

EAST BETHEL PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

March 22, 2011

The East Bethel Planning Commission met on March 22, 2011 at 7:00 P.M for their regular meeting at City Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Eldon Holmes Lorraine Bonin Brian Mundle, Jr.
Tim Landborg Dale Voltin Julie Moline

MEMBERS ABSENT: Glenn Terry

ALSO PRESENT: Stephanie Hanson, City Planner
Heidi Moegerle, City Council Member

Adopt Agenda

Acting Chairperson Holmes called the March 22, 2011 meeting to order at 7:01 P.M.

Holmes motioned to adopt the March 22, 2011 agenda. Bonin seconded; all in favor, motion carries.

Public Hearing: Conditional Use

Permit. A request by applicant, Great River Energy, to obtain a Conditional Use Permit for the placement of a transmission line in portions of the City of East Bethel.

According to GRE, GRE is a generation and transmission cooperative electric company that supplies wholesale power to 28 distribution cooperatives in Minnesota and Wisconsin, including Connexus and East Central Energy. The purpose of the project is to ensure the electric system meets the needs of growing areas including East Bethel, Linwood Township, Athens Township, Cambridge, Stanford Township, St. Francis and others, while also balancing the need to be fiscally responsible. Due to growth in East Bethel and surrounding areas, the region is at risk for interruption of electrical service; therefore, GRE proposes to construct a transmission line to address system deficiencies and proactively ensure the homes and businesses in these communities continue to receive reliable, quality electric service.

Ordinance 15, Second Series (adopted by City Council on January 6, 2010), establishes the requirements and criteria for conditional use permits for transmission lines in the City of East Bethel.

According to the ordinance, Phase 1 includes a work group process in which the work group will conduct an analysis of the proposed routes and present its report to the city's Planning Commission. The work group was established by City Council in September 2010 and has been holding work group meetings with GRE representatives since then.

According to the code, the *“work group will conduct an analysis of the alternatives and present its report to the city's Planning Commission. The city's Planning Commission, based on the work groups' submittals and applicant presentation, will narrow the alternatives for the siting of the transmission line or facility. Following the Phase 1 process, the applicant may submit an application for a conditional use permit.”* On Monday, February 7, 2011, the work group unanimously made a recommendation of a route that was not originally presented to Planning Commission for the transmission line location. This route is known

as “Route I.” Altogether the group worked with GRE on 14 routes.

The work group made this recommendation by taking into consideration the minimal impacts to existing ecological areas, including Cedar Creek Natural History Area; it affects the least amount of people, and has fewer turns and angles than the other routes. The majority of the line would be in Athens Township and Linwood Township, with a small portion affecting the area on the northeast side of Fish Lake/Cedar Creek Natural History Area. This information was conveyed to GRE; they conducted an analysis of this proposed route, which is part of Attachment #3 of the staff report. Athens Township and Linwood Township have been advised of the route.

Mr. Pete Criswell, East Bethel resident and member of the work group, has submitted a compilation of information as Attachment #9. The information includes photos to demonstrate the visual effects of 69kV transmission lines, a letter discussing the unanimous decision of the work group for Route I, and documentation supporting his decision to vote for Route I. Staff has also included a CD with the information so the commission members have the chance to see the photos in color, which in staff’s opinion has a much more visual impact than the black and white photos attached to the staff report. Also as part of the information, staff has included a letter from Mr. Lou Cornicelli, East Bethel resident and member of the work group. Mr. Cornicelli reviewed Mr. Criswell’s documents and believes the information submitted presents a compelling case as to why the work group recommended Route I. Staff highly encourages Planning Commission to review this document as it may provide hindsight of the thinking process of the work group and how they arrived at their decision.

On February 22, 2011, Planning Commission heard the recommendation of Route I (Attachment #5, Planning Commission Meeting Minutes, February 22, 2011). Work group members, Mr. Cornicelli and Mr. Criswell, attended the meeting. Mr. Cornicelli spoke on behalf of the work group by answering questions of the Planning Commission and explaining reasons behind the recommendation of Route I, such as the environmental impacts, impacts to property owners, and the effects the project has on the City.

At the meeting, GRE presented their preferred route known as Route A (Attachment #4). Some of the reasons GRE prefers Route A is because it is the shortest viable route, shortest length of transmission line to build, fewer easements to obtain, and the lowest construction costs. Ultimately, Planning Commission recommended Route A for the proposed line location. Therefore, GRE has submitted a request for a CUP to construct the 69kV transmission line along Route A.

According to GRE’s application, the purpose of it is to request a CUP for: 1) rebuilding to double-circuit a portion of GRE’s existing 69kV transmission line from Athens/East Bethel border, south to Coopers Corner substation on 237th Avenue NE; and 2) to build a single circuit 69 kV line, with some under-build (distribution line on the structures beneath the transmission line) that would run from the Cooper’s Corner substation east, along 237th Avenue, then south along Gopher Drive NE, and then east again along 229th Avenue NE, to the border of East Bethel at Sunset Road NE. The total length of the route is approximately

10.4 miles in which approximately 5.8 miles will be in East Bethel.

As part of the CUP process, the applicants are to provide statement of ownership in the properties along the proposed alignment. This particular request is a unique case. GRE does not own the property on which it plans to construct the transmission lines, but will acquire the use of the properties through easements and leases if the CUP is approved. If approved, GRE will be required to provide the city with documentation of the easement/lease information of properties within the City of East Bethel.

GRE has submitted an information packet as Attachment #10. The packet is a total of 77 pages, which consists of important, detailed information of the proposed project. The information includes an executive summary, purpose of the project, transmission line options, transmission line route selection methodology, proposed Route A, general right-of-way information, general environmental information, and general engineering information. Staff will present the information in greater detail as part of the public hearing.

Also, GRE will give a presentation of the project to the Planning Commission. The presentation has been provided for your review as Attachment #2. GRE will have additional staff available to answer specific project questions.

The City Engineer has reviewed the request and accompanying materials. The engineer's letter has been attached for your review as Attachment #6. The engineer's comments mainly address the compliance of East Bethel Code Chapter 74, Permits for Transmission Lines. Mr. Schaub of GRE submitted a response to the engineer comments on March 16, 2011 (Attachment #7). If the CUP is approved, staff will monitor the progress of compliance to Chapter 74 and other engineering comments to insure all comments are addressed to the satisfaction of the City Engineer.

After the packets were distributed, a letter from Fire Chief DuCharme was received. That has been provided for the Commission.

On March 14, 2011, staff received a GRE Transmission Line Petition signed by 67 residents who strongly oppose the construction of the transmission line in the location proposed by GRE. The petition discusses the work group's reasoning for recommending Route I. The petition has been attached for your review as Attachment #8.

Attachments:

1. Application
2. 69kV Transmission Line Project Presentation by GRE
3. Route I – Work Group Recommended Route with Route Summary
4. Route A – Route Summary
5. February 22, 2011 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
6. City Engineer Letter Dated March 14, 2011
7. GRE Letter Dated March 16, 2011, Response to City Engineer
8. GRE Transmission Line Petition
9. Transmission Line Information Submitted by Work Group Member Pete Criswell and Letter by Work Group Member Lou Cornicelli
10. GRE - Athens to Martin Lake 69kV Transmission Line Project

Recommendations:

Planning Commission may make a recommendation of denial to City Council of a CUP request by GRE for a proposed 69kV transmission line to be located partially in East Bethel; the location is known as Route A, as depicted in Attachment #4. If Planning Commission recommends denial, staff suggests the commission state findings of fact to support the denial of the request.

Planning Commission may make a recommendation of approval to City Council of a CUP request by GRE for a proposed 69kV transmission line to be located partially in East Bethel; the location is known as Route A as depicted in Attachment #4. If Planning Commission recommends approval, staff suggests the commission state findings of fact to support the approval of the request. In addition, staff suggests the approval is contingent upon the following conditions being met:

1. Applicant must satisfy the comments by the City Engineer, dated March 16, 2011 (Attachment #6) prior to proceeding with the installation of the transmission line.
2. Applicant must sign and execute a Conditional Use Permit Agreement prior to proceeding with the installation of the transmission line. Execution of the Conditional Use Permit Agreement must be completed no later than April 6, 2012. Conditional Use Permit Agreement will not be executed until all conditions of the approval are met. Failure to comply may result in the revocation of the Conditional Use Permit by City Council.
3. GRE shall provide the City with documentation of the easement/lease information of properties within the City of East Bethel to be filed with Anoka County.
4. GRE shall provide necessary information for the City's Emergency Management Plan as required by Fire Chief Mark DuCharme.

With that the floor is being turned over to Mr. Schaub from GRE.

Mr. Schaub stated GRE is located in Maple Grove. The presentation is a paired-down version of what was in the Planning Commission packets. The purpose was more for brevity and he is happy to expand at the Commission's request.

Route A is what GRE submitted for the Conditional Use Permit request. Route A runs from Athens substation south to Coopers Corner and then runs east to and continues down on the 229th and then south to the Martin Lake Substation. The map shows the approximate property identifications. The first mile on the east side is primarily homes, and then through the University of Minnesota property (Cedar Creek). The line would be placed on the south edge of the University of Minnesota property. The line would continue along, jumping from the University of Minnesota property, then overtaking the distribution line and north to the border of Athens and East Bethel.

Some of the features of the Route A line are: It is approximately 10.4 miles in length. It would require new transmission line easements. There would be fewer people involved in this route than any other routes and that is only if the line stayed on the Cedar Creek side of the road. Route A would have a moderate

impact on plants and animals. GRE would attempt to minimize any impact on the plants and animals. This route does have a lower number of wetlands and public waters, which ultimately means that soil conditions would be more desirable. It does follow along a county highway. It also has fewer pinch points - houses across from each other. It would make it difficult to run in front of those homes. This route also has the fewest number of turns and angles. Every time GRE encounters an angle or a turn it requires more engineering on the line, stronger poles, guides and anchors; all of that drives the cost up.

GRE likes this route because it would enable GRE to help Connexus. The line from Martin Lake to Cooper's Corner needs to be replaced in the future. GRE would absorb some of the replacement line costs.

Route A is the lowest cost option. There is a \$1.5 to \$2 million dollar difference between this route and Route I – the route the work group recommended.

Schaub showed pictures of what Route A currently looks like with the utility lines or non-existent lines at this point. He also showed the highways and the oak savannah. The trees are cut back along the roads.

Schaub explained GRE looks at a number of factors before they decide on a route:

- They look at public social considerations, such as homes within 100, 200, and 300 feet of the route. In this route, there are 0 homes within 100 feet, 43 homes within 200 feet, and 84 homes within 300 feet.
- Additionally they look at the public facilities, trails and parks in the area. This route does not cross parkland. According to the East Bethel Comprehensive Trails and Open Space Concept Plan, a bituminous surface trail is proposed for the southern edge of the Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve.
- Tree and vegetation removal would not be a problem. The existing three-mile transmission corridor is maintained and minimal additional clearing would be required. Within the remaining 7.4 miles of the route, approximately 14 acres of trees/vegetation would need to be cleared.
- Historic and archaeological sites were also explored. There are two historical sites within one-half mile of the route. Cedar Creek is on the historical register. There are not any archaeological sites on the route.
- Environmental and cultural considerations were also explored. GRE identified two areas to be avoided in this route. The University of Minnesota Cedar Creek property is an area of ecological significance. The Allison Savanna Scientific Natural Area and the Linwood School Forest are also along the route. This route has the lowest percentage of forested wetlands of all routes (.11% or .1 acre).
- This route should not affect agricultural operations.

- There would be no negative impacts to existing utilities. The distribution line along the route will be upgraded (3.3 miles). This route affects the fewest miles of distribution lines.
- Engineering and construction considerations were factored in. The route's distance is 10.4 miles total length. 7.4 miles would be new transmission lines with new easements for an estimated total of 34.8 acres (3.0 miles existing SC 69kV transmission line corridor, very few to no new easements required).
- Structure size was another factor considered. The structures are designed to meet ground clearance as defined by the NESC. GRE also adds additional feet to this clearance to account for hard packed snow and to anticipate any future environmental changes that may naturally occur. The standard clearance for a 69kV transmission line is 23.5 feet. This clearance, along with the standard phase-to-phase (wire to wire) clearance as defined by the NESC, dictates the minimum structure height. Also, longer spans (distance between poles) can cause larger sag in the conductors and affect the height of the pole. The addition of distribution underbuild on the poles under the phase wires adds to spacing requirements and adds to the pole height. The anticipated pole height for this route is 60 feet to 75 feet above ground level for structures that carry just the 69kV phases and 70 feet to 80 feet above ground level for structures that have the distribution phases underbuilt under our 69 kV phases.
- Span lengths directly impact the structure size. On this route, structures that have distribution underbuild on the pole will have a maximum span length of 300 feet. To reduce the number of poles, the spans are designed to be between 250 feet and 300 feet. Terrain may dictate a shorter span length in some areas. For structures with the 69kV transmission phases only, spans can be longer, but are usually limited to around 400 feet due to the strength of the insulators that are supporting the conductor at the poles. In extreme cases, the terrain or an environmental permit may dictate a longer span, such as a water crossing. In those instances, an H-Frame or two-pole structure would need to be utilized to span 700 to 1,000 feet. There is a potential for one of these spans on the route as it crosses Cedar Creek.
- Species that are in the area of the route are:
 - * Red Shouldered Hawk – DNR has guidelines on when to do construction and precautions to take. The design of the structures and conductor spacing would keep raptors from electrocution.
 - * Sandhill Crane – USFWS has guidelines on when to do construction and precautions to take. Bird diverters may be required in flyways.
 - * Blanding Turtle, Gopher Snake, Jumping Spider, Leonards Skipper and Karner Blue – DNR has guidelines on when to do construction and precautions to take. Whenever possible construction would happen during the species dormant season.
 - * Oak Savanna, Dry Barrens Prairie, Wet Prairie, Walter's Barnyard

Grass, Violets, Wild Indigo and all other rare native plant communities – Most of the plant communities would not be located in the transmission easement. In cases where they are DNR guidelines and mitigation would be followed. Spanning areas would also be a possibility for some species.

- Agencies that will be or have been consulted for the project include the following:
 - * US Fish and Wildlife Service – consulted; no concerns noted. Rare species listing – gray wolf.
 - * Minnesota Historical Society – not yet consulted - will be consulted regarding excavation.
 - * US Army Corps of Engineers – not yet consulted but will be consulted if the wetlands cannot be spanned or forested wetlands are involved.
 - * MnDOT – consulted; there are no airports in the area of Route A.
 - * DNR – consulted on the general concerns of the area.
 - * Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve, University of Minnesota – have consulted with Jeffrey Corney.
 - * Anoka County and Isanti County Highway Departments – consulted regarding plans for future highway expansions/improvements.

- To avoid harming sensitive plant and animal life, winter construction will be used whenever possible. Power lines have been designed to prevent electrocution of birds of prey. DNR will be consulted regarding bird diverters.

One area that has been raised is what affect does this have on VA or FHA financing options.

Essentially the VA rules state that no part of any residential structure may be located within a high voltage electric transmission line easement. Any detached improvements even partially in a transmission line easement will not receive value for VA purposes.

The FHA rules states that regarding property improvements, no dwelling or related property improvement may be located within the engineering fall distance of any pole, tower or support structure of a high-voltage transmission, For field analysis, the appraiser may use tower height as fall distance. Pursuant to the FHA handbook, if the dwelling or related property improvement is located within such an easement, the lender must obtain a letter from the owner or operator of the tower indicating that the dwelling and its related property improvements are not located within the tower's (engineered) fall distance in order to waive this requirement. If the dwelling and related property improvements are located outside the easement, the property is considered eligible and no further action is necessary. The appraiser, however, is instructed to note and comment on the effect of marketability resulting from the proximity to such site hazards and nuisances.

In the event there is no way to get around to place the pole or easement, GRE would work with the property owner so they didn't suffer any diminution in

value.

That concludes Schaub's presentation. He did take a look at the two letters presented. He can address some of the things in there now or he can comment after the letter writer's comment.

Holmes asked Bill Boyer, the chairman from the GRE Work Group to come up.

Council Member Bill Boyer was appointed to serve on this work group as the Council Liaison. He was elected chair of the work group. He wanted to talk about the history of this project. The original proposal GRE made to City Council is very close to what the work group settled on which is Route I. This is basically a straight line. He found it a little interesting that GRE then came back with Route A, after talking to Athens Township. Athens Township has approximately 2,000 people residing in it. Frankly he doesn't think anyone on the work group cared which alternative route is chosen. They are concerned with Route A, which impacts Cedar Creek, Allison Savannah, and also the Linwood School Forest. This is a type of transmission line that municipalities get to regulate to some degree. Larger lines go to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission and one of their primary criteria in authorizing a line is if there is already another line on the route. If this projects turns into an 115kV line, we will not have any say in the project. This is something this group needs to be quite aware of. Speaking personally he will not support Route A, it impacts too many people in our City.

Lou Cornicelli, 4620 229th Avenue NE, East Bethel – He was on the work group that the previous City Council appointed. When we started this task in August 2010, they met 5 to 6 times in 2-3 hours of time each time. Route A was the first route that came forward. The work group advised that per process they needed alternatives to look at. GRE came forward with alternatives. The work group looked at the alternatives, what the impacts on the City would be, and what the City would be getting. We saw nice pictures of a 69kV line in an open field; they didn't show what it looks like in a wooded area. The group looked at impacts and there was a good faith effort that the one route that was selected was in the best interest of the City of East Bethel. Route I minimized the impact to the City of East Bethel. Route A might be the most expensive route for the City of East Bethel. The most disappointing part of the process is we looked at 14 alternatives - we did it in good faith and that there were 14 alternatives to be reviewed. If the other 13 were just given to give us something to do, or just to appease the ordinance, that is disappointing. If there weren't truly 13 alternatives, we would have said no to the line. The group did put a lot of thought into this. They didn't approach it as 'not in my back yard,' they decided that Route I would be in the best interest of the City of East Bethel. The group thought this would be the best route, it might cost GRE a little bit more and GRE might have to deal with Athens and Linwood again, and it may also require them to have to look at the archeological again.

Holmes asked if the Commission had questions for Mr. Cornicelli.

Mundle asked if there was any talk about hiring consultants or an attorney who specializes in transmission lines. Cornicelli said the group believed we were

evaluating alternatives. It seems GRE really didn't have alternatives. In retrospect maybe we should have contacted an attorney, but we were working with a good faith effort.

Holmes stated he would be opening the public hearing. Anyone who would like to come up and talk will be provided the opportunity. He just would appreciate that questions are not repeated.

Public hearing was opened at 7:45 p.m.

Thomas Steffen, 1812 237th Avenue NE, East Bethel – He asked if the Commission knows where his house is? It is right next to the substation. The power line is already illegally over his property and the road is already on his property. Now you want to steal more, you're killing me.

Sandy Winegar, 4912 229th Avenue NE, East Bethel – She wonders why when a committee recommended to go with Route I, why you would go with Route A. She doesn't understand that. She would really encourage against Route A. It does affect the ecological areas in the City. She wants an answer from everyone who supported this route. She said her house isn't 100 from the center of the road, but will be within 100 feet from the power line. She wants an answer from each person.

Holmes said he voted no, and he was on the committee. The committee went out of their way to look for what is right for the City and the residents of the City of East Bethel. He thinks the Planning Commission has had a little more time to take a look at it.

Bonin said she did vote for Route A, because that was what was presented to us, and there wasn't anything else to look at. She has changed her mind; she is now in favor of Route I. Route A does not benefit the City of East Bethel; it doesn't make sense to go through the Cedar Creek area.

Mundle did vote for Route A, but there was only so much information presented. There have been 75 pages of information from our work committee presented for tonight's meeting. Boyer said in fairness to the Planning Commission members, the Council didn't realize you were going to have that discussion.

Bonin said she was given a large packet, her decision is a much more informed decision now.

Voltin voted for Route A before, he was led to believe that the work group was given information that the University of MN would not allow the GRE to go in front of their property. But now the U of M would work with GRE. He drove both routes and there will be a lot more work for GRE to go Route I. GRE and Connexus are us, we own them, and we are a coop. They try to do the best they can to provide power at the least cost, because it is the least cost. That is their objective and their goal. There will be a lot more new areas in Route I to deal with. At this time he will not commit to Route I or Route A.

Landborg said he voted yes for Route A; it is the shortest route, most economical

route and the money savings come back to the residents. In the scheme of things \$2 or \$3 million doesn't make a difference. Route A is on a county road, less impact and it looks like the spot to be. He doesn't see the impact to Cedar Creek. He has lived, owned and worked on property that has 69kV lines in the City and they haven't changed in the City for 40 plus years. The other aspect he had a hard time with saying that it 'isn't in our back yard.' If you are looking at shoving it in someone else's back yard, you need to think about that. Why aren't the other cities here when you are going to push it to another city. In the end if Route A is not approved, GRE may decide to run it right through the wildlife management area. From a financial standpoint there are a lot of reasons he voted yes.

Moline wasn't at the last meeting. She lives right on the road. She said because it is on the route, being that it is the shortest route and the most economical area. She is going to state her opposition to A and go with Route I.

Landborg wants to know what the grounds for denial are from a legal perspective. A resident stated that they are all in the letter from the work group. Landborg wanted to know what about the other cities. Boyer said there two times more people in the City of East Bethel than in Linwood or Athens Township. Fifty-seven percent of the line is going to be in our City, why are our residents going to be impacted. It is going to have a visual impact on Cedar Creek. Landborg said we have wanted shoulders on the county road, the easements get widened and the roads get widened. It doesn't mean it will not be back here; possibly going through Cedar Creek, if we say put it in Athens.

Bonin said of all the areas that it would go through, Athens and Linwood would benefit, and we pay for it.

Marlys Belky, Athens Township – Was there anyone from Linwood or Athens ever invited to the work session. Hanson said no one was invited to the work sessions. Belky stated the Townships Zoning Administrator advised her of this evenings meeting. She asked why the City of East Bethel didn't get all the interested parties involved?

Anita Rentz, 4532 229th Avenue NE, East Bethel – The route would go right in front of her home. Again, when GRE made the original proposal it looked a lot like this. It wasn't like this and it didn't change until they went to Athens Township and it changed to this Route A. She doesn't think GRE has been up front. She went to the Linwood meeting. There wasn't one person there from Linwood that was in favor of what was going on. She was invited to the open house, the City Council was not, and GRE told us what they were going to do. There were large beautiful maps and there were four people there from GRE. They didn't want to talk about it; they were just there to show us what it looked like. All along things were not up front. She said she understands the cooperatives, but they don't live in my house. They are going to take all our trees one of the reasons we moved out there. If you haven't driven along 229th, please take the drive. We may not be right across from one another but it will affect the reason some of us chose to live out there – the beautiful views. She will pay higher energy prices to have the view she has.

Tanner Balfany, 19172 East Front Blvd, East Bethel – He was appointed to the work group as a rep from the Road Commission. The first meeting they did discuss bringing in Athens and Linwood Township, but because we needed to focus on the City of East Bethel that is their reason they didn't. We wanted to come up with a viable route that followed the same ethics in the City of East Bethel.

Mike Voligny, 22500 Typo Creek Drive, Linwood – there are three Linwood residents here tonight and there were quite a few Linwood residents at GRE's public hearing in East Bethel. He has been informed of the study committee work in East Bethel.

Anita Rentz. She didn't want to leave the impression that she didn't hear from the working group, a neighbor told us about the open house. Anything from a GRE standpoint, they were not advised about. She did hear from the working group and did appreciate that.

Ann Jones, 4525 Fawn Lake Drive, East Bethel – She lives on Route I. You have heard from other people and if she didn't take the Anoka Union she wouldn't have known about the meeting this evening. But it was published in the newspaper. Everyone that she caught at home last night thought the line was going to be on 229th. She asked the Commission to please restate how they voted; she couldn't hear the information before. Mr. Voltin, did you vote for A. Voltin voted yes for A. Mundle voted for A at the last meeting. Holmes voted no. Bonin stated it is irrelevant what was voted on at the last meeting. She voted for A and would vote for Route I now. Langborg voted yes for Route A at the last meeting. Moline was not at the last meeting. This time she would not vote for Route A.

Holmes stated Route I is not in stone.

Jones said she sees why there hasn't been huge representation at your meetings. She is the only one up there that gets the newspaper, so she is the only one that hears anything. She cannot drive at night, so she is at a handicap. She was very happy to the City of East Bethel newspaper come this weekend. She bets you know how she feels about a line going in front of her house and isn't going to tell how you feel about a proposal for a route in front of her house.

Doris Wetchen, 22436 Typo Creek Drive, Linwood Township – She lives just one house from the Linwood substation. No matter which route is chosen, from what she can see, it will come down past her house. There are three houses from the corner to the substation; the house next to us has trees along the fence line. Which is okay, with the power line. She has trees but the one on the corner on 227th and Typo Creek Drive is like a forest. It will just totally change the landscape in front of their houses. She is here to support the City of East Bethel to say we don't want this power line going down our road. Although she doesn't know if there are any alternative routes that would bypass her. She would hope that the Commission would vote against Route A, and GRE would have to go back and work on this some more. If anyone can come up with anything that would help us on Typo Creek. We moved there because we liked the rural setting, it is just really important to us to have the country feel.

Bonin stated she was told about this little area. She came home from Taylors Falls and she noticed the lines in that area. The lines here are part of the plan. She doesn't know what is going on in the other areas; we are really in the dark on this thing.

Leroy Baldwin, 2611 Fawn Lake Drive – He is Route I, and wants to know why he hasn't been told about it. Holmes said Route I means nothing to GRE. The only thing that pertains to GRE is Fish lake. Baldwin asked shouldn't the landowners on Route I be notified of this meeting. If it is going to go across our land, we should know.

John Colbal, 4482 Fawn Lake Drive, East Bethel – If you would indulge him for a moment. Does map 1 go through the U of M property and then go east. It appears to him, other than the neighbors from Athens and Linwood, he has driven past the properties that have already spoken of, and they are closer to the road. If they put up the line by where his house is, he would be in the fall zone. His grandchildren love the owls and animals. Almost 100 percent of the people of Route I are here tonight. Someone would be negatively impacted in both routes. There is a lot of controversy in our State, for those not showing up to do their job. It appears to him, and to the best benefit to the City of East Bethel and the people, would be a no vote on the whole line going through the City of East Bethel.

Doris Wetchen, Linwood Township – What bothers her the most is the 35 clear-cut from the centerline. The really tall power lines, there is not the 35 foot cut back; if we could retain our trees, she wouldn't be so opposed to the lines going through. Why are so many lines that don't have the huge swath of trees being cut back?

Holmes asked the representative for Cedar Creek to come up.

Jeff Corney, Managing Director for Cedar Creek – Holmes felt the University of MN is strongly opposed to Route A. The University of MN was not opposed to Route A. Cedar Creek cannot answer for the University. We would prefer Route A rather than other routes that would go through Cedar Creek, but a promise he made to the City is they will support the City. They will follow the wishes of the City, such as it is. If this is inevitable, if it has to be along the route, clearly our land can handle this rather than the residential properties. Where goes the City, we will follow that. If the City opposes Route A, we will support that also.

Bruce Wyatt, 23919 Hwy 65 NE, East Bethel, MN – He doesn't care which way it goes. He sits back and listens to the people, and he laughs; we moved out here for the beauty and the rural area. In the first place, if you weren't out here we wouldn't need the electricity. Route A goes in his back yard and we all need electricity. Just because you put a power line across, the animals will not leave. He has been here for 54 years.

Schaub came back up to answer some questions. He can clarify; this doesn't benefit Athens and Linwood. All along they have tried to emphasize this isn't a city-by-city, unit-by-unit project. It is designed to help all East Central and

Connexus Energy users. They are cooperative, they are owned by the cooperatives. GRE's purpose is to provide power to the coops. The purpose is to provide good service and electricity to the users. Secondly, there is talk about what is coming in the future. We have no plans. We could have gone with 115kV lines. We would have been able to just go to the State and request those routes. We have persisted in these routes, to do the best we can with the resources we can. All of the different routes have different ramifications. Quite a number of them will have equal or greater impact on wetland and ecological areas. The money to pay for this project comes from the ratepayers. This is not something that would not just benefit one community or another. Larger lines are sometimes done on more of a regional basis. Those plans are sometimes looked at in a long-term stance. They are not written in stone when they come out. He wants to address Mr. Criswell's letter. Three complaints – one is that these things don't look good. Granted no one wants a transmission line in front of his or her home, but it has to go somewhere.

We are trying to avoid a low voltage situation, when it is hot and people are using a lot of electricity. If there is low voltage, then equipment powered by the electrical lines may get ruined. If the line in Martin Lake Substation goes out, then they sit dark until we can fix it. Part of the purpose of this project is if we have another line going into the substation, we can then backfeed power to those people powered by that substation.

Allison Savannah property, we talked to the nature conservatory, is willing to work with them. The reason they wanted to continue on the Cedar Creek side. The DNR agreement with the Allison Savannah property would make it difficult to the GRE.

His argument said the transmission line should be on a super road. He said they are trying to serve a specific purpose to make sure the area gets the electricity that is needed.

The other argument that is secondary – if you allow this route to go through, this is a foot door for larger lines. Before you know it, they will have much larger lines. That argument is essentially a red herring. If we had those plans, we could just go to the State right now. The line that runs north, some of those lines that are currently there, the lines were built in 1955 or so. This project will probably cost about \$6.5 million. We don't view that as small change. We don't want to rebuild it and build something larger, but we will repair and upgrade. There is a State process that we have to go through. If there is a 69kV along the route, we cannot just ahead and bump it up whenever we feel the need.

One of the things that is probably his fault is he didn't address the City's comprehensive plan, which calls for the City to grow. Highway 65 is to become multifamily housing, commercial, and residential. The point of this project is to make sure there is the power that is needed for that growth. This is the route that we have determined would support this growth.

We have been looking at where people live; where the environmental impact is, and we are required what impact it will have on historical or archeological issues. We work with the different entities that govern and control - this one for East

Central, Connexus and the ratepayers. We have determined Route A is the most beneficial and it is something that should be done. Our job is to plan for the future, and we are trying to do that. We are trying to do that so that something is done in time for growth and everything is seamless. So you won't have lights flickering and things being damaged because power is low.

Why aren't other lines cleared to 35 feet? Some of these lines are distribution line and they can be closer to trees. On 229th, the line is bumping branches, some could be transmission lines or whoever owns the line has not been doing a good job clearing, it may be due to low growing species. The government requires us to keep the lines clear. If we don't, there are substantial penalties. He doesn't know specifically where there are lines that aren't being cleared, it is probably an old line, or a distribution line or they haven't been able to keep up with it.

GRE does not feel it is in anyone's interest to not be open, honest and above board.

Voltin wanted to know if you don't resolve this, if we don't approve the 69kV line, then how long before you would go to the State. He can't answer that.

Landborg said no one in the communities is happy. If we say no, what do you guys do, and if Council reject it. Schaub said we would argue this is our best line. He doesn't know at this point, it is not his call or his decision. The fact that our planners think this line is needed, that need doesn't dissolve because this process has stopped one specific route.

Bonin said this wasn't our original choice why did that change. Schaub said they brought in one route all along, looked at one route that would start at the beginning of Route A, would go through Athens, into East Bethel. The reason they changed that is they held an open house and we did provide notice to everyone we could. Every time we have met we have taken out an ad in the paper. We mailed notice to the City, not to the City Council as a whole. We have been trying to have open communication to the City. There was never any intention to slide things by. We changed the route because of the people that showed up in the open house. Initially we were operating under assumptions. Route A was evaluated compared to the other routes and it is the best route.

Bonin said what about the area east of Cambridge and how does it come down to Martin Lake. She said you referenced Cambridge is supported by this. Schaub said all of these lines are connected into a grid. Within the grid you need to make sure there is electricity for each area. He doesn't have the specific names of the substations. Bonin said you should have them, because Cambridge has been mentioned more than once. She doesn't understand that. He said Cambridge is used as more of a reference point. They are not trying to just fix Athens and Linwood; it is a wide range effect. Bonin said going west to Elk River doesn't affect this area. Schaub said it isn't always linear on how things match up geographically.

Schaub said essentially the substations around the state serve specific coops; each coop has different regions and areas. He is unsure how far the Connexus and East Central Region go. The substations provide electricity to the coops. The

planners and the engineers decide where the local power will be served. Just because there is an electric grid to draw from, doesn't mean we could draw power from there for here. They have determined in order to ensure reliability they need to tie into the two substations. He doesn't know what area the substation serves. He said GRE or Connexus could say that. Martin Lake substation service location has been provided to the City.

Holmes understands brown-outs and we need power. He believes it is the Planning Commission charge to look out for the City of East Bethel. He understands GRE needs this, but he wants to know if it is a brand new line or a redundant power source. If it is a new line to serve a new area. Schaub said the power is redundancy, but also to allow expanded growth. It is redundant, but also serves the purpose of ensuring there is enough power. It is a new area in terms of territory of demand. His opposition is we are very close to Cedar Creek and other wetlands and yet there are areas north and south of us that don't have this. He doesn't understand why they can't be run in those areas. It doesn't seem right to go through areas with wetlands and history. Schaub said that wasn't clear, Holmes said what wasn't clear. Holmes said most of our development would be off of Highway 65. Most of the energy would come from Elk River to feed Highway 65, not from Martin Lake. Schaub said there are limits to what can be drawn from other areas. They are trying to use the Linwood substation that does feed Martin Lake. They do have finite resources. It is not just about price, and it doesn't lessen the impact. They all have wetlands, plants and animals. One of the reasons we know so much about Cedar Creek is because it is being studied all the time. From our opinion, if we use a different route, we incur greater costs and get less for it. We buy nothing by moving to a different route. Another route would have an impact, just like what was raised here tonight. Holmes said our area is very significant than other areas of the state.

Jim McGuire, Transmission Engineer from GRE – We are trying to connect our stronger sources to connect lower sources. Cambridge and Elk River have strong power sources and Linwood also has a strong source. The farther we get from our power sources the more you have problems during peak demand. Yes it is redundant. It will also help that we can feed from another source if something happens. We have to serve the residents. Holmes said it could be placed in a different spot without losing what we would have to lose.

Scott Schlitsky, 2948 229 Avenue NE, East Bethel, MN – Martin Lake is served by one line that comes from Blaine. Why can't you come from Linwood to Martin Lake. Schaub said the power would come from the Linwood sub, but we still need to get Athens.

McGuire said GRE still needs to have the line connecting the substations. We try to have multiple leads so we don't lose all our lines in the same location. We have to be able to connect between the two. Schlitsky said if the major line was hit would we still lose power. McGuire said we would have had back-up with these lines. Schlitsky said what about going down Hwy 65 and across County Road 22. Schaub said it would be 20 miles or so and would be very expensive. The work group agreed that was too long of a route. Route I is about 13.5 miles. This longer route would cost about \$40 million dollars. Holmes said everyone heard that Viking Blvd. is expanding to a four lane, which he would like to see it

on Viking Blvd, but we have to be realistic at times.

Cooper's Corner is already handled from two areas. If there was an advantage to either Route A or Route I. If there was an additional service assisting Route A, then that would be advantageous.

Public hearing closed at 9:15 p.m.

Landborg said it sounds like they will have to feed Linwood and cross over to Athens one way or the other. He said just be careful what you wish for. If 115kV goes by your house, you might be wishing it were a 69kV line.

Holmes said he feels they can go other places other than down 229th. It just seems crazy to him.

Landborg said it is obvious you can go all kinds of ways. If the City says no, and Athens says no, it will go somewhere. Somebody is not going to like it. If it is 115kV line, no one will be happy.

Holmes said with the nature center and all that it should go somewhere else. Landborg said he has seen them cut down trees and burn off.

Holmes motioned for denial to City Council of a CUP request by GRE for a proposed 69kV transmission line to be located partially in East Bethel; the location is known as Route A, as depicted in Attachment #4. The Commission recommends GRE take the advice of the committee and propose Route I. Mundle seconded; all in favor, motion carries.

Approve February 22,
2011 Planning
Commission Meeting
Minutes

Voltin motioned to approve the February 22, 2011 Planning Commission minutes as presented with above change. Landborg seconded; all in favor, motion carries.

Adjourn

Holmes made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 PM. Moline seconded; all in favor, motion carries.

Submitted by:

Jill Teetzel
Recording Secretary