

Mower County Planning Commission

Minutes of the Mower County Planning Commission

Members Present: Myles Bendtsen, Harold Boverhuis, Vance Larson, Brian McAlister, Leonard Miller and Beverly Weness

Members Absent: Diane Bensen and Sheldon Lukes

Others Present: Rick Lancaster and Gary Ostrom (Great River Energy Representatives), Mr. Peters, Jim Hartson, Ken Peterson, Jeff Wilhelmi, Tom Daleen, Chuck Kulas, Russ Briggs, Terry Grove, Dr. Erdreich, David Hillier, Dick Miller, Dick Cummings, Glen Jacobsen, Amy Olson (Austin-Post Bulletin), Lee Bonorden (Austin Daily Herald), Glen Jacobsen and Daryl W. Franklin

Chair Len Miller called the regular meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 28, 2000 at the Mower County Senior Citizens Center, 400 Third Avenue NE, Austin, Minnesota.

CUP #562 – Great River Energy. Conditional Use Permit #562 to construct a 161 kV transmission line from Great River Energy's Pleasant Valley generating station to the North Austin Substation pursuant to 14-51(r) of the Mower County Zoning Ordinance, existing land use is agricultural and rural residence, Pleasant Valley, Sargeant, Red Rock, Waltham & Lansing Townships in Mower County, Minnesota.

Staff Presentation: Reference was made to the site investigation performed by Myles Bendtsen, Sheldon Lukes and Leonard Miller on June 21, 2000. Staff presentation was given. The items required to approve a CUP were discussed.

Applicant's Presentation: Len Miller called on Rick Lancaster who presented background information on Great River Energy. They are a not for profit cooperative for members serving approximately 1.2 million people. He stated that the Pleasant Valley location was selected for the substation because of the major 345 power line and the large gas line, which is also near. They have received permits from the Environmental Quality Board, Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Mr. Lancaster called on Terry Grove, a transmission line specialist, to speak about the concept. He stated that NSP owns the 345 power line from the Adams substation to the Twin Cities and St. Louis, Missouri. From the Adams substation there is a 161 kV line going into Austin. Their objective is to have Pleasant Valley as a feed on the NSP 345 power line. Rules state that there needs to be another power source outlet and it is felt that the Northeast Power

Plant in Austin is the best location because of problems experienced in 1991 and 1998 when the Austin 161 kV power lines were down. This will bring benefits to the area and will be more reliable. From the Sargeant substation they will use an existing 161 and 69 kV route. They tried to avoid splitting property by following property and section lines as much as possible. Rick Lancaster was then called upon to talk about the meetings that were held by Great River Energy in Lansing, Waltham, Red Rock, Pleasant Valley, Brownsdale and Sargeant. It was also explained that they would be gaining a CUP from Red Rock Township. Dr. Erdreich, Ph.D., presented information on Electric Magnetic Fields and discussed 1999 National Health Institute studies including the McBride study. She also discussed other 1999 studies. Laboratory studies that were done to determine health risks showed little or no influence on the body system. **Statement from the Public:** Commissioner Miller called on comments from the audience. Ken Peterson was concerned about an opposing view on Electric Magnetic Fields. Jim Hartson was concerned about the easement value of the proposed line; he felt it should be higher because of potential use. Jeff Wilhelmi wanted to know how this would affect him since he just recently purchased property and is proposing to build a home in the future. He also wanted to know the height of the power poles. Gary Ostrom stated the poles would be approximately 75 feet. **Conclude the Public Hearing:** Len Miller closed the public hearing. Harold Boverhuis questioned how land values were determined. Gary Ostrom explained that he will use current land values for agricultural land and residential land will be based on residential usage with input from appraisers if needed. Bev Weness was concerned that power lines could have an impact on property value based on her perspective as an Edina Realty representative. She stated that they were told to avoid power lines and railroad lines. Gary Ostrom stated that they tried to follow existing corridors and that power lines generally are not a problem on land value. Diagonally has a greater impact on property value than if a property line is followed. He stated market studies show that values are generally the same before and after a power line is installed, however, the "holding time" for the sale of property may be somewhat longer. He also stated that the noise from the power line is very low. Jim Hartson stated that he felt the future value was not being considered and that the County should hire an independent consultant to discuss Electric Magnetic Fields. Commissioner Miller closed the discussion. After further discussion a motion was made by Brian McAlister, seconded by Harold Boverhuis to recommend approval of CUP #562 because it is in accordance with Section 14-31 of the Mower County Code based on following findings of facts that the individual Planning Commission members prepared and will become part of the record.

- (a) That the conditional use will not be injurious to the use and enjoyment of other property in the immediate vicinity for the purposes already permitted, nor substantially diminish and impair property values within the immediate vicinity.

There would be little impact on health and safety as per Dr. Erdreich's presentation. They are also building to national codes for safety. The power line should have limited impact on people's enjoyment of their property. Great River Energy will also need an easement from property owners for the power line.

- (b) That the establishment of the conditional use will not impede the normal and orderly development and improvement of surrounding vacant properties for uses predominant in the area.

They are just installing poles and land can still be developed or farmed in accordance with County regulations.

- (c) That adequate utilities, access roads, drainage, and other necessary facilities have been or are being provided.

Great River Energy is a utility and will be able to use existing roads or acquire easements to install the line.

- (d) That adequate measures have been or will be taken to provide sufficient off-street parking and loading spaces to serve the proposed use.

There is no need for areas along the line for parking and loading spaces once the line is completed.

- (e) That adequate measures have been or will be taken to prevent or control offensive odor, fumes, dust, noise, and vibration, so that none of these will constitute a nuisance, and to control lighted signs and other lights in such a manner that no disturbance to neighboring properties will result.

There are no lights on the power line. There is no odor and there is limited noise level.

The following are conditions of Conditional Use Permit #562:

1. Permanent permit.
2. Secure necessary easements.

Roll Call

Myles Bendtsen – Yes

Harold Boverhuis - Yes

Brian McAlister – Yes

Vance Larson – Yes

Beverly Weness - No

Summary: 4 Yeas – 1 Nays. Motion passed 4-1. Chair, Leonard Miller does not vote.

It was stated that the County Board would be acting on the petition at the July 5th meeting at 1:30 p.m.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m. on a motion by Harold Boverhuis, seconded by Brian McAlister. The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted,



Daryl W. Franklin

Mower Co. Planning Director

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