

Guide for Public Participation and Public Comment

The Minnesota Public Utilities Commission often provides an opportunity for the general public to submit written comments on matters pending before the Commission. The Commission encourages members of the public to submit their opinions and draw attention to reference materials in a well-organized manner. Well thought out, focused written comments help Commission staff and the Commissioners identify and analyze relevant information being evaluated on a particular subject matter.

Important: Comments are made publicly available and posted to the Commission's website, except in limited circumstances consistent with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act. Please be careful with any information you do not want others to see; the Commission does not edit or delete personally identifying information from submissions.

Below are some guidelines for submitting helpful, useful written comments.

- 1. Written comments are accepted on-line via the Commission's website or in the absence of access to the website public comment on-line tool, via U.S. postal service.**

The Commission accepts written comments received through its on-line form at www.puc.state.mn.us, select *Comment on an Issue* under Get There Faster. For those that do not have access to the Commission's website, written comments may be submitted to Dr. Burl Haar, Executive Secretary using the U.S. postal service. Include the associated docket number on any postal service submissions to expedite processing. Submitters should select only one of these comment methods to prevent duplicative submissions.

- 2. Written comments received before or after an official comment period will not be considered part of the formal record.**

The Commission identifies the applicable time period for submitting written comments and issues notices to the public specifying these exact time periods. All time periods expire at 4:30pm CST on the last day of the comment period. Written comments received before a comment period opens or after a comment period closes are not considered part of the official record. Comment deadlines are enforced and untimely comments will not be considered part of the record.

- 3. A person's written comments should consist of the person's personal knowledge or personal opinions only. A reference document, article or other outside source of information not written by the person commenting is not considered a public comment or part of the person's testimony, but may be referenced in a person's public comment or testimony.**

The purpose of soliciting public testimony or written comment is to obtain opinions and local information or knowledge from members of the public about a specific matter before the Commission. When the Commission solicits public input, the Commission is not seeking to obtain newspaper articles, white papers, studies, professional journal articles, or any other form of publication or third-party writing. The Commission is seeking first hand, personal knowledge on how the matter before the Commission will affect the submitter personally. Commenters may cite reference materials in their public comments but must include a list of any reference materials cited in their comments.

4. Grassroots, Community Groups and Organizations, AstroTurfs

A single, well-reasoned comment may carry more weight than large volumes of identical or near-identical text in form letters, postcards, emails and petitions that impose significant administrative costs while providing little to no real benefit or value. Organizations often encourage its members to submit form letters designed to address issues common to their membership as a tool to voice their opposition or support of a proposal being considered by the Commission. This misguides members into believing that their form letter or email constitutes a "vote" before the Commission.

The Commission welcomes input from such organizations but wants to remind anyone considering initiating or joining a form letter campaign that issues or matters pending before the Commission are not determined by a majority public vote. The Commission bases its decisions on in-depth analysis of the case record. Organizations wishing to indicate their members' wishes should consider submitting a single public comment reflecting the Organization's position.

5. Comments to Commissioners and Individual Commission Staff

Public comments shall be submitted within the prescribed comment periods via the Commission's on-line public comment form [link to form](#) or via mail to Dr. Burl Haar, Executive Secretary, MN Public Utilities Commission. Comments submitted to individual staff members or submitted outside the public comment period may be delayed and unavailable. Comments submitted in any form directly to individual Commissioners may constitute ex parte Communications and are not permitted or considered in deciding a case unless expressly allowed by law.

6. Department of Commerce – Energy Facilities Permitting Solicitation of Comments

The Department of Commerce – Energy Facilities Permitting (DOC EFP) solicits public comments to aid in identifying issues and concerns for development of environmental review documents and report to the Commission. Please see the [Department of Commerce's website](#) for further information on open comment periods. Direct questions on DOC EFP comment periods to raymond.kirsch@state.mn.us or 651-296-7588.

7. General Information on Public Participation

Inquiries regarding general procedures on how to participate in Public Utilities Commission proceedings including submitting written comments in a Commission docket, please contact the Commission's Consumer Affairs Office at consumer.puc@state.mn.us or 651-296-0406 or 1-800-657-3782. Public comments are not accepted at this email address.

Commission documents can be made available in alternative formats (i.e., large print or audio) by calling 651-296-0406 (voice). Persons with hearing or speech disabilities may call the Commission through Minnesota Relay at 1- 800-627-3529 or by dialing 711.

Commission hearing rooms have wheelchair access. If other reasonable accommodations are needed to enable you to fully participate in a Commission meeting (i.e., sign language or large print materials), please call 651-296-0406 (voice) or 1-800-657-3782 at least one week in advance of the meeting.

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