

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND SCOPING MEETING  
ELKO NEW MARKET - 1:00 P.M. - OCTOBER 1, 2013

FOR THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION  
OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA

In the Matter of the Application of Great River Energy  
for a Certificate of Need and a Route Permit for a 115  
kV Transmission Line Project in the Elko, New Market  
and Cleary Lake Areas in Scott and Rice Counties,  
Minnesota

PUC DOCKET NOS. ET-2/CN-12-1235  
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110 J Roberts Way  
Elko New Market, Minnesota

Met, pursuant to Notice, at 1:00 in the  
afternoon on October 1, 2013.

COURT REPORTER: Julie A. Rixe

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1 MS. SMETANA: So good afternoon and  
2 thank you for coming. My name is Tracy Smetana.  
3 I'm with the Minnesota Public Utilities  
4 Commission. We're going to walk through a little  
5 bit about the Elko, New Market, Cleary  
6 transmission line project that Great River Energy  
7 is proposing.

8 So first off, I'll do the  
9 introductions. We're going to talk a little bit  
10 about the Certificate of Need and route permit  
11 roles and process. There's various agencies and  
12 the company that play a role in this process, so I  
13 want to make sure you have an understanding of who  
14 does what.

15 I'm going to ask Great River Energy to  
16 provide a summary of the project, and then the  
17 Department of Commerce is going to speak about the  
18 environmental review process, and then we'll open  
19 it up for your comments and questions at the end.

20 So first off, who is the Public  
21 Utilities Commission. Well, I can tell you that  
22 before I started working at the Public Utilities  
23 Commission I had no idea such a thing existed. So  
24 I always like to give a little introduction of who  
25 we are and what we do. We regulate permitting for

1 power plants, pipelines, transmission lines, local  
2 and instate long distance telephone companies,  
3 investor-owned electric and natural gas  
4 utilities. So we have a lot of things on our  
5 plate.

6 We have five commissioners that are  
7 appointed by the governor, so they're not elected  
8 officials. They serve staggered terms. So we're  
9 not an agency where when we get a new governor, we  
10 get a whole new set of commissioners. They're  
11 staggered, and so some were appointed by Governor  
12 Ventura, some were appointed by Governor Pawlenty,  
13 and we have some that have been appointed by  
14 Governor Dayton. There's a mix in there.

15 The commissioners serve as full-time  
16 employees. So it's not like a small town city  
17 council, where they show up for a couple of  
18 meetings on every other Thursday and that's their  
19 duty. They're actually at the commission  
20 full-time, 40 hours a week. And we have about  
21 50 staff that help gather information and do the  
22 research and so on to help the commissioners make  
23 the best decision possible.

24 So we'll get into a little bit more of  
25 who's who. Some terms that you might here, both

1           today and throughout the process, if you stay  
2           involved with it, first off is the applicant.  
3           That's what we call the company who's asking for  
4           the Certificate of Need and the route permit. So  
5           in this case it's Great River Energy, but you  
6           might hear that term applicant. We really mean  
7           the company, Great River Energy.

8                         We also have the Department of Commerce,  
9           the Energy Environmental Review and Analysis,  
10          sometimes abbreviated EERA. They're a state  
11          agency and they conduct the environmental review  
12          for the project.

13                        There's another arm of the Department of  
14          Commerce called the Energy Regulation and Planning  
15          Division. Again, part of the state agency, and  
16          they represent the public interest in a lot of  
17          different things, when utilities ask to change  
18          their rates or services or facilities.

19                        Later on in the process we'll have an  
20          Office of Administrative Hearings involvement.  
21          They're another state agency. An administrative  
22          law judge from that office will hold hearings,  
23          summarize the facts in the record, and make  
24          recommendations to the Public Utilities  
25          Commission, when we get closer to a decision

1 point.

2 And, again, the Public Utilities  
3 Commission, we kind of went over the basics of who  
4 we are. Also at the Public Utilities Commission  
5 there's a couple different folks that you may get  
6 to know throughout this process. The first is the  
7 public advisor and that's me. Again, my name is  
8 Tracy. And my job is to help you figure out how  
9 this process works and when you can participate,  
10 how you can share your concerns and comments, get  
11 your questions answered. Keep in mind I'm a  
12 neutral party. I'm not out here to give you legal  
13 advice. I'm not an advocate to say, hey, put it  
14 across the street from John Smith; he doesn't want  
15 it in his front yard. My job is just to help you  
16 understand what information is out there and how  
17 you can have your input added to the record.

18 Let me back up. We also have a staff  
19 analyst that works on more of the technical side  
20 of the project, assists in building the record,  
21 collecting the facts, informs commissioners on  
22 impacts of various decision options that are out  
23 is there. And, again, the commission staff is a  
24 neutral party. We don't give legal advice. The  
25 analyst is not going to be an advocate for any one

1 person or party either. We're just looking at the  
2 facts.

3 Okay. So why does the Public Utilities  
4 Commission care about this particular project,  
5 right? Well, because it's a large energy  
6 facility. What does that mean? Well, there's  
7 some laws and rules that tell us what that means.  
8 It's a transmission line with a capacity of  
9 200 kilovolts, which you might see abbreviated kV,  
10 or more and greater than 1,500 feet in length. Or  
11 it's a transmission line at 100 kV or more and  
12 either more than ten miles of it is in Minnesota  
13 or if it crosses the state line. So if one of  
14 those sets of facts is true, then the rules say it  
15 is a large energy facility and it requires what we  
16 call a Certificate of Need before the company can  
17 build it. And for those of you that are looking  
18 for some bedtime reading, I've listed the actual  
19 statutes and rules that cover all of these  
20 things.

21 And it's also a high voltage  
22 transmission line. That's the type of large  
23 energy facility we're looking at here. And that's  
24 defined in the statutes and rules as a line that  
25 will operate at 100 kV or more and is greater than

1 1,500 feet in length. Now, if that's true, then  
2 the company needs what we call a route permit from  
3 the Public Utilities Commission. So in this case  
4 the company needs both a Certificate of Need and a  
5 route permit before they can build this project  
6 that they're proposing.

7 So some other terms that you might see  
8 as part of this process and in the end, if a route  
9 permit is granted, we have what we call the  
10 permitted route. It's going to be the location of  
11 line between two end points. And that route width  
12 is going to vary quite a bit. It may be up to  
13 1.25 miles.

14 Then we narrow it down a little bit and  
15 there's the right-of-way. And I think most folks  
16 are somewhat familiar with that term. That would  
17 be the land required within that route for the  
18 construction, maintenance and operation of that  
19 line.

20 And then we get smaller yet into what we  
21 call the anticipated alignment. The alignment is  
22 where the lines and the poles actually go. And so  
23 when a route permit is issued for this project or  
24 for any other that the Commission is involved in,  
25 it will include those terms. And there will be a

1 map that illustrates all of that on there.

2 And so the Public Utilities Commission  
3 has been given direction on how to decide. How do  
4 you answer these questions. We have to figure out  
5 do we need this; and if we do, where should it  
6 go. And so some of the things that we need to  
7 consider would be human settlement, displacement,  
8 noise, cultural values, recreation, public  
9 services, anything related to where people are  
10 at.

11 Public health and safety is another  
12 issue that we have to look at, the economy,  
13 agriculture, forestry, tourism, archeological and  
14 historic resources that might be along the path,  
15 the natural environment, air and water quality,  
16 flora, fauna, what have you.

17 And there's more. We want to look at  
18 design options to maximize efficiencies and allow  
19 for future expansion. So if there are projections  
20 that say further expansion is going to be needed,  
21 we want to be keeping that in mind when planning  
22 whatever project is in front of us today so we  
23 don't have to go back and start over from scratch  
24 down the road.

25 If there are existing rights-of-way that

1 can be used, we certainly want the company to look  
2 at that. It could be a road right-of-way, it  
3 could be another utility line or those types of  
4 things. We also ask the company to look at the  
5 use of natural boundaries, survey lines, field  
6 boundaries, those types of things, so it can be  
7 the least disruption.

8 Of course we're concerned with  
9 electrical system reliability. We all want the  
10 lights to come on when we flip that switch,  
11 right. And, of course, we need to look at the  
12 cost because, in the end, someone is paying for  
13 it. In some cases it's going to be the customers,  
14 the ratepayers, that are using that service that  
15 are helping to pay for these new lines, so we want  
16 to make sure that the cost is reasonable.

17 And so all of these are things that go  
18 into the bucket for the Public Utilities  
19 Commission to review. And we ask a lot of folks  
20 to help us come up with information to decide on  
21 these factors. Certainly your input is valuable.  
22 We don't -- You're the experts in your area, so  
23 you can tell us about some of the land uses in  
24 your area. Or if there are some perhaps protected  
25 plants or animals that live near this proposal,

1 you're the folks that live here every day and you  
2 can tell us about these things.

3 We also rely on folks like the  
4 Department of Natural Resources. Clearly they're  
5 experts in those areas as well. So we ask all of  
6 those parties to provide us with information so  
7 that we can make the best decision possible.

8 Okay. So for those of you who like  
9 pictures, we have a little picture here. So the  
10 first thing that the Commission is going to do is  
11 review the application. So the company has got to  
12 come to us and apply and say, hey, we want a  
13 Certificate of Need and a route permit for this  
14 project that we want to build. And so we have a  
15 checklist of things that they have to tell us  
16 about before we can move forward and process that.

17 And so when it says application accepted  
18 at the top, that just means they've given us the  
19 information we need to take the next step. It  
20 doesn't mean we've approved anything. It just  
21 means we have all the information we need to move  
22 forward.

23 From there there's all sorts of things  
24 going on. So you can see we've got public  
25 information and scoping meetings. That's where we

1 are today. So you can see we're very early on in  
2 the process. Lots of other things are going to  
3 happen before we get down to the end, where  
4 there's a decision.

5 Typically to get from that top box of  
6 application accepted, to the bottom box of  
7 decisions is about nine to 12 months. So, like I  
8 said, we're pretty early on in the process at this  
9 point.

10 Now, if you're a list person instead of  
11 a picture person, this slide is for you. So,  
12 again, you can see we're at the early stages of  
13 the process, at the public information and scoping  
14 meetings. So there's a number of things that will  
15 follow.

16 You'll note further on in the process  
17 there are public hearings later on down the road,  
18 after the environmental assessment is completed.  
19 So it will give folks an opportunity to provide  
20 feedback on that and additional comments on the  
21 possible routes for this project.

22 And at this point we're anticipating the  
23 decisions will occur in June of 2014. But keep in  
24 mind, these deadlines are all estimates at this  
25 point. We're too early on in the process to have

1 any real firm deadlines at this point.

2 So if you're looking for more  
3 information or you just want to make sure you stay  
4 informed on this project, there's a bunch of  
5 different ways that you can do that. One is the  
6 Department of Commerce project website. They keep  
7 up a really nice schedule of what's happening with  
8 this project, links to various documents. The  
9 website link is there.

10 You can also look at all documents  
11 related to this project. For some folks that  
12 might be a little overwhelming or too much  
13 information. But if you really want to dig in and  
14 get all of that, the company files all of the  
15 information and so do the other parties. Like the  
16 Department of Commerce or if citizens submit  
17 comments, all of it goes into what we call our  
18 E-docket system. The instructions are here for  
19 how you can look at anything that's been submitted  
20 for this Certificate of Need or this route permit  
21 process through our E-docket system.

22 If you want to make sure that you stay  
23 informed and you're among the first to know when  
24 something new comes in, you can subscribe to get  
25 an e-mail notice when something new comes into the

1 record. So you just get a note that says, hey,  
2 something new came in on this Great River Energy  
3 case, and it will include a link you can click on  
4 to go to that document. If it's something you  
5 don't find interesting, you can just delete the  
6 e-mail. If you want to read it, you can open it  
7 up and read it.

8 I also have some orange cards over at  
9 the table here (indicating) when you first came in  
10 that say project mailing list. That would be if  
11 you want to receive information in the mail about  
12 upcoming meetings or opportunities to submit  
13 comments in writing about the project. That's how  
14 you can get on that mailing list.

15 You can also contact me, you can sign up  
16 online. But as long as you're here, you can take  
17 one of those orange cards and fill it out.

18 The Department of Commerce website is  
19 listed here, Minnesota statutes and rules. Again,  
20 if you're looking for that bedtime reading, that  
21 would be a good place to find that. And, also,  
22 the Public Utilities Commission website.

23 On our calendar from our front page  
24 there is a link to this meeting. It would have a  
25 copy of the notice that you received in the mail

1 and also a copy of that presentation. So if you  
2 have neighbors that weren't able to attend but  
3 they want to learn what happened at the meeting,  
4 they can go to that section at our website and  
5 take a look at that presentation if they'd like.

6 And then here's the contact information  
7 for all of the folks at the Public Utilities  
8 Commission that are involved with this case.  
9 Again, my name is Tracy Smetana. I'm the public  
10 advisor. Most often you'll be communicating with  
11 me if you have questions or concerns about what's  
12 happening, but certainly our staff analysts are  
13 available as well. There's one staff analyst  
14 working on the Certificate of Need and another  
15 working on the route permit. Their contact  
16 information is listed there as well.

17 And with that, I'm going to turn it over  
18 to Peter Schaub with Great River Energy.

19 MR. SCHAUB: Hello. As Tracy said, my  
20 name is Peter Schaub. I work with Great River  
21 Energy. I work in the land rights department. So  
22 when and if we get the permits for this and it  
23 comes time to negotiate easements and things, it  
24 will probably be me that comes to talk to you  
25 about that as well.

1           The other person in the project that is  
2           one of the main contacts is Carol Schmidt, who is  
3           standing up right here. She works in the  
4           environmental department in permitting. And you  
5           can feel free at any time -- I believe the  
6           information you got also has our contact  
7           information on it. Anytime during the process you  
8           can feel free to call us, and we can at least give  
9           you the perspective from Great River Energy's  
10          standpoint. That's just the docket number and the  
11          name again.

12           And just to go into a little bit of the  
13          project need, right now this system is a 69 kV or  
14          kilovolt system. And it was built in the sixties  
15          and seventies. And it's exceeded its peak demand  
16          already primarily in the summer months. That's  
17          the primary need for it, is to make sure that we  
18          can provide reliable, safe electricity.

19           Here's a chart that shows the historical  
20          demand. The red line is the load available and  
21          the top line shows that in 2012, we exceeded it  
22          quite a bit.

23           The remedy for the issue of exceeding  
24          the load demand is the planner's have come up with  
25          the idea to connect the transmission lines from

1 the project area, Elko, New Market, Cleary area  
2 with the Scott-Faribault system. And you've heard  
3 the term electric grid. That's part of this  
4 issue, is to create a stable grid that can provide  
5 backup for either area and make sure that  
6 electricity remains reliable and stable.

7 What we specifically want to do is  
8 construct a new double circuit line and we say to  
9 a 115 kV standards. That's the reason we're in  
10 this procedure now, is the State requires us to go  
11 through the State permitting process if it's over  
12 100 kV. So what we would do is build to 115 kV  
13 standard and operate it at 689 kV until sometime  
14 in the near future, when the demand increases  
15 enough that it would be required to switch over to  
16 the 115 kV. So what it consists of is rebuilding  
17 some of the 69 kV to 115 and building some brand  
18 new lines as well.

19 And we have two maps here, two  
20 portions. I think you may have received one. It  
21 looks like this one over here was -- it looks like  
22 these other maps. It's the whole thing.

23 The northern part essentially starts up  
24 at Dakota and Eagan Drive, right up here  
25 (indicating). All of this (indicating) would be

1 rebuilt. There's nothing new specifically  
2 proposed here.

3 And then this area right here  
4 (indicating) is just Great River Energy's  
5 acknowledgment that the line right in here  
6 (indicating) is very tight. Essentially what  
7 happened is we had lines built, developers came in  
8 and built homes and backed them right up to the  
9 line. The terrain is also kind of hilly in  
10 there. I believe there's some ponds back in there  
11 too. So it's just our acknowledgment that there  
12 is issues with that, and we tried to come up with  
13 another way to address that. That doesn't mean  
14 that that is the way that will be approved. It's  
15 just an idea on our part that we looked at.

16 The other part farther south here  
17 (indicating), this is still the northern region.  
18 Though this runs along the Cleary Lake Regional  
19 Park. And then in here (indicating), this will be  
20 169 -- or, I'm sorry -- 115 kV with a 69  
21 underbuild. So it will be essentially a double  
22 circuit in that area.

23 And part of these actually run  
24 cross-country. The road ends approximately in  
25 here (indicating), takes up again about there

1 (indicating), and also here (indicating) it runs  
2 cross-country again.

3 And then this is the southern end, the  
4 southern proposed part of the project. Again,  
5 this (indicating) part along two hundred -- I  
6 believe it's 260th, that's already in existence.  
7 That's already built. We just want to rebuild  
8 it. These are the new construction possibilities  
9 (indicating). And these are both areas that we  
10 looked at. They're just our suggestions based on  
11 the other requirements or recommendations that the  
12 PUC looks at to make a determination on routing.  
13 And looking at these (indicating) two areas, we  
14 thought these would meet those requirements.

15 And the object is to connect this Veseli  
16 breaker station to this line that we're going to  
17 rebuild, the MVPN line. So in reality, we need to  
18 connect somewhere along this (indicating) line to  
19 this (indicating) point right here.

20 And then to talk a little bit about the  
21 right-of-way. Specifically, Tracy had mentioned  
22 before that things can be up to one point -- I  
23 believe a mile-and-a-quarter wide. What we're  
24 requesting now is a 300-foot wide route. And  
25 within that route we then need, eventually,

1 70 feet. And that 70 feet is what would be our  
2 easement, our right-of-way.

3 There are existing easements, as you saw  
4 for the rebuild. A lot of those are somewhere  
5 close to what we need, so in most instances we  
6 contemplate just leaving those easements as they  
7 are and designing the line to fit within that  
8 easement. And, let's see, yeah, rebuilt portions  
9 may not need additional right-of-way. And this is  
10 just a little representation of the width itself  
11 or the route and the right-of-way width, which is  
12 actually much less.

13 And then just a little bit about the  
14 structures that we would use. Most of them will  
15 be wood poles, again, not too different than  
16 what's out there now, anywhere between 52 to  
17 92 feet. Some of them will be taller, ten, 15  
18 feet taller than what's there. Some of them will  
19 be very close to what's out there. Most of them  
20 will be single wood poles.

21 Most of it will have single circuit.  
22 Some double circuits will be there, which just  
23 essentially means there will be more lines on the  
24 structures. This would be a single circuit.  
25 Sometimes we'll use an H frame structure if we

1 need to go underneath other lines, things like  
2 that. We need the stability for that. That would  
3 be essentially, to a certain extent, specialty  
4 structures. Other specialty structures might  
5 include a steel pole or something if there's a  
6 sharp angle, and that sometimes will be embedded  
7 in concrete.

8 Most of the poles themselves will be  
9 probably be somewhere approximately one-and-a-half  
10 to two feet wide. And the spacing would be  
11 anywhere from 250 to 400 feet. That just depends  
12 on whether it's single circuit, double circuit,  
13 whether there's distribution on the line at all.  
14 Several factors go into that.

15 And then just a quick process. When and  
16 if we get the permits for this, the quick process  
17 is we come out and survey and stake the easement  
18 area. Then we would clear trees and vegetation  
19 from the easement. And then we would build the  
20 structures, place them in their locations, string  
21 the lines and then repair the damage.

22 And one part we left out of here is the  
23 acquisition itself. If we do need to acquire new  
24 easement, that would come after the approval from  
25 the Public Utilities Commission and sometime prior

1 to the actual staking of the center line and the  
2 final survey. So it would actually be up in here  
3 (indicating).

4 And that's the end of our project -- of  
5 our presentation. If you have any questions, I  
6 think we can handle them at the end of  
7 Mr. Birkholz's presentation.

8 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Good afternoon,  
9 everybody. My name is David Birkholz. I'm with  
10 the Department of Commerce. And in case you like  
11 acronyms, which I know you don't, but to keep us  
12 straight from other participants, we are the  
13 Energy Environmental Review and Analysis  
14 Division. There are two parts of the Department  
15 that are involved in this project. The other one,  
16 as Tracy mentioned, is the Energy Review and  
17 Planning. But for the most part, they're involved  
18 in the Certificate of Need. And we'll be  
19 involved, to some degree, in both.

20 For each of the -- each project that  
21 comes across, each large energy project, whether  
22 it be a gas pipeline or transmission line of at  
23 least 115 kV or the 345s that are going up just to  
24 the west out to Brookings, wind turbine farms and  
25 any kind of large energy production facility, we

1           become involved especially at the environmental  
2           review stage of that process. And we do have a  
3           role also in feedback of a technical support for  
4           the Commission when they ask for particular  
5           information that we can help provide, but our  
6           legislative role in this case is environmental  
7           review.

8                         In this case there are the two  
9           processes, the Certificate of Need and the route  
10          permit. Each one, if you were doing them  
11          separately, would require a particular kind of  
12          review. A Certificate of Need requires an  
13          environmental report, which is a little  
14          higher-level review. And it looks at the  
15          different kinds of processes that might answer the  
16          question, do we have a need because we have low  
17          voltage or we have run out. What is the  
18          solution. Can we build transmission, do we build  
19          local generation. You know, any number of options  
20          are available. And the environmental report is a  
21          higher level overview of those options.

22                        When we do a route permit, we do -- for  
23          very large projects, an EIS, an Environmental  
24          Impact Statement. In this case, for the smaller  
25          projects that are -- it's called an environmental

1 assessment. Essentially the same type of project  
2 as an EIS. It operates as an alternative type of  
3 environmental review because the project time  
4 review is condensed, there's a smaller project at  
5 issue. Essentially we cover the same issues in  
6 depth as possible.

7 What this project is doing now, then,  
8 since there are both, is we're going to do one  
9 environmental report. So when we get down to  
10 asking you about impacts and input into  
11 alternatives or what you want to know about the  
12 project, what you want to see studied about the  
13 project, we'll be looking at both of those things  
14 in the environmental report, so we'll be doing  
15 one.

16 And as Tracy said, in her job as public  
17 advisor she's impartial. We're impartial too.  
18 What our goal is to do is to take all the route  
19 alternatives and to do essentially a comparative  
20 analysis. Now, in the end, once all your input is  
21 in, once the hearings have been held, once all the  
22 studies and reviews have been done, we'll probably  
23 be making a recommendation on what we think is the  
24 best. But we are not the people who decide that  
25 and we don't have an opinion up front. We'll

1 probably have more when we have more information,  
2 which is the way it should be done, I would  
3 guess.

4 We've come to the part of the program  
5 where we want you to participate, and that  
6 participation takes place today and it takes place  
7 ongoing for the next couple weeks. So you can  
8 make comments today or you can make comments in  
9 writing as it goes on. All of those come into the  
10 record. All of those are official comments.

11 I just separated out a couple slides,  
12 just to note that, again, there are two different  
13 rules, one for the Certificate of Need, where you  
14 do the environmental report. What you're  
15 essentially doing is looking for different  
16 solutions to the problem. If you have ideas about  
17 that, if you have concerns about that, you're  
18 certainly welcome to put those into the process.  
19 That's equally important.

20 The other thing we're looking at is if  
21 there is determined to be a route, a transmission  
22 line that's going to be built to answer the  
23 problem that exists, that's where we're going to  
24 look at different possibilities for routes. As  
25 Tracy said earlier, the local input on what the

1 impacts are, invaluable. We can't come out here  
2 and see everything that you can see that you know  
3 is out here. What you can do is you can point  
4 those things out to me. You can point out the  
5 concerns that you have, the questions you have  
6 that maybe we can answer, the questions that you  
7 have that maybe we need to do more research to  
8 find an answer.

9           Essentially, also, the idea of giving us  
10 alternative route ideas. As Peter pointed out,  
11 the company, in that one instance where the  
12 right-of-way is compressed, they've come up with  
13 an alternative route idea as a solution to that.  
14 That's the type of thing that we also get input  
15 from on these projects from local citizens. Maybe  
16 there's a whole different route idea. Maybe  
17 there's a route section that you think would be a  
18 more efficient way to do the project. You submit  
19 them in your comments today, you submit them going  
20 forward.

21           Going back to Tracy's nighttime reading,  
22 I've got the rules for both of these. But  
23 essentially what it says is if you have an idea  
24 for a route, give us all the information. In  
25 other words, if you are suggesting a route, an

1 alternative route to what the company is  
2 proposing, tell us what it's solving. What's the  
3 impact that's the problem and what is it solving.  
4 What is the alternative you're recommending and  
5 how is that better, how does that mitigate for  
6 that problem, to the best of your knowledge.  
7 We'll take it from there and investigate it. But  
8 as much information, local information as you can  
9 feed into that question or recommendation as  
10 possible is what we're looking to see.

11 And the same way in the environmental  
12 review for the need and for this. So that's the  
13 concept behind what they're saying here, is to  
14 tell us why this alternative is a good solution.

15 I'm not going to waste a lot more time  
16 talking about that. I think that's clear. But,  
17 of course, you can ask questions as you go along.

18 What we're going to do now is  
19 essentially move into the public comment part of  
20 the afternoon session. Keep in mind your comments  
21 will go into the record. We have with us a court  
22 reporter. She's going to take down your comments  
23 word for word, so it's not any question about what  
24 was said and it helps me when I get back to my  
25 office to look back and see. You have a comment

1 sheet that I left in the back that you picked up.  
2 You can use that. You don't have to use that, but  
3 it has my address on it. You can use it as an  
4 example.

5 The Department, on our website, actually  
6 allows for electronic comments. So if you prefer  
7 doing that, you can go right onto our website and  
8 make your comment directly there or fax it.

9 The idea is -- What we're going to do  
10 with these is we're going to take all the  
11 comments, all the alternative processes and route  
12 ideas and come up with what's called the scope.  
13 And the scope is, in the end, the picture of what  
14 we're reviewing. It's the universe that we're  
15 reviewing. We can't review the entire universe  
16 between here and Prior Lake. We need to narrow  
17 down what is the universe that we're looking at.  
18 What are the routes that are possible solutions,  
19 we're going to look at those. So the Department  
20 of Commerce, in the end, makes a decision as to  
21 what the scope is.

22 I've left a document at the back as  
23 well. It's called a draft scope decision. It  
24 doesn't look exactly like one because it has a lot  
25 of background information about what that is for

1 and what it does. It also includes at the end, it  
2 sort of shows you the idea behind that. So even  
3 if you make comments today, take that home, read  
4 through that and see the kinds of things that can  
5 be put into the system.

6 Key fact, the comment period ends  
7 October 15th. As Tracy said, there's a time limit  
8 to this process. The statutes and rules limit the  
9 time available for review. In order for us to get  
10 going onto the full evaluation of the  
11 environmental impacts, we need to have your input  
12 as soon as possible. So we've had this period  
13 open since we released the notice and it will be  
14 held open for two more weeks. I need to stress  
15 that your comments need to be in by that time, so  
16 that's critical.

17 Otherwise, I think we've come to the  
18 time that you can stop listening to us and start  
19 speaking. You can come up and speak on a topic.  
20 You can come up and speak about your ideas. You  
21 can come up and ask questions. We have a lot of  
22 people here from the company. If you have basic  
23 questions that maybe we can answer quickly today,  
24 we can do some of that. You can ask questions  
25 about the process, we can do that. Mostly it's

1 about getting your thoughts and your concerns,  
2 your issues on the record so we can take those  
3 back and evaluate them and use them as information  
4 going forward.

5 I don't know how it's going to work, but  
6 normally in a room -- As you can tell, I'm using a  
7 mike and everybody can hear me. Everybody can't  
8 hear me when I speak without a mike and people  
9 think they can. So if it works with a small  
10 amount of people, fine. But for the court  
11 reporter's benefit, it's really helpful to come up  
12 to the microphone and make your comment. So I  
13 would ask you to do your comment at the  
14 microphone, if you would, please.

15 State and spell your name so we know  
16 that. The others are quite simple. I don't think  
17 we'll have a problem. We have a small crowd. We  
18 have enough time for people to make the comments  
19 they want.

20 Unless there's anything else going  
21 forward, I would turn it over to people. Did  
22 anybody turn in the green cards in the back to  
23 speak? Okay. So we'll do it by a raise of hands  
24 of who wants to come forward.

25 MR. D. WAGNER: Hi. I'm Darrin Wagner.

1 I live on Texas Avenue, one of the proposed  
2 routes. I live there and farm.

3 I have a concern with cattle and the  
4 impact with animals with this line going through,  
5 wondering about stray voltage, if that is an issue  
6 here, and what impacts on the animals it will  
7 have. I do have a concern.

8 I farm a farm that was built when 27 was  
9 a gravel road. It's literally 20 feet off the  
10 road. What kind of impacts that would be as far  
11 as a right-of-way and having steel Harvestore  
12 structures that close to the line. Thank you.

13 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Thank you. I probably  
14 will need the company to talk to -- to answer, if  
15 they have just a quick answer, about building that  
16 close to steel structures.

17 I can tell you we generally, when we're  
18 in a rural area especially but in all our  
19 environmental reports, will address the topic of  
20 stray voltage because we understand that it's an  
21 issue for a lot of people. And we try to keep up  
22 to date on what solutions have come forward on  
23 that and what's required to build the line. So we  
24 will revisit that in this environmental assessment  
25 and we will try to find out, based on local

1 situations, if that will be a problem. So we will  
2 look at that.

3 Does somebody from the company want to  
4 address --

5 MR. SCHAUB: Hi. I just need to clarify  
6 a little. Did you say you had steel structures or  
7 steel Harvestores?

8 MR. D. WAGNER: Steel Harvestores.

9 MR. SCHAUB: Harvestores, okay, the  
10 equipment. Yeah, I guess --

11 MR. L. WAGNER: Structures.

12 MR. SCHAUB: Excuse me?

13 MR. L. WAGNER: The Harvestore silo is a  
14 structure, not a piece of equipment.

15 MR. SCHAUB: Okay. That's what I was  
16 trying to clarify. Yeah, obviously we don't want  
17 the line right next to a steel building. We're  
18 not going to design it so that it would go right  
19 there.

20 We have to look at whatever route we are  
21 given, and then we would look at things like  
22 that. On any given route there's always some  
23 issues where we need to design around it or we  
24 need to make some sort of an accommodation to deal  
25 with that.

1 I can tell you now, no, we're not going  
2 to put it so that the line would run right next to  
3 any kind of a steel building. That's why we have  
4 the 70-foot wide right-of-way. It's usually  
5 35 feet either side of the centerline -- either  
6 side of the line. And that usually gives us  
7 enough room to get past most structures and also  
8 handles issues like when the lines sag and they  
9 blow out and that sort of thing. That's the best  
10 I can tell you for now. We have to look at it  
11 specifically, and the engineers would have to look  
12 at it and design it accordingly, if it even ended  
13 up going anywhere near your property.

14 MR. L. WAGNER: My name is Lander  
15 Wagner, L-A-N-D-E-R. I farmed there since 1960.  
16 That's when it was a gravel road. This one is  
17 unique because my homestead is actually in two  
18 sections of land.

19 MR. SCHAUB: Okay.

20 MR. L. WAGNER: And right now you're  
21 talking about a 300-foot right-of-way. We've got  
22 homes on both sides of the road, the barn and  
23 structures. Some of that stuff was put in -- I  
24 think put in 60 feet of the center of the road.

25 MR. SCHAUB: Are you also on Texas?

1 MR. L. WAGNER: Yes, same farm he's  
2 talking about.

3 MR. SCHAUB: Is this the one where  
4 there's stuff on both sides --

5 MR. L. WAGNER: Right.

6 MR. SCHAUB: -- just a little bit north  
7 of 250?

8 MR. L. WAGNER: Right.

9 MR. SCHAUB: Okay. I'm familiar with  
10 it. Yeah, I think the question is the same?

11 MR. L. WAGNER: Right. It's the same  
12 situation there. You know, back prior to that, as  
13 I was growing up in the thirties and forties, the  
14 main line went 250 down to Dakota and then to New  
15 Market. Then when they rebuilt the road and  
16 straightened it out, then 27, Texas Avenue got the  
17 main road.

18 MR. BIRKHOFF: Yeah, thanks. That's  
19 what we need to know. And we need to evaluate, is  
20 there going to be a solution for that. The  
21 concept of the 300-foot wide route is that that  
22 gives leeway for the company to work around. In  
23 the end, if it works out that the line should go  
24 behind the buildings on one side, that's not  
25 uncommon. Or if it ends up needing to be on a

1 different line, that will have to be looked at.  
2 But the actual right-of-way will be much smaller  
3 than --

4 MR. L. WAGNER: The other part is that  
5 our land on the east side of the road is already  
6 annexed into the city of New Market, so there will  
7 be development out to 27. Sewer and water is  
8 there, so you're going to have housing down the  
9 road.

10 MR. BIRKHOLZ: That's good to know. And  
11 we generally look at the land use plan and the  
12 zoning plan, but that's good to know.

13 MR. L. WAGNER: Okay.

14 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Thank you. And that's  
15 the idea of the route width. They only need  
16 70 feet to build the line. But the 300 feet the  
17 Commission gives them, that gives them leeway to  
18 say, we just ran into a problem and we can't put  
19 it right here so we need to make another  
20 solution.

21 MR. MESSER: My name is Dale Messer,  
22 M-E-S-S-E-R. We live on the west option. We're  
23 less than a quarter mile from the CapX line right  
24 now, so similar to what --

25 MR. SCHAUB: Someplace in here

1 (indicating)?

2 MR. MESSER: Yep. Similar to what  
3 Wagners were talking about talking about, talking  
4 about stray voltage, we don't have cattle. Our  
5 neighbors do, but that's beside the point.  
6 There's controversy, of course, about adverse  
7 effects on humans too. Well, here, this line is  
8 going right under CapX. So now you've got two  
9 high-powered lines crossing each other. What's  
10 that going to do to stray voltage and what have  
11 you?

12 MR. SCHAUB: The issue of stray voltage,  
13 my understanding is it's generally a distribution  
14 issue as opposed to a transmission line issue.  
15 But it's also my understanding that that's part of  
16 what the environmental review and process  
17 addresses, is people's concerns with things like  
18 any kind of emissions or anything coming from the  
19 lines themselves.

20 Obviously when you drive around the  
21 state, you've seen other lines crossing and going  
22 underneath each other, that kind of thing. The  
23 engineers are aware of the different types of  
24 issues and they design for that.

25 MR. BIRKHOLZ: But part of the analysis

1 will be to look where across the line is what kind  
2 of impact. Where is the electric field, how  
3 strong is it, how far out does it go, is it larger  
4 underneath, where the crosses are. And same with  
5 the magnetic field, how far away does it  
6 dissipate, how strong is it at the line.

7 So we will make sure we get all that  
8 information laid out for the different  
9 comparisons. And then we will, of course, address  
10 it. If you go back and glance on our website, you  
11 can see other environmental reports. You can see  
12 some of the results that we've come up with to  
13 date.

14 But, again, we continue to go forward  
15 and we continue to look at the best available data  
16 that we can find and update what we learn along  
17 the way and put that in the process.

18 MS. WIXON: Hi. My name is Hope Wixon,  
19 W-I-X-O-N. I have a conservation farm on the  
20 corner of Panama -- or 23 and 86, right at the  
21 roundabout. You've got the big wetland.

22 MR. SCHAUB: Here (indicating)?

23 MS. WIXON: Right here (indicating). So  
24 there's a big wetland here that I own.

25 MR. SCHAUB: So west of there?

1 MS. WIXON: Yes.

2 MR. SCHAUB: Okay.

3 MS. WIXON: So when they did the  
4 roundabout -- My wetland, my husband and I have  
5 spent a lot of money and energy to conserve the  
6 area. We put it into protective easement there.  
7 And when they did the roundabout, they also  
8 created a wetland right here (indicating), another  
9 U.S. Fish and Wildlife.

10 So our whole point is we get all the  
11 migratory birds. We get flocks of three to 500.  
12 I mean, pelicans, eagles, everything. That's  
13 their flight pattern. They come through there.  
14 And it's not a problem right now with the current  
15 lines because they're low, but these new lines are  
16 quite a bit taller. And it's the exact flight  
17 pattern and where our wetland comes right up to  
18 the road. So when they come in and land and take  
19 off, I just envision all these birds, incredible  
20 migratory birds, coming through. And we're  
21 talking not a few random birds. It's nothing to  
22 have our wetland full. I think we counted  
23 hundreds of them at a time.

24 And right kitty-corner to that is that  
25 other new U.S. wetland that they created on 86.

1 So within a mile of each other we've got two major  
2 wetlands, a lot of critters, mostly birds, that --  
3 I mean, you're talking major patterns that would  
4 be disrupted with the lines.

5 So that's my big concern. I don't know  
6 if the -- if U.S. Fish and Wildlife have contacted  
7 you yet. I know they will be because I've  
8 contacted them. But that's a big concern for us.

9 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Thank you. Yeah, we will  
10 consult with U.S. Fish and Wildlife. We'll also  
11 talk to DNR, Minnesota DNR. We'll look at what  
12 kinds of easements can be crossed, what kind of  
13 easements can't be crossed, what structures should  
14 be used.

15 For instance, there shouldn't be a  
16 collision issue because the transmission lines are  
17 designed now so they're farther apart than a wing  
18 span, so there's not electrocution. There might  
19 still be collision, so that's a place where the  
20 DNR would insist, we're going to put bird  
21 diverters there.

22 So we will look at that in the  
23 environmental assessment, whether that's a place  
24 the line can go. And if it can go there, what  
25 kind of aviation mitigation plan needs to be put

1 in place to do that. And we'll find them all or  
2 not. That's why we ask you to come here and point  
3 them out. We're not going to take the chance that  
4 we miss something.

5 MR. COUGHLIN: My name is Ryan Coughlin,  
6 C-O-U-G-H-L-I-N.

7 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Can I interrupt just --  
8 I'm sorry.

9 Also, I just want to point out in this  
10 instance, if you envision a solution that would  
11 entail moving the route somewhere else, where  
12 would that be moved?

13 MS. WIXON: Well, I mean, obviously, you  
14 know, I think the Wagner farm has legitimate  
15 issues there, too, with the farm on both sides.

16 But I'm looking at Zachary and Jonquil,  
17 too, in between that. I'm not sure why -- Is  
18 there a reason you're choosing more major roads?

19 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Usually we'll use  
20 something that has a larger right-of-way. But if  
21 you want to send in written notes, write up what  
22 you think might be an alternative, we'd be very  
23 happy to look at that and see what the impacts  
24 are, and see if a more narrow road is a problem or  
25 not.

1 I'm sorry. Go ahead.

2 MR. COUGHLIN: I just had a question. I  
3 live on 23 Panama Avenue there, so just north of  
4 where the CapX line went through. And we do have  
5 small service lines running along the road from  
6 the substation there on the west side of the  
7 road. How are these poles going to be different?  
8 You say they're going to be taller. Are they  
9 going to have to be further from the road from  
10 where the existing poles are? What differences do  
11 we see from the existing poles? Would these be in  
12 addition to?

13 MR. SCHAUB: You're talking about  
14 existing transmission line poles, not CapX?

15 MR. COUGHLIN: No, just transmission  
16 lines, small ones that you see.

17 MR. SCHAUB: Yeah. They'll be pretty  
18 similar to any transmission lines you'd see there  
19 now. This is an existing transmission line right  
20 here (indicating), so it will be very similar to  
21 that. That's about, approximately, the same  
22 height and same style. They'll be wood poles.

23 Usually we try to go a little bit off  
24 the road right-of-way and then use part of the  
25 road right-of-way. And we get permits from the

1 counties, or whatever the road entity is, to  
2 overhang on the road. That way we encroach less  
3 on the private property.

4 MR. COUGHLIN: How far off the road  
5 typically do you go?

6 MR. SCHAUB: If we're talking about the  
7 edge of the road right-of-way, usually about three  
8 feet, something like that, three, four feet.

9 Now, I need to distinguish that from  
10 centerline and drivable surface. Because a lot of  
11 people will look at the drivable surface and say,  
12 okay, how far is it from there. It's actually the  
13 edge of the road right-of-way that the county or  
14 town, wherever it is you live, that they own or  
15 have the right to operate within. So usually we  
16 go about three to five feet off the edge of the  
17 road right-of-way and place the pole.

18 MR. COUGHLIN: Okay. Just south of  
19 where that transmission line is, there's a  
20 proposed line which is a smaller utility line  
21 there now.

22 MR. SCHAUB: Probably distribution or  
23 something.

24 MR. COUGHLIN: Yeah. Would they be  
25 significantly further off the road from where

1 those distribution lines are? Is there a  
2 different need with it?

3 MR. SCHAUB: It kind of depends. If  
4 it's distribution, it depends on whether or not  
5 the entity that owns that distribution, whether  
6 it's Xcel or Minnesota Valley, or whomever, if  
7 they own easements, they probably purchased  
8 easements in that area. Quite often the  
9 distribution poles are set in the road  
10 right-of-way, and then they just use the road  
11 right-of-way instead of purchasing easements.

12 So with that said, if the existing poles  
13 are in the road right-of-way, we will move outside  
14 of the road right-of-way. Typically our projects,  
15 we see that means moving them anywhere between  
16 five and ten feet, maybe 15 feet back, depending  
17 on how close to the edge of road right-of-way the  
18 distribution lines are.

19 If they're actually on private property  
20 and they have an existing easement, then we  
21 probably won't move from that centerline much at  
22 all, probably try and use that.

23 MR. COUGHLIN: Okay. Thank you.

24 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Well, we're here for a  
25 little bit. We're happy to take anything while

1 we're here. But, of course, again, keep in mind  
2 that we'll be taking written comments up through  
3 the 15th. So whatever ideas you want to lay out,  
4 you want to go home and cogitate on it, see what  
5 kinds of things we do, what kinds of things we can  
6 help you understand, what kinds of things you can  
7 help us understand, that's the way this process is  
8 going to work best. If anybody else wants to make  
9 a comment yet today, we've got some time.

10 Do you want to close? Well, if you're  
11 good, that you've got the information you need for  
12 right now to go, remember on our websites there's  
13 links to a lot of websites where you can keep up  
14 with the information. Also, for your neighbors  
15 that didn't come, send them to our website. They  
16 can find the materials so they can look over them  
17 and make their own comments. If you would do  
18 that, that's great.

19 Otherwise, just thank you very much for  
20 coming and sharing. We'll be around here a little  
21 bit.

22 (Meeting concluded at 2:01 p.m.)  
23  
24  
25

1 STATE OF MINNESOTA )

2

3 COUNTY OF HENNEPIN )

4

5

6

7

REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

8

9

I, Julie A. Rixe, do hereby certify

10

that the above and foregoing transcript, consisting of  
11 the preceding 44 pages, is a correct transcript of  
12 my stenographic notes and is a full, true and complete  
13 transcript of the proceedings to the best of my  
14 ability.

15

Dated October 7, 2013.

16

17

18

19

JULIE A. RIXE  
Court Reporter

20

21

22

23

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25

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND SCOPING MEETING  
ELKO NEW MARKET - 6:00 P.M. - OCTOBER 1, 2013

FOR THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION  
OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA

In the Matter of the Application of Great River Energy  
for a Certificate of Need and a Route Permit for a 115  
kV Transmission Line Project in the Elko, New Market  
and Cleary Lake Areas in Scott and Rice Counties,  
Minnesota

PUC DOCKET NOS. ET-2/CN-12-1235  
ET-2/TL-12-1245

Prior Lake High School  
7575 150th Street West  
Savage, Minnesota

Met, pursuant to Notice, at 6:00 in the  
evening on October 1, 2013.

COURT REPORTER: Julie A. Rixe

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1 MS. SMETANA: Evening, and thank you,  
2 everyone, for coming out tonight. We're going to  
3 spend a little bit of time talking about Great  
4 River Energy's proposed Elko, New Market, Cleary  
5 transmission line project. And then we'll be  
6 opening it up for your comments and questions  
7 after the formal presentations are complete.

8 So to start with, we'll just go through  
9 some introductions. I'm Tracy Smetana. I'm the  
10 public advisor with the Minnesota Public Utilities  
11 Commission. I'm going to talk a little bit about  
12 the Certificate of Need and route permit  
13 processes, and who plays a role in those and what  
14 that looks like.

15 I'm going to ask someone from Great  
16 River Energy to come up and talk a little bit  
17 about their proposed project. Then we'll turn it  
18 over to the Department of Commerce to talk about  
19 the environmental review process, and then, the  
20 part you've all been waiting for, citizen comment  
21 and questions, where we'll open the floor for  
22 you.

23 The Public Utilities Commission.  
24 Chances are many of you haven't heard of us  
25 before. I can tell you until I looked for a job

1 and ran across one with the Public Utilities  
2 Commission, I had no idea what it was, why it  
3 existed, where it was, anything like that.

4 So I thought I'd share a little bit  
5 about who we are and what we do. We regulate a  
6 lot of different industries surrounding  
7 utilities. We deal with permitting for power  
8 plants, pipelines and transmission lines. We deal  
9 with service issues, primarily for local and  
10 instate long distance telephone companies, and  
11 rates and service issues for investor-owned  
12 electric and natural gas companies.

13 We have five commissioners appointed by  
14 the governor. They serve staggered terms, so it's  
15 not when a new governor comes in, they all get  
16 changed out and get replaced. They're staggered  
17 over time, so some have been there a shorter time,  
18 some a longer time, appointed by various governors  
19 along the way. And it is full-time employment for  
20 them. A lot of folks say, oh, you know, do they  
21 come in for the meetings on Thursdays and that's  
22 it? Nope. They're there full-time. It's a  
23 full-time job for the commissioners. And we have  
24 about 50 staff, including myself, that kind of  
25 help keep things moving there.

1                   So a little bit more on who's who.  
2                   Throughout this process you're going to hear a lot  
3                   of different terms, a lot of different  
4                   organizations and agencies. And you might wonder,  
5                   who are these people and how do they fit into this  
6                   picture. One term that you'll hear is applicant,  
7                   and that's the party that's asking to build the  
8                   transmission lines. So in this case it's Great  
9                   River Energy. But if you hear the term applicant  
10                  or company, that's who we're talking about.

11                  We also have the Department of Commerce,  
12                  Energy Environmental Review and Analysis. That's  
13                  a mouthful, so we abbreviate it EERA. You might  
14                  see that abbreviation. They're a state agency and  
15                  they will conduct the environmental review. And  
16                  they'll have a little bit more information for you  
17                  about what is involved with that tonight.

18                  The Department of Commerce has another  
19                  part of their agency that helps with this process,  
20                  and that is the Energy Regulation and Planning.  
21                  And their job in this process and in many others  
22                  before the Commission is to represent the public  
23                  interest when utilities ask to change their rates,  
24                  services, facilities and so forth.

25                  We also have the Office of

1 Administrative Hearings. You might see them  
2 abbreviated as OAH. Later on in the process  
3 they'll get involved as well. An administrative  
4 law judge, another abbreviation for you, ALJ, you  
5 might see that, holds hearings. So we'll be back  
6 out here in a few months with the ALJ to hold  
7 public hearings and gather more information from  
8 citizens and landowners in the area.

9 He or she will summarize the facts in  
10 the record and then make a recommendation to the  
11 Public Utilities Commission. So the ALJ will  
12 write a report, gathering all the information  
13 that's been submitted into the record at that  
14 point, and make a recommendation to the Commission  
15 on do we need this project; if we do, where should  
16 it go, that type of thing.

17 And, again, the Public Utilities  
18 Commission, you might see us abbreviated as PUC or  
19 simply referred to as the Commission. Again,  
20 we're a state agency. We have five  
21 commissioners. And there's two other groups of  
22 folks at the Commission that you may interact with  
23 as part of this project. The first is the public  
24 advisor, and that's me. And my job is to help you  
25 figure out how the process works, when you can

1 offer input, how to offer that input, where to  
2 find out more information about the project if  
3 that's what you need, put you in touch with the  
4 folks at the company if you need help with  
5 something, just kind of help you navigate.

6 So my job is not to advocate and say,  
7 hey, Joe Smith over here really thinks the line  
8 should go on the other side of the road. That's  
9 not my job. I don't give you legal advice  
10 either. I don't get paid enough to do that,  
11 right. You'll need to seek that out in other  
12 avenues.

13 We also have staff analysts, who deal  
14 with more of the technical side. So I kind of  
15 deal with the people side, help you guide your way  
16 through the process. The technical folks, the  
17 staff analyst, deals with the technical aspects of  
18 the project, assists in building the record, in  
19 gathering those facts for the Commission and for  
20 the administrative law judge, informs  
21 commissioners about the various impacts that  
22 different decisions could have. And, again,  
23 they're also a neutral party, not advocating for  
24 the company, for a particular landowner or any  
25 other party. They're just to gather the facts and

1 be neutral.

2 Okay. So why does the Public Utilities  
3 Commission care about this proposed project,  
4 right. Well, the statutes and rules define a  
5 large energy facility. And so if it's a large  
6 energy facility, then the Commission cares and we  
7 have to get involved in the decision-making  
8 process.

9 So the statutes and rules tell us a  
10 transmission line that's 200 kilovolts -- You  
11 might see that abbreviated as kV -- 200 kV or more  
12 and greater than 1,500 feet in length or if it has  
13 the capacity of 100 kV or more, so lower capacity  
14 but longer in length, more than ten miles of its  
15 length in Minnesota or it crosses the state  
16 lines. So if those sets of facts are true, then  
17 the rules say, aha, we've got a large energy  
18 facility here and that means the Public Utilities  
19 Commission has to decide do we need this or not.  
20 That's what we call the Certificate of Need. It  
21 answers the question, do we need this project.

22 And it also requires a route permit from  
23 the Public Utilities Commission because it's  
24 defined as a high voltage transmission line. So  
25 that means it will operate at 100 kV or more and

1           it's greater than 1,500 feet in length. So in  
2           this case, this project needs both a Certificate  
3           of Need and a route permit before Great River  
4           Energy can build it. So we're going to answer  
5           those questions, do we need it; and if so, where  
6           is it going to go. And I also put the actual  
7           rules and statutes up there if anybody has a  
8           really strong desire to read a lot about that and  
9           maybe take a nap.

10                        Okay. So some other terminology that  
11           you might see or hear today or as part of this  
12           process as we move along, in the end, if a route  
13           permit is granted for this project, you will see  
14           terms like a permitted route. And so what that's  
15           going to do is it's going to say, here's sort of  
16           the general path of where it's going to go. And  
17           it's fairly wide, to give the company some leeway  
18           to work with landowners or if they run into some  
19           other obstacle out in the field that they have to  
20           work around, like a wetland that wasn't on the map  
21           or something like that.

22                        When we get smaller, then we start  
23           talking about right-of-way. And that's the land  
24           actually required within that route for  
25           construction, operation and maintenance of that

1 line. So that's smaller than the route. Then we  
2 go smaller yet and get to the anticipated  
3 alignment, and that's the actual placement of the  
4 lines and poles. And when we issue the permit, of  
5 course, it's called anticipated because it hasn't  
6 been built yet. But once it's out there, then  
7 it's the alignment because it's built.

8 So how in the world does the Public  
9 Utilities Commission decide if we need this thing  
10 and where is it going to go. Well, as you can  
11 imagine, the statutes and rules give us some  
12 guidance on that. They have this long list of  
13 things that we have to look at. So we gather  
14 information from all different places. The  
15 company has to provide us with some, the two  
16 different arms of the Department of Commerce  
17 provide us with some. We ask the Department of  
18 Natural Resources, we ask the Department of  
19 Transportation, the State Historic Preservation  
20 Office, and we ask you. That's why we're here  
21 tonight, to get your input on all of these  
22 factors.

23 So what are some of them. Well, human  
24 settlement. That's probably why most folks are  
25 here, right. They want to know how is this going

1 to affect me or my property or my home. What is  
2 the impact on human settlement. Public health and  
3 safety. We certainly want to take a look at that  
4 as well. The economy, are there agriculture,  
5 forestry or other considerations that are in the  
6 proposed path of this project. Archeological and  
7 historic resources, the natural environment.

8 We want to design options that will  
9 maximize efficiencies. And I heard folks talking  
10 over here (indicating) before we started the  
11 meeting about using the route that's already there  
12 and using some of the equipment or facilities and  
13 different things that already exist. That's  
14 maximizing efficiency, so you don't have to go out  
15 and get new easements from everyone for  
16 everything. Use what you have already.

17 Use of natural boundaries, survey lines,  
18 field boundaries, use of existing rights-of-way,  
19 electrical system reliability. Of course, that's  
20 one of the big issues, right. When we flip that  
21 switch, we want the lights to come on.

22 We also want to look at cost because, in  
23 the end, it's the company and the ratepayers, the  
24 customers, that are going to be paying the costs  
25 for the transmission lines that are eventually

1 built. We want to make sure that, you know, we're  
2 keeping that in mind as well.

3 So all of these factors kind of get  
4 thrown in the bucket, and then it's up to the  
5 Public Utilities Commission to kind of sort  
6 through them, weigh them, figure out which ones  
7 might be more important than others in certain  
8 areas or that type of thing. So it's a lot of  
9 information to wade through.

10 Okay. So for those of you that are  
11 picture people, I have a nice little picture for  
12 you that kind of shows you the nutshell of the  
13 process. Certainly you can imagine there are lots  
14 of little things that happen in between some of  
15 these steps, but these are sort of the big picture  
16 decision points and things that folks typically  
17 want to know about. If you would like more  
18 information about some of the specifics in  
19 between, there's plenty of folks here that can  
20 help answer those questions for you.

21 So we start at the top with application  
22 accepted. And, actually, there's some things that  
23 happen before that because before it can be  
24 accepted, it has to be sent in, right. So the  
25 first step really is to review that application.

1 Did the company give us everything that we need to  
2 say, yep, this is an application and we're going  
3 to go ahead and move forward with it. So that  
4 step has already happened.

5 So now we're on that second box down,  
6 the public information and scoping meetings. So  
7 you can see we're very early on in the process.  
8 There's lots of other things that are going to  
9 happen before we get to a decision point, okay.

10 That review of facts and merits, that's  
11 largely what the ALJ, that administrative law  
12 judge, is going to help us with, gathering those  
13 facts, collecting the evidence from the various  
14 parties, and reviewing and summarizing those for  
15 the Commission.

16 As I mentioned earlier, there will be  
17 public hearings later on in the process, as well,  
18 once the environmental assessment is complete. So  
19 then all of those things kind of come together to  
20 the administrative law judge's report, and then we  
21 get down to the Commission's decision.

22 Generally speaking, to get from  
23 application accepted, up at the top, to decisions,  
24 down at the bottom, we're talking about nine to  
25 twelve months, okay. So, like I said, we're very

1 early on in the process.

2 If you're a list person instead of a  
3 picture person, you'll probably like this better.  
4 So you can see that the applications were filed  
5 and accepted earlier this year. Now we're at the  
6 third box, public information and scoping  
7 meetings.

8 And then there's a comment period that  
9 goes until the 15th. And the rest of the dates on  
10 here are all estimates because we're too early on  
11 in the process to really have those carved in  
12 stone yet, but just to give you an idea of where  
13 we think things will fall. So it looks like the  
14 public hearing is February 2014, sometime early in  
15 2014, with a Commission decision expected next  
16 June. So we have a lot of information to uncover  
17 between now and then.

18 So if you're looking for more  
19 information, you think this project might affect  
20 you or your property, and you want to stay  
21 involved and informed about the process, there's  
22 lots of ways you can do that. First off, the  
23 Department of Commerce has a website for this  
24 project that kind of walks you through the  
25 different steps that will occur, tells you kind of

1           where we're at. It has a nice little timeline  
2           across the top showing you how far we're moving  
3           along in the process. It has links to various  
4           documents that you might find useful, gives a  
5           description of the project and of the process. So  
6           that's a really good place to start if you're  
7           looking for information on the project.

8                         If you want to see all documents that  
9           have been sent in on this project -- Now, keep in  
10          mind, there's a lot of stuff that gets to be  
11          pretty detailed, and that might be too much  
12          information for some folks. But if you want to  
13          dig in and sort through and decide for yourself  
14          which things you want to see, all of the documents  
15          that are filed in this case by Great River Energy,  
16          by the Department of Commerce, by citizens, by the  
17          DNR, all of those things are put into what we call  
18          our E-docket system. So they're all electronic.  
19          They're all on the web for folks to see if you  
20          would like. So the instructions are here on how  
21          to do that.

22                         And the key things to know, in terms of  
23          finding anything with the Public Utilities  
24          Commission, are these docket numbers. They  
25          probably seem kind of like Greek to you, but

1 really the most important part of them is the 12,  
2 which stands for the year, and 1235 is really just  
3 a sequence. It's the 1,235th docket that was  
4 filed at the Commission. So there's no secret or  
5 magic to those numbers, it's very basic. But  
6 those are the two things that you'll need to know,  
7 the docket numbers for the two cases. One is for  
8 the Certificate of Need and one for the route.

9 You can also subscribe to receive an  
10 e-mail notification when something new comes in in  
11 the case. So, for example, last week, when we  
12 finished this presentation, I added a copy of the  
13 presentation into our E-docket system. So if you  
14 were a subscriber, you would get a notice saying,  
15 hey, something new came in; you can click this  
16 link and you can see it. And then if you look at  
17 it and go, um, not something I want to read, you  
18 can delete the e-mail. So if you're an e-mail  
19 kind of person, this is the way to go. You can  
20 just self-serve, you can go ahead sign up to  
21 subscribe. And, again, those docket numbers are  
22 the key to finding information.

23 There's also a project mailing list if  
24 you're not an Internet person. Or if you don't  
25 want to look at everything, you just want sort of

1 the basics of when are there meetings that I might  
2 care about, when are there opportunities for me to  
3 send comments in writing. If those are the kinds  
4 of things you want to, you're a less is more kind  
5 of person, then you're going to want to sign up to  
6 be on the project mailing list. We have the  
7 orange cards over here (indicating) at the table.  
8 You can fill that out tonight and return it to  
9 me. If you're not sure or don't get it done, you  
10 can mail it in. Our address is printed on the  
11 back. You can also call me, you can e-mail. You  
12 can also sign up right online. So all of those  
13 options are out there to make sure you get the  
14 information that you need.

15 And then, again, just some additional  
16 resources. The Department of Commerce, on their  
17 energy facilities web page, has a lot of really  
18 good information about how the process works, some  
19 other things about participating in the process,  
20 some stuff about easements and rights-of-way. So  
21 there's a lot of really good information there for  
22 folks.

23 Again, if you're looking for some  
24 bedtime reading, the Minnesota statutes and rules  
25 are also out there for you. And on our website,

1 the Public Utilities Commission, we maintain a  
2 calendar that will show upcoming meetings. So if  
3 you look at today's calendar, you'll see this  
4 meeting, along with the link to the notice that  
5 you got in the mail and a link to this  
6 presentation. So if you have, say, friends or  
7 neighbors that weren't able to come, but they  
8 would like to look at that information, that would  
9 be a good way for them to see the presentation.  
10 You can also take extra copies, if you'd like, and  
11 share them with your neighbors.

12 And so, again, at the Public Utilities  
13 Commission, there's a few different folks that are  
14 working specifically on these cases. Again, I'm  
15 Tracy. I'm the public advisor. For most things  
16 that you're looking for, you're probably going to  
17 talk with me, but certainly our technical staff is  
18 happy to assist you in any way they can as well.

19 We have one staff analyst working on the  
20 Certificate of Need and a different staff analyst  
21 working on the route permit. Their contact  
22 information is there for you as well.

23 And with that, I will turn it over to  
24 Great River Energy. Mr. Schaub is going to talk  
25 some more about the proposed project.

1 MR. SCHAUB: Thank you. Hello. I'm  
2 Peter Schaub. I work with the Land Rights  
3 Department of Great River Energy. Also in the  
4 room is Carol Schmidt. She works with the  
5 transmission, permitting, compliance and  
6 environmental. Anytime through the whole process  
7 if you have any questions, from beginning to end  
8 of this entire permitting process or construction,  
9 anything else, feel free to contact either one of  
10 us. We can get you information as needed.

11 That's just the name of the project and  
12 the docket numbers. I think there are handouts of  
13 this if anybody wants one.

14 And then this is just an overview, a  
15 summary of the reason we're doing this. And  
16 essentially the reason we're doing this is the  
17 lines themselves that are in existence are  
18 currently 69 kV and were constructed primarily in  
19 the sixties and seventies. Given that, we've  
20 reached a point where there is system overload and  
21 there can be problems with low voltage at critical  
22 levels. So that's the issue we need to address.

23 Here's one of the charts that a planning  
24 engineer came up with. You can see the load level  
25 is the dark red and the highest peak is 2012. And

1 we've greatly exceeded the load already.

2 So the planners came up with the idea to  
3 address that. Basically it would be to connect  
4 the lines in the project area to the western area  
5 called the Scott-Faribault system, which is  
6 comprised of parts of Carver County, Scott  
7 County and down into Wright County. And to do  
8 that they need to construct a new double circuit  
9 line, 115 kV standards. And then they'll operate  
10 at 679 kV. They also need to rebuild some of the  
11 transmission line that's there. Some of it is  
12 already at maximum exposure. And, again, they'll  
13 build it to 115 standards, operate it at 69 kV  
14 into the near future, next five to ten years or so  
15 at least.

16 And this is a drawing of the northern  
17 part of the project. That would be up in this  
18 (indicating) area. It starts up at the  
19 intersection of Eagan and Dakota. And our lines,  
20 this line is already in existence, this dark line,  
21 as well as these lines right here (indicating).  
22 Those already exist. Those are transmission lines  
23 in operation. What we would do is rebuild these  
24 to the higher standards, operate at 69 kV.

25 This blue outsheath here (indicating)

1 was our attempt just to acknowledge that in here,  
2 essentially, our line was there and developers  
3 came and built around it. And now people have  
4 homes not far from the line. They have playsets  
5 underneath the line, things like that. A lot of  
6 fences in the area, that kind of thing.

7 So we have done this a time or two  
8 before. We know that people raise issues about  
9 reconstructing in those kinds of areas, so we at  
10 least tried to anticipate one other possibility.

11 This is the southern route. And this,  
12 again, the darker red, is already in existence.  
13 This line exists. We would just rebuild that.  
14 And what we need to do is we need to connect this  
15 line (indicating) down to the Xcel and Veseli  
16 breaker station, and that would complete the  
17 project.

18 How we get there is pretty much the  
19 question. That's why you're here. That's why the  
20 PUC takes information. We believe that these are  
21 both good routes. They meet the requirements that  
22 Tracy had touched on before, the things that the  
23 Public Utilities Commission looks at when having  
24 people route transmission lines. Essentially  
25 coming down Panama on this side or coming down, I

1 believe that's Natches over here (indicating), and  
2 then cutting over and back down to Veseli.

3 And then just a little bit about the  
4 right-of-way itself. What we do is we ask for a  
5 300-foot wide route area. That doesn't mean we  
6 need to buy 300 feet or take 300 feet from  
7 somebody. It just means, as in here (indicating),  
8 this is just a display. It means that it gives us  
9 the ability to deal with unforeseen issues. If  
10 we're running down a specific route and there's  
11 something in the way that makes it improbable to  
12 continue through that way, then we'll route  
13 around. We'll move the route to accommodate that  
14 sort of thing.

15 So then from 300 we go down to we need  
16 -- A 75-foot right-of-way is what we normally do  
17 when we purchase new line for this size of a  
18 line. If it's a higher voltage, we'll usually get  
19 wider easement, but for this 75 feet is good. We  
20 also have right now existing easements. Most of  
21 those easements are going to be sufficient. There  
22 are areas where we don't have enough room for what  
23 we want to do, so we would then, in those cases,  
24 talk to the property owners and negotiate purchase  
25 of additional easement space if we need to.

1                   And, let's see, the poles themselves --  
2           As I mentioned, some of these lines are already  
3           built. The poles will not be that much different  
4           than what's out in a lot of these areas. They'll  
5           run anywhere from 52 to 92 feet high. Generally  
6           they'll probably be about two feet across at the  
7           base.

8                   They'll be made out of wood for the most  
9           part. They will use some steel structures if they  
10          have to on certain angles, things like that. They  
11          also may use the H frames in some instances, where  
12          they have to do things like go underneath other  
13          lines. And the spans themselves will be anywhere  
14          between 250 to 400 feet, approximately 250 to  
15          400.

16                   And if the line is going to have  
17          distribution lines, the lines that serve the  
18          businesses, homes and farms, that will limit the  
19          distance span itself, so that would be closer to  
20          the 250-foot range. And if there's nothing else  
21          on it but the transmission line, we can stretch  
22          the range out closer to the 400 area. Specialty  
23          structures would be the H frames, steel poles,  
24          sometimes laminate structures to handle some  
25          angles.

1           And the process itself, we kind of left  
2           one thing out of here. When and if we get the  
3           permits that we're seeking, then we would come to  
4           the property owners up here and we would acquire  
5           any additional easements or right-of-way that we  
6           would need. Then we would come out and survey and  
7           stake the easement area. And after that, tree  
8           clearing, vegetation clearing to clear out the  
9           right-of-way. And we can then build the  
10          structures, string the line, and then we come back  
11          and we restore and repair any damage that was  
12          done.

13           One thing I didn't elaborate on is the  
14          width. Most of these, as you'll notice, most of  
15          them run along a road. So when we say 75 feet,  
16          normally what we ask for is something along the  
17          lines of 38 feet from the property owners and the  
18          balance would overhang onto the road  
19          right-of-way.

20           And that's the end of our presentation.  
21          We will be here afterwards if anybody has any  
22          questions. Also, feel free to contact any of us  
23          at any time. Thank you.

24           MR. BIRKHOLZ: Good evening. I imagine  
25          several of you have a lot more questions for Peter

1 and for Great River Energy. And during the public  
2 comment period, we'll also be able to ask  
3 questions of the company as well. I'll explain  
4 that as we go along. And, of course, as Peter  
5 said, we'll all try to be here afterwards for a  
6 little while to make sure you leave here knowing  
7 what you came here to try to find out.

8 Okay. Again, my name is David  
9 Birkholz. I am with the Department of Commerce.  
10 The Department of Commerce is involved in this  
11 process in a number of ways. One thing we do is  
12 we do technical work at the request of the Public  
13 Utilities Commission a lot of times.

14 By statute and rule, we are the agency  
15 that does environmental review for the large  
16 energy facilities. We do that for power lines,  
17 pipelines, wind farms, a number of things. That's  
18 our specified rule, hence the long Energy  
19 Environmental Review and Analysis name. It used  
20 to be a lot shorter, but that was a little too  
21 simple, so we got that taken care of.

22 In this project we have to look at a  
23 couple of things. Tracy mentioned that there are  
24 two processes, a Certificate of Need and a routing  
25 permit. Number one, a Certificate of Need, the

1 Commission will decide if a project is needed.

2 And if a project is needed, what's the best  
3 solution to solve that problem or that issue.

4 And then there's a -- if the solution to  
5 the problem is a transmission line, then where  
6 does it get routed, where is it put on the  
7 ground. So those are two different pieces. And  
8 not every project has both pieces, depending on  
9 the size, but in this case there are. If we were  
10 doing just the Certificate of Need, the Department  
11 of Commerce would do something called an  
12 environmental report. That's a little higher  
13 level view of the project. And what we're looking  
14 at in an environmental report is the human  
15 environmental impacts of different choices on how  
16 to solve a problem. Is the solution to brown oats  
17 and low voltages building transmission upgrades,  
18 is it tying into different systems, is it maybe  
19 building distributed generation. There are a lot  
20 of options.

21 And in this case the company has  
22 determined that the solution should be building a  
23 transmission line. And we will be evaluating  
24 that, but we will also be looking at some of the  
25 other alternatives and comparing what some of

1 those advantages and disadvantages are and what  
2 the human environmental impacts are again. That's  
3 an environmental report.

4 When we get down to basics and we get on  
5 the ground of where we would put a transmission  
6 line, then we do something called an environmental  
7 analysis. That's essentially the same thing as an  
8 Environmental Impact Statement, something that  
9 would be done on a larger project and a big  
10 project we will do that, but it's essentially the  
11 same process. And the Minnesota Environmental  
12 Protection Act has many of the same processes, but  
13 it refers to this solution to this environmental  
14 review as an alternative form of review. In  
15 essence, we're still doing the same thing, it's  
16 just on a slightly smaller scale. We're still  
17 looking at the same natural resource issues, human  
18 issues, cost issues, the whole gamut, again, of  
19 the factors that are being considered.

20 So since this project came in as one  
21 project, for a Certificate of Need and a route,  
22 what we have the option to do under the statute  
23 and rule is that we can do one environmental  
24 document that covers both things. So that makes  
25 it simple. We don't have to come out here and do

1 a scoping meeting and make you come out for  
2 another meeting or read two different documents to  
3 get the answers you want. They will be combined.  
4 It will be an environmental assessment. It's  
5 called an environmental assessment in lieu of an  
6 environmental report, but essentially just  
7 remember that it's covering both things.

8 The other thing that I would note is  
9 that we aren't a party in the sense that we have a  
10 point of view at this point in time of what we  
11 think the answer is. Our job is to take what the  
12 applicant has given us as their application, as  
13 their basis, as their research and knowledge, then  
14 we come out here and we talk to the public, the  
15 people who live out here. We talk to you about  
16 your image of the process and the project, talk to  
17 you about your knowledge of the area, talk to you  
18 about any number of issues that are of importance  
19 to you.

20 We'll go back -- In the end, the  
21 Department of Commerce will make what's called a  
22 scope for the environmental report -- or  
23 environmental assessment. That defines what we're  
24 going to look at, the whole picture of what we're  
25 going to look at, not the whole universe. We have

1 to somehow compress that. We'll come out with  
2 that and then create the environmental report.

3 What that scope is and why we're here  
4 tonight, for one reason, is that we want to look  
5 at what are, again, the issues and concerns you  
6 have, but also what are some of the possibilities  
7 that you might think might be a better solution.  
8 In an environmental report the rule looks at  
9 defining alternatives to the project, as I  
10 mentioned before. There can be different  
11 solutions. That may be your interest.

12 It may be more of your interest about  
13 discussing perhaps alternative routes that we may  
14 look at. What I mean is that if you have a  
15 concept of a problem that needs to be addressed,  
16 you see what the applicant has put forward as a  
17 route, you see a problem with that, help us come  
18 to a solution, help us come to an alternative. So  
19 what we ask for during the public comment  
20 section -- session tonight and during the written  
21 comment part, we ask you to put forward. We ask  
22 you to tell us as much about the problem that's  
23 being solved, your idea of how to solve it, and as  
24 much as you know about what issues might be  
25 involved. We will take it from there. We will

1 flesh that out, but we need to know what are all  
2 the pieces, again, that are going to come into  
3 that scope that's going to make the final thing  
4 that we look at.

5 So give some good thought to ideas. If  
6 you're in a situation where you think there's  
7 going to be a major problem that needs to be  
8 overcome, if an alternative by moving the route to  
9 a different area slightly or different ideas  
10 entirely, give that some thought, bring that back  
11 to us and we'll look at that.

12 In the end, if those alternatives become  
13 part of the scope, then we will look at them in  
14 the comparative analysis, with the rest of the  
15 information that comes from the company, with the  
16 information that we do on our own independent  
17 study, with the information we do in consultation  
18 with the other departments, such as the Department  
19 of Natural Resources and others, Minnesota  
20 Pollution Control and others.

21 So this is, in our view, a critical  
22 piece of the puzzle. Because all of those  
23 agencies and all of those parts and all of us are  
24 separated from this area, but you're the ones here  
25 who see what exists on the ground in Prior Lake,

1 in Savage and, again, down in New Market.

2 There's a number of ways you can put in  
3 comments. If you didn't get the materials as you  
4 walked in the door, grab them when you're out.  
5 That way you don't have to write down all this  
6 contact information because all of that is in the  
7 handout that Tracy put together.

8 This is very useful. I prepared a  
9 comment sheet. The reason I prepared this comment  
10 sheet is because it tells you what we're looking  
11 for, but it also has my address on the back. So  
12 in case you lose it, all you've got to do is fill  
13 it in and fold it. You can use it. You don't  
14 have to use it. You can e-mail me, you can fax  
15 me, you can go online. You'll have this piece of  
16 paper, you'll have the contact. You can go  
17 online. We've set up a system where you can make  
18 your comments electronically.

19 If you want to mail things in, it's  
20 oftentimes helpful if you have an idea for a route  
21 alternative to take one of the maps that have come  
22 out of the system, print it out, draw on it,  
23 comment on it. That's oftentimes very helpful.

24 The key thing to note on this slide is  
25 that all the comments have to come in by

1           October 15th. This notice went out for this a  
2           couple weeks ago and we have a couple weeks out  
3           from this, so the comment period is about a month  
4           long. So take the time that's available, make  
5           your comments tonight. If you make comments  
6           tonight, you could still go back home, cogitate,  
7           come back and mail in your comments.

8                         But in order for the system to go  
9           through and keep on its statutory timeline, we  
10          have to set the limits. So we have to set the  
11          limit of the scope, and then we have to set the  
12          limit of the time that we'll have to do the  
13          environmental assessment. So that's a very  
14          critical number to keep in mind because if you  
15          have your ideas, we don't want them missed because  
16          they missed the comment period.

17                        So you may have comments and questions  
18          about what I've said. You may have comments and  
19          questions of what Peter said or what you read in  
20          your notes or in earlier meetings. You may have  
21          questions about the process that Tracy can help  
22          you with. So we can take some questions, but  
23          we're also really here to take your comments and  
24          recognize your issues and get them on the table so  
25          that they're part of the record.

1                   We have with us tonight a court  
2           reporter, which will make sure that when I go home  
3           and I want to write down what you said, I actually  
4           write down what you said instead of what I thought  
5           I remembered you said. That's always a critical  
6           piece.

7                   So the thing we're going to do to make  
8           sure that that works effectively is we'll speak  
9           one person at a time. Since the room is kind of  
10          strange, we sometimes have people come up. This  
11          room is a little strange, so instead of coming up,  
12          we'll just have people -- We have a remote  
13          microphone. We'll raise our hand and Lori will  
14          come around with the handheld microphone and we'll  
15          be able to exchange our ideas.

16                   We had the green cards there. We'll get  
17          the green cards first, as this is a small crowd.  
18          This is what usually works best. This is what  
19          usually works best when we have a whole big room  
20          to keep things orderly. But I think we have  
21          enough time here and the size crowd that we can  
22          all be able to have an opportunity to make our  
23          statement and make our comments. I think these  
24          other things are self-explanatory. And, again, in  
25          a small room it's easier conversation.

1           So, Lori, if you wish to start, let's  
2           get away from us and let's get to you.

3           MR. STOCKERT: Tom Stockert,  
4           S-T-O-C-K-E-R-T. And I represent a company that  
5           actually is bordered on two sides of the map, 87  
6           and 21. And I've spoken with Great River Energy  
7           and we've asked about what you mean by the  
8           acquisition process. If this isn't the right  
9           forum tonight, I can find out what forum would be  
10          it. We're really interested in understanding what  
11          the acquisition process looks like, how public it  
12          is, just a little bit more flavor as to what that  
13          looks like and the confidentiality that would be  
14          involved in the discussion.

15          MR. BIRKHOLZ: Well, I think we'll allow  
16          Xcel -- I'm sorry -- we'll allow Great River  
17          Energy to answer that, to the degree they want to,  
18          or maybe you do more of that offline. We also  
19          have available on our website a special study that  
20          we prepared to help people walk through the  
21          process, the acquisition process and your land  
22          rights process. It's part of the process. We're  
23          looking a lot for comments on alternatives and  
24          other issues, but we can surely briefly address  
25          that.

1 MR. SCHAUB: The process is pretty much  
2 the same for everybody. Once we get a route, we  
3 know where we have to go, we look for the best  
4 alignment. We'll figure out to a great extent  
5 what side of the road we ultimately need to be on,  
6 because generally we try to follow roads. Usually  
7 the routes give us that.

8 Then what we do is we contact the  
9 property owner, tell them what we need, give them  
10 an idea. And then eventually what we'll do is  
11 give them a copy of the type of easement we  
12 request. And, also, it will have an exhibit on it  
13 indicating their legal description, the legal  
14 description and the easement we want. Then it  
15 also will have a drawing depicting what that is.

16 As far as confidentiality, all of the  
17 easements get recorded with the county, but our  
18 easements generally say, for one dollar and other  
19 valuable -- good and valuable consideration,  
20 that's it. And then we don't give out information  
21 to anybody else as to what we pay someone for an  
22 easement, if that's what you're getting to as far  
23 as confidentiality.

24 MR. STOCKERT: That's one of the  
25 questions, yes.

1 MR. SCHAUB: Okay. So if you want  
2 someone to know what you were paid, that's your  
3 business. You can give that to them. We don't do  
4 that. The most we'll say is one dollar and other  
5 consideration.

6 If you want to talk more, I think that's  
7 probably enough, gives everybody a general idea.  
8 If you have specifics, I can talk to you out there  
9 or whenever is convenient for you. I'll give you  
10 my card, so just let me know when's convenient.

11 MR. STOCKERT: Sounds good.

12 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Is that good?

13 MR. STOCKERT: Thank you.

14 MR. BIRKHOLZ: All right. That was the  
15 one card. So, again, in this room I think we can  
16 go by hands, that's just fine. Who would like to  
17 comment next or have a question?

18 MR. MEDLAND: I'll try to use  
19 microphone. Last name Medland, M-E-D-L-A-N-D. My  
20 question is concerning my front door right now is  
21 about 80 feet from the existing power pole, so  
22 that would put your easement about ten feet from  
23 my door. What would that happen?

24 MR. SCHAUB: Our easements are usually  
25 somewhere around 60, 70 feet right now. I'm not

1           sure where you live, but a great many of the  
2           easements we have now are sufficient for what we  
3           need. So if you've already got a power pole  
4           that's owned by Great River Energy, then we may --  
5           we're not going to need to buy a lot of additional  
6           area. But if we do need to buy some, we'd talk to  
7           you.

8                         But the 80 feet, I think there's a  
9           little confusion. We don't need to go 70 feet  
10          onto your property towards your house. We need  
11          70 feet, 35 feet either side of the centerline.  
12          So a portion of that, if it's next to a road, is  
13          going to hang over the road. So what we would  
14          need on your property would probably be something  
15          closer to 38 feet. So we'd still have the --

16                        MR. MEDLAND: That's about 22 feet from  
17          my front door.

18                        MR. SCHAUB: If it's an existing line  
19          that's there and if it's something that's approved  
20          in the permit to rebuild, then we generally are  
21          going to try and follow that same centerline.

22                        Now, if it's a question of placement of  
23          the pole, we can probably work with you on that to  
24          a certain extent. We would talk to you, we would  
25          have the design engineer probably talk to you and

1 look at it, come out and look at your property.  
2 But right now we don't know what the route is  
3 going to be, we don't have a permit, so that's the  
4 best I can tell you at this time.

5 MR. MEDLAND: Okay.

6 MR. SCHAUB: Thanks.

7 MR. RIDLEY: My name is Aaron Ridley,  
8 A-A-R-O-N, R-I-D-L-E-Y. I currently live on the  
9 proposed new route in Savage that would kind of  
10 stretch down Dakota. Could you kind of talk about  
11 some of the factors that would cause you to choose  
12 that to be the place where you would start  
13 building power lines?

14 MR. SCHAUB: Both of the routes -- Here,  
15 let me go back to the maps here. You're on the  
16 east side?

17 MR. RIDLEY: The other half.

18 MR. SCHAUB: Sorry. Talking about here  
19 (indicating)?

20 MR. RIDLEY: Yeah.

21 MR. SCHAUB: Oh, okay. We're perfectly  
22 content to build on the existing route, too, it's  
23 just that it is narrow. The topography fee is a  
24 bit difficult. There's water in there, there's  
25 fences, people have put structures right up next

1 to it. There's several -- We just drove by there  
2 tonight. There's several playhouses and things  
3 next to the pole or right under it. We don't  
4 necessarily promote one or the other  
5 specifically. We just said that we understand  
6 that it's tight and there may be questions or  
7 issues.

8 What we would like to do is build where  
9 it's safe for everybody, as far as including our  
10 construction guys, what's easier for them, that  
11 kind of thing. It's really going to be up to the  
12 PUC, as to where we ultimately end up. They'll  
13 look at their criteria that they have for routing  
14 lines as well.

15 MR. BIRKHOLZ: And I would suggest,  
16 again, that if you have a particular issue why  
17 it's a problem there or if you have a particular  
18 idea of another solution, we're happy to receive  
19 those.

20 MR. RIDLEY: Sure. I guess one thing  
21 I'd like to add, why I'm here tonight is depending  
22 on the placement of the power lines, your property  
23 value could decrease up to 10 percent. We just  
24 bought into that property a year ago for the sole  
25 reason that there were no power lines around.

1           There was nothing else around. It was a really  
2           private place for us to buy.

3                        So all of a sudden if everything gets  
4           routed away from the existing homes that already  
5           have that priced into their property values, we  
6           would be at a deficiency, basically, from where we  
7           thought we were a year ago, when we purchased the  
8           house. And there would be other homes along that  
9           line as well.

10                      MS. SCHULDT: I'm Jackie Schuldt,  
11           S-C-H-U-L-D-T. And I just have a question. Sorry  
12           if I missed this part. A lot of us in our  
13           neighborhood, we're on the existing route and  
14           we're looking to have it be the blue part. So we  
15           just -- I just want to be clear on if there's a  
16           lot of us that want that, what are the next steps  
17           for us?

18                      MR. BIRKHOLZ: I understand your  
19           question. Again, all I can say is put in your  
20           reasons why you think one route is better than  
21           another. And, again, we'll do a comparative  
22           analysis for any number of factors on one line or  
23           the other.

24                      But the bottom line, it doesn't come  
25           down to if one line has more signatures than

1 another line. It's really going to be an  
2 evaluation of all of the factors combined and how  
3 the -- and in the end, how the PUC weighs them  
4 against each other. It's a tough call one way or  
5 the other, obviously.

6 MS. SCHULDT: Okay. So that answered my  
7 question. So it's just this sheet that you gave  
8 us, that's where we put our reasoning and send  
9 that in?

10 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Yep. Use that or  
11 whatever other means you want. But, yeah,  
12 absolutely. Just by the 15th, I have to remind  
13 you.

14 MS. SCHULDT: Okay. And it doesn't --  
15 You're sure of that? Because I thought we heard  
16 something about like a petition, so that was  
17 inaccurate; it doesn't matter how many people want  
18 one thing or the other?

19 MR. BIRKHOLZ: It does not. That comes  
20 down to a matter of who can organize better. And  
21 while it's important to make sure that the  
22 Commission knows the opinion of the people, again,  
23 it's not going to be -- it's going to be a  
24 combination of all the factors. So if somebody  
25 else has been organizing, people do that a lot.

1 But writing in your comments at this stage of the  
2 game -- There are a couple of stages of comments  
3 along the way. One is the environmental report,  
4 in this case environmental assessment. And,  
5 again, I'm doing a basic comparative analysis.

6 Now, there will be a public hearing down  
7 the road, when more pieces of the information are  
8 in. And you'll be able to tell the Judge what  
9 your opinion is and what your feeling is and  
10 whatnot, but as much factual information as you  
11 can provide for me now is the most helpful.

12 MR. CUNDIFF: Hi, Dan Cundiff,  
13 C-U-N-D-I-F-F. And I've read some material saying  
14 that it's not cost-effective to bury these lines.  
15 Can you elaborate on that at all?

16 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Yeah. Peter, you can  
17 elaborate on that as well. The general rule is  
18 perhaps seven to ten times the cost because they  
19 need to be buried and encased in concrete conduits  
20 and that needs a clear-cut right-of-way. So in  
21 some ways instead of leaving some of the trees  
22 along the way, nothing can be left on top of  
23 that. So there are a couple issues to that. It's  
24 very rarely done, so cost always comes back to the  
25 people as well. It's a question that's looked at,

1 but to be honest, up front, it's not a usual  
2 solution.

3 MR. SCHAUB: I can't really add much to  
4 that. It's essentially Great River Energy's  
5 policy that we don't bury transmission lines.

6 MR. SVOBODA: James Svoboda, spelled  
7 S-V-O-B-O-D-A. The question that I've got is when  
8 can we expect to have an answer? And I know  
9 there's a lot of variables and obviously a lot of  
10 people in this room, but let's just look at the  
11 best-case scenario for the power company. When  
12 are they going to get the routes and when are  
13 these easements going to come up?

14 And the reason I ask that is we've got a  
15 chunk of property. We're moving to a new facility  
16 here in the next few months. We're going to start  
17 the move and it's going to be on the market, so  
18 the timing issue obviously is going to be  
19 something I've got to deal with. We're going to  
20 need to know what the easements are going to be.  
21 Do you have any timeline, like in a perfect world  
22 for you guys, and then kind of go from there?

23 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Yeah, and that's part of  
24 it. In the materials that Tracy provided, you'll  
25 get a better feel. Some way along the line, like

1 after the public hearing, the Judge will release a  
2 report. That would be after the environmental  
3 report. You may get some feel of something, but  
4 the Judge will give a report recommending her or  
5 his recommendations to the Commission. But until  
6 the Commission makes the decision, it could go  
7 either way. And in this case it's -- it will be  
8 spring. And on the paper it said June, but it may  
9 be a little bit earlier than that, but probably  
10 not a lot. So that's just the way it is on that.

11 MR. KASTEN: Kirk Kasten, K-A-S-T-E-N.

12 And the question is if the existing route now has  
13 a newly-established wetland, what impact will that  
14 have on the route? The wetland has been  
15 established within the last year as a protected  
16 wetland. The existing route has been there  
17 probably for years. Does that have any effect?

18 MR. BIRKHOLZ: That's an interesting  
19 question. It may, depending on. But if the  
20 wetland was built surrounding the existing line,  
21 probably not. There's only certain instances  
22 where there's a conservation easement that  
23 disallows any utility crossing. That's almost  
24 certainly going to be the case, without knowing  
25 all the facts, but they'll evaluate it compared to

1 the other issues. It may come up as part of the  
2 comparison.

3 MR. KASTEN: I guess you're referring to  
4 a newly-established wetland, but this is actually  
5 a wetland that's been there for years, but it's  
6 just been designated as a protected wetland as of  
7 late.

8 MR. BIRKHOLZ: And we can probably find  
9 that, but I'd appreciate your commenting and  
10 saying exactly where it is and what you're talking  
11 about and we'll look at it.

12 MR. VIREN: My name is Bruce Viren, V,  
13 like in Victor, I-R-E-N. I have a couple  
14 questions. One relates to human health and what  
15 the effect of the electromagnetic fields are going  
16 to be. What's going to be done to mitigate that  
17 or address those concerns we have for human  
18 health?

19 And the other question I have, when I  
20 moved on my property it was 10.01 acres. There's  
21 all sorts of requirements with number of livestock  
22 I can have on the property, requires at least ten  
23 acres. What are you going to do to assure that  
24 the county does not have an issue with those  
25 requirements if I go to sell the property at some

1 point and, say, you do a purchase of part of that  
2 easement and it takes me below ten acres?

3 MR. BIRKHOLZ: You might want to explain  
4 this more. I'll take the second question first.  
5 But the easement isn't a purchase of the land. So  
6 you may have more information about that in  
7 particular, but it's still your land. The utility  
8 just has an easement to cross the land. You can  
9 look at what county ordinances are, but that's how  
10 the easement works at this point in time.

11 As far as electric fields and magnetic  
12 fields, utility lines do produce them. They  
13 produce them stronger underneath and they  
14 dissipate as they move away from the line. As you  
15 may suspect, we will report in the environmental  
16 analysis exactly what you can expect those fields  
17 to be. There's some assessment of that in the  
18 application now if you want to go back to the  
19 application. That's in the library, as well,  
20 right?

21 MR. SCHAUB: Yes.

22 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Which library?

23 MR. SCHAUB: It's at the Elmo-New Market  
24 library. I believe it's also at the Savage  
25 library. And if you want, we can also get you a

1 copy of it as well.

2 MR. BIRKHOLZ: And it's online on our  
3 page and on the E-docket so you can look at that.  
4 We'll look at it again, make sure that we have the  
5 correct numbers -- Or we assume they're the  
6 correct numbers, but we check those as we go  
7 along.

8 The effects, you may want to go back to  
9 earlier reports we've done. We've almost  
10 certainly addressed that question in every docket,  
11 in every project that comes along. And what we  
12 try to do in our agency is to each time look to  
13 see if there's additional information that's come  
14 up, if there are additional studies, what's the  
15 status of the literature on it. So the EMF  
16 analysis will be in the environmental assessment.

17 MR. SCHAUB: Also, if you wanted to look  
18 at the application again, it's also in the New  
19 Prague Public Library, Prior Lake Public Library,  
20 as well as Savage and Elko and New Market.

21 MR. VIREN: One of my concerns about  
22 specifically is whose standards they use to  
23 evaluate the effects of EMF on human health?

24 MR. BIRKHOLZ: That's the question.  
25 That's the right question. Because if you want to

1 go out on the Internet, you can find every  
2 answer. You have to evaluate the sources and  
3 that's what we consider part of our job, is to go  
4 back and find what the best science is at the  
5 given time that we can relate back to you.

6 MR. VIREN: So the Department of  
7 Commerce is responsible for that?

8 MR. BIRKHOLZ: The Department of  
9 Commerce is responsible for reviewing the data and  
10 making the environmental analysis. At the time,  
11 if someone has different opinions, as has happened  
12 in the past, at the public hearing citizens are  
13 able to come and make comments and enter evidence  
14 or pieces of information into the record at the  
15 public hearing as well. So if the environmental  
16 assessment comes out and you find that not  
17 palatable as far as information goes, you have  
18 every right to come forward with another set of  
19 information if you want to do that at the  
20 hearing.

21 MR. VIREN: All I know is there's good  
22 evidence that smaller numbers are creating  
23 biologic effects in animals and humans. There's  
24 increasing evidence. I think many scientific  
25 articles site that, so that's why I'm wondering

1 what your standards are.

2 MR. BIRKHOLZ: Right, there are some.  
3 It's not the prevailing, but there are some  
4 scientific studies that will say that. The actual  
5 number is really tricky to find and that varies.

6 If you go back -- I can't quote you the  
7 numbers off the top, but if you go back to the  
8 environmental reviews that we've done, you'll  
9 probably find also what the guidelines are for any  
10 number of -- oh, goodness, I can't remember the  
11 name of the system. But as we have in the state  
12 of Minnesota, we do have a standard for electric  
13 fields which it cannot exceed 8 kilovolts per  
14 meter at the centerline. We do not have a  
15 standard for magnetic fields and only a couple  
16 states do. And those have standards on the order  
17 of 150 to 250 milidogs at the end of the  
18 right-of-way.

19 So there are some standards out there  
20 that say -- now studies out there that say two or  
21 four milidogs is going to be a problem. Well,  
22 that's not substantiated by physical evidence in  
23 actual cause and effect at this time.

24 But, again, we start at each analysis,  
25 at each environmental analysis, and we go back and

1 look and say what else has come in and what do we  
2 know, what new information is available. So  
3 that's how we'll approach it.

4 Has everybody had a chance to speak that  
5 wants to speak tonight? I appreciate all the  
6 questions and the issues because they're ones that  
7 we need to address and they're ones that are going  
8 to be helpful.

9 Again, I want to remind people that you  
10 can come to us for ideas for route alternatives.  
11 It's really helpful if you go out and if you're  
12 online or take a copy, take the map, use that to  
13 point out what you're talking about. Help us  
14 evaluate what it is that you're trying to --  
15 information you're trying to get across. By all  
16 means, take advantage of your opportunities. And  
17 by all means, as Tracy said, she has extra  
18 handouts there.

19 Also, if you go on either PUC or on our  
20 website, there will be copies of the handouts so  
21 you can point your neighbors. Everyone, as many  
22 people as possible, can have the opportunity to  
23 comment and get their information in.

24 So if there's nobody else that wants to  
25 speak this evening, I just want to thank you for

1 the questions and thank you for the participation  
2 in coming out. We'll look forward to hearing from  
3 you as we go down what Tracy has said is just the  
4 very start of a fairly long process. So thank  
5 you.

6 (Meeting concluded at 7:12 p.m.)

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1 STATE OF MINNESOTA )

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3 COUNTY OF HENNEPIN )

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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

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I, Julie A. Rixe, do hereby certify

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that the above and foregoing transcript, consisting of  
11 the preceding 51 pages, is a correct transcript of  
12 my stenographic notes and is a full, true and complete  
13 transcript of the proceedings to the best of my  
14 ability.

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Dated October 7, 2013.

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JULIE A. RIXE  
Court Reporter

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