this area. The line that
2 was at issue was in pretty bad condition. There
3 was -- the liability of it was pretty bad. MP went
4 forward with replacing that to a new distribution
5 line. It still didn't qualify as a transmission
6 line. So there's two different levels yet, this
7 kind of funding, because to MP it's a distribution
8 line, to GRE it's a subtransmission that serves Crow
9 Wing Power substation. Where at Crow Wing Power's
10 Little Falls substation, that's where it's pretty
11 clear it's distribution. But all in all, that
12 corridor is still a distribution line.

13 The 115 project was in planning at that
14 time, but it was still being looked out still 10 to
15 15 years out. Based on some -- well, based on the
16 last ten years of unsuspected load growth that we've
17 had in the area, we've had a lot of electric
18 conversions that did advance our project up to,
19 well, 2012, 2013 on that. It largely is -- was just
20 time and coincidence, just different needs at the
21 time. We had -- the reliability in that portion was
22 so bad that MP had to move forward with the project
23 in that time frame. We weren't even ready for the
24 115 construction at that time.

25 MR. MILLER: Am I hearing you right by

1 saying, if they'd be doing it today, they would have
2 probably built to accommodate a line straight from
3 that substation to their substation along 27?

4 MR. KEMP: It depends. Like Chuck said,
5 we've gone out and looked at the right-of-way and
6 we're looking for what would be the least amount of
7 impact on the landowners and homes in the area. And
8 probably specifically if there's a lot of homes in a
9 corridor, we try to avoid that corridor if we can.
10 When it came down to it, I guess when we looked at
11 the routes, it was just better to do the proposed
12 route that we came up with, had the least amount of
13 impact on residences, especially the homes that they
14 live in.

15 MS. STEINHAUER: Thank you.

16 Questions or comments?

17 MR. MILLER: How many poles are you going
18 to put across that open field down there, if you're
19 coming straight east out of MP's substation? They
20 come across, and then there's an open field. How
21 many poles are going to be set in that open field?
22 I'm sure those fellows are going to ask. They
23 aren't here tonight.

24 MS. STEINHAUER: I'll ask somebody from
25 the utility.

1 MS. LOMMEL: Sure. Michelle Lommel. I
2 can answer that question. I did go out and meet
3 with the landowner there, and our transmission
4 engineer on the project did have a chance to
5 preliminarily review it, and we think that we can
6 span across that field. Again, we may have to have
7 some specialty structures, and the easement that we
8 would need is a little bit wider than what we would
9 typically have. But we're hoping we could span
10 across there. Until we get out and actually do some
11 survey and start some preliminary design, we won't
12 know that for sure.

13 MR. MILLER: I'm sure Duane would
14 appreciate that.

15 MS. LOMMEL: He expressed that -- I went
16 out and met with Duane --

17 MR. MILLER: Yorek.

18 MS. LOMMEL: Yes, yes -- and we had a
19 good meeting out there, took a look at it, and it
20 was very clear that he would like us to span across
21 that, if possible. We definitely took note of that,
22 and we'll try to accommodate that, if possible. If
23 we needed to, my understanding is we could go to a
24 different style of structure like an H frame, but
25 then -- you know, and then you can span the poles

1 apart even further, but he wasn't too crazy about
2 that type of pole. He'd like to see single poles
3 and then just as far apart as possible. So
4 hopefully we can get across the field.

5 MR. MILLER: Okay. Good. Yeah, he'd
6 appreciate that.

7 MS. STEINHAUER: Other comments or
8 questions? Did you have a question that you wanted
9 to get on the record or -- we'll also be available
10 to answer questions after the meeting, but that
11 won't be part of the record, so it won't be anything
12 that the Commission sees. So I want to make sure
13 that --

14 MR. SMITH: Well, I was just
15 wondering how many --

16 MS. STEINHAUER: I'm sorry, if you could
17 just identify yourself for the court reporter,
18 please.

19 MR. SMITH: Do I have to?

20 MS. STEINHAUER: Yes, you do.

21 MR. SMITH: Jack Smith.

22 MS. STEINHAUER: Okay.

23 MR. SMITH: How many feet is going to be
24 between the poles? Do you have any idea?

25 MS. STEINHAUER: It's in the application.

1 I don't have that right at my fingertips.

2 MR. SMITH: That's that long stretch,
3 that one-mile stretch.

4 MS. LOMMEL: The one-mile stretch going
5 up to Crow Wing Power's substation?

6 MR. SMITH: The north, yeah, going to the
7 substation.

8 MS. LOMMEL: Okay. If we carry the
9 distribution, under build it, we're on the east side
10 of the road, those poles would be maybe 250 to
11 280 feet apart.

12 MR. SMITH: Not any more than it would be
13 now?

14 MS. LOMMEL: It would be very similar to
15 what's out there right now.

16 MR. SMITH: As long as you don't have to
17 farm around them.

18 MS. LOMMEL: I know. I know. It does
19 look like --

20 MR. SMITH: I don't farm. Her husband
21 does.

22 MS. LOMMEL: Okay.

23 MR. SMITH: He rents the place.

24 MS. LOMMEL: One follow-up comment about
25 that too is it does look like Crow Wing Power's

1 existing distribution line is outside of the
2 township right-of-way, so most likely the
3 transmission line could be right on that same
4 alignment as what's out there right now. Again, we
5 need to survey that to verify that information. But
6 we shouldn't have a need to be any further in the
7 field than those poles are right now.

8 MR. SMITH: See, that power line comes in
9 across that field too, in that road up to the house.

10 MS. LOMMEL: Sure. Yeah. And that would
11 all be reconfigured. I would expect it would stay
12 the same as it is right now, unless Crow Wing Power
13 has anything else they come up with. But most
14 likely you could expect that would stay the same.

15 MR. SMITH: If I had the money, I'd bury
16 the line. But I'm not rich. Then I could move my
17 airport.

18 MS. LOMMEL: I remember we talked about
19 your airport before. I recall that, yes.

20 MR. SMITH: Yeah. It's not there no
21 more.

22 MS. LOMMEL: Oh.

23 MR. SMITH: Gene plowed it up. He put in
24 an alfalfa field. So there's about maybe five,
25 six weeks out of year I could still use it. I don't

1 fly anymore anyway. I just rebuild them.

2 MS. STEINHAUER: I don't want to cut
3 people off, but I also don't want to make people
4 stay any longer than necessary, especially on a
5 beautiful night. But we're here as long as you'd
6 like us to be.

7 MR. MILLER: I got another question about
8 that 280 feet. I thought they would span close to
9 400 feet. That was always my thinking. Are they
10 closer because of the transmission line?

11 MS. LOMMEL: It would be closer because
12 of carrying the distribution line under the
13 transmission system. So if we don't have the
14 distribution line, then we can span out a little
15 further. 400 is probably a little far. But
16 generally out to, you know, 375, 380.

17 MR. SMITH: A good wind and you can watch
18 that line move.

19 MS. LOMMEL: That's true. The further
20 apart the poles, the more sway you get in the
21 conductors too.

22 MS. STEINHAUER: Comments? Questions?
23 Going once. Going twice.

24 MR. MILLER: I have another question.
25 Seems like a long time, a whole year to start and

1 finish that line. Is it a long time or --

2 MS. STEINHAUER: Well --

3 MR. MILLER: It seems like a long
4 schedule, a whole year for --

5 MR. SMITH: The government's got their
6 nose in it. That's why.

7 MR. MILLER: You said it. I didn't.

8 MS. STEINHAUER: Is your question about
9 the permitting process or about the construction?

10 MR. MILLER: Oh, the committee has been
11 going on for a while already.

12 MS. STEINHAUER: Since June.

13 MR. MILLER: Since June. But you said
14 something about starting constructing or something
15 by the first -- by 12?

16 MS. STEINHAUER: I think Michelle was
17 talking about that. First of all, they can't do
18 anything until they have a permit, their permits.

19 MR. MILLER: Right.

20 MS. STEINHAUER: And then, once they have
21 their permits and know where the line is going, then
22 they'll talk to the landowners. So they can't do
23 that until they have an agreement with the
24 landowners. Then they do their engineering and
25 design the project, stake the poles, clear the

1 vegetation. But the actual, I think, construction
2 period is perhaps three months or -- I'll let you
3 speak to that.

4 MS. LOMMEL: Yeah, it most likely
5 wouldn't take that long on this project. Although
6 we do have -- with the existing distribution system
7 that's out there, it adds a little complexity. So
8 some of it depends on our crew's availability. I
9 would say one to three months for construction. And
10 as far as the time getting started, when we go
11 through this process with the State, we really can't
12 go out and do any survey or any groundwork to
13 evaluate the route until we get that permit. So it
14 holds us up, I guess, a little bit on the front end.
15 And then we do have some flexibility. We know
16 there's a lot of agricultural use out on the
17 project, and we do have some flexibility in working
18 with the landowners out there. Depending on when
19 crops are harvested and how much of an impact we may
20 be in the field, we could possibly set construction
21 back just a little bit. If, you know, harvest was
22 going to happen in September, maybe we'd start
23 construction right after, just to minimize damage
24 out there.

25 MR. MILLER: I'm pretty well aware of all

1 that because I think everybody -- the reason why I
2 ask it is so everybody hears it.

3 MS. STEINHAUER: Going once, twice, three
4 times. Thank you very much. I'll close the formal
5 part of the meeting. We'll be around to answer
6 questions. And if you think of anything at this
7 point forward, you can call Jaimie or I if you have
8 questions, but comments in writing. It doesn't
9 matter the form. You can use the comment sheet we
10 have. You can send me a letter. You can e-mail
11 them. You can fax them. You can comment directly
12 on the website.

13 Thank you very much for your time and
14 interest, and we'll be back out again later this
15 fall. Thank you.

16 (Concluded at 6:50 p.m.)

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1 STATE OF MINNESOTA)
2 COUNTY OF DAKOTA) ss.

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5 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

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7
8 I, Angie D. Threlkeld, do hereby
9 certify that the above and foregoing transcript,
10 consisting of the preceding 15 pages is a
11 correct transcript of my stenographic notes, and is
12 a full, true and complete transcript of the
13 proceedings to the best of my ability.

14 Dated September 19, 2011.

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19 _____
20 ANGIE D. THRELKELD
21 Court Reporter
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