

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-02

RESOLUTION

Submitted By:

Town Board of the Town of Seneca

Date Drafted:

July 15, 2026

**RESOLUTION STATING THE OPPOSITION OF THE TOWN OF SENECA TO
THE PROPOSED MARIBELL 765 KILOVOLT ELECTRIC TRANSMISSION
PROJECT DUE TO ENVIRONMENTAL, WILDLIFE, ECONOMIC, AND
COMMUNITY SENSITIVITY WITHIN THE DRIFTLESS AREA**

WHEREAS, Dairyland Power Cooperative, through the Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO), is proposing the construction of a 765-kilovolt electric transmission line extending from Marion, Minnesota to Bell Center, Wisconsin, commonly referred to as the MariBell Project, and identified as part of MISO Tranche 2.1; **and**,

WHEREAS, until September 2024, MISO Tranche 2.1 planning maps avoided the Driftless Area option for a more northerly route through the Xcel Energy territory. After years of planning otherwise, in just three months between September and December of 2024, a less direct route through the central Driftless Area was adopted and awarded without competitive bidding to a partnership of GridLiance and Dairyland Power Cooperative; **and**,

WHEREAS, the proposed MariBell Project route is intended to traverse areas in the Town of Seneca in Crawford County, Wisconsin and adjacent Townships and the Village of Bell Center; **and**,

WHEREAS, the Town of Seneca is located within the Driftless Area, a region characterized by steep and fragile topography, cold water streams, productive agricultural lands, extensive timber resources, landscapes that are unusually sensitive to disturbance from largescale linear infrastructure and karst geology—with the highest concentration of sinkholes of any town in Crawford County, Wisconsin; **and**,

WHEREAS, the proposed project is in proximity to the Upper Mississippi River National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, including Pool 9 of the Mississippi River, an area of national ecological significance; **and**,

WHEREAS, Pool 9 and adjoining blufflands provide critical habitat for nesting bald eagles and lie within a recognized tundra swan migration corridor, both of which are highly sensitive to habitat fragmentation, aerial obstructions, construction disturbance, and long-term landscape alteration; **and**,

WHEREAS, transmission lines of the 765-kilovolt class require wide permanent easements, tall structures, and ongoing vegetation management that result in substantial ground disturbance and may adversely affect wildlife behavior, nesting success, migratory patterns, and the ecological integrity of protected and sensitive areas; **and**,

WHEREAS, the construction and permanent presence of a 765-kilovolt transmission line may result in measurable reductions in property values for affected and adjacent landowners due to visual intrusion, limitations on land use within easements, loss of privacy and rural character, and perceived safety risks; **and**,

WHEREAS, reductions in assessed property values or changes in land classification associated with the proposed transmission corridor may lead to long-term loss of property tax revenue for the Town of Seneca, shifting the tax burden to other residents and constraining the Town's ability to fund essential local services and infrastructure; **and**,

WHEREAS, the proposed MariBell Project would require permanent clearing and perpetual maintenance of a broad transmission right-of-way, resulting in the irreversible loss of productive timberland, forest habitat, and associated ecological, economic, and carbon-sequestration benefits, **and**,

WHEREAS, the scenic blufflands, river corridors, forested landscapes, and undeveloped rural character of the Driftless Area are essential to tourism, outdoor recreation, and associated local business activity, and the introduction of large-scale transmission infrastructure may substantially diminish tourism appeal and result in long-term economic losses to the Town of Seneca and surrounding region; **and**,

WHEREAS, residents, landowners, and the electorate of the Town of Seneca have expressed significant concern regarding the cumulative environmental, agricultural, economic, scenic, and property-related impacts associated with the proposed MariBell Project; **and**,

WHEREAS, the Town of Seneca Board of Supervisors has a responsibility to represent the interests, welfare, and expressed concerns of the Town of Seneca's electorate and to communicate those concerns to state regulatory authorities;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Town of Seneca Board of Supervisors, on behalf of the electorate of the Town of Seneca, formally states its opposition to the proposed MariBell 765-kilavolt transmission project as currently proposed, due to the exceptional sensitivity of the Driftless Area and the unacceptable potential impacts on wildlife habitat, natural resources, agricultural, and timber lands, property values, the Town of Seneca's tax base, tourism revenues, and overall community character;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Seneca Town Board respectfully requests that the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin give careful and deliberate consideration of the Driftless Area, the presence of the Upper Mississippi River National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, and the formal concerns of affected local governments and residents during its review of the MariBell Project;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution be entered into the official records of the Town of Seneca and transmitted to:

- The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
- Dairyland Power Cooperative
- GridLiance Heartland, LLC
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- Any other state or regional agencies involved in the review of the MariBell Project



Tom Kearns, **Town Chairman**



Don Lenzendorf, **Town Supervisor**



Dan Snyder, **Town Supervisor**