

RESOLUTION NO. 38-26

SYNOPSIS: Address Siting of Proposed BECI Transmission Line

INTRODUCED BY: Executive Committee

To the Honorable Board of Supervisors of Columbia County:

WHEREAS, Columbia County, Wisconsin, is defined by its exceptional natural beauty, pristine rural character, productive farms and agricultural landscapes, and recreational ecotourism and agritourism; and,

WHEREAS, Columbia County contains the scenic and ecologically important waters of the Wisconsin River, Lake Wisconsin, and other priceless aquatic resources; and,

WHEREAS, Columbia County contains ecological treasures that include the popular tourist destinations of the Gibraltar Rock State Natural Area and the historic Ice Age National Scenic Trail, among many others; and,

WHEREAS, Columbia County's agricultural and agritourism economy depends on undisturbed natural productive farmland, livestock operations, and regenerative farming systems that would be adversely affected by land fragmentation, easement restrictions, soil disruption, and concerns regarding electromagnetic field (EMF) exposure to livestock and people; and,

WHEREAS, Columbia County's Comprehensive Plan protects its rural and scenic character and its natural, cultural, and agricultural resources while planning for and directing necessary and reasonable growth; and,

WHEREAS, following the January, 2025, Presidential Executive Order 14154 ("Unleashing American Energy") and the February, 2025, Federal Register notice entitled "Removal of National Environmental Policy Act Implementing Regulations," the federal Council on Environmental Quality rescinded rules implementing the National Environment Policy Act that had included strict requirements for public notice and comment and environmental review; and,

WHEREAS, in April, 2025, Presidential Executive Order 14270 ("Zero-Based Regulatory Budgeting to Unleash American Energy") directed 10 federal agencies with energy-related oversight to initiate processes to sunset many or all of their existing regulations; and,

WHEREAS, Midcontinent Grid Solutions (MGS) has proposed a 765-kilovolt (kV) high-voltage transmission line project with suggested preliminary routes that would slice directly through the communities, farms, ecological and tourist resources, and generally pristine greenspaces throughout Columbia County; and,

WHEREAS, the construction of massive industrial transmission towers and lines would require extensive clearing, construction corridors, and long-term maintenance that would fragment wildlife habitat, disrupt agricultural lands, and permanently threaten the viability of agricultural production, ecotourism, agritourism, property values, groundwater safety, and other important health and economic foundation of Columbia County; and,

WHEREAS, Wisconsin Statutes § 1.12 (6)(a)-(d) states regarding transmission lines that: "[I]t is the policy of this state that, to the greatest extent feasible that is consistent with economic and engineering considerations, reliability of the electric system, and protection of the environment, the following corridors should be utilized in the following order of priority: (a) Existing utility corridors. (b) Highway and railroad corridors. (c) Recreational trails, to the extent that the facilities may be constructed below ground and that the facilities do not significantly impact environmentally sensitive areas. (d) New corridors"; and,

55 WHEREAS, legislation has been proposed in the Wisconsin Senate (Senate Bill 1125)
56 and may be taken up in the next legislative session to further limit the siting options for mega
57 transmission systems to land already dedicated to utility infrastructure or to high-voltage direct
58 current systems or other underground facilities located with an existing high-voltage
59 transmission line or within the right- of-way of an interstate highway, a U.S. numbered highway,
60 a state trunk highway, or a railroad;
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63 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Columbia County declares the
64 preservation of the natural beauty, rural character and agricultural economy to be of significant
65 importance and strongly opposes the proposed greenfield routes for MGS's BECI powerline
66 siting as too great a risk to the county's unique, fragile, and economically essential
67 environmental and aesthetic resources.
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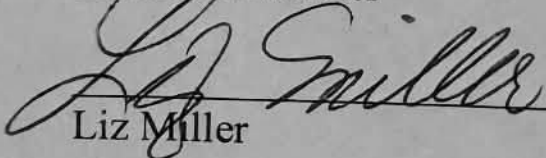
69 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Columbia County expects and will continue to
70 participate and insist that MGS and the Wisconsin Public Service Commission (PSC) will
71 determine a final route that is consistent with existing and proposed state law by using existing
72 major utility infrastructure corridors.
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74 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Columbia County Clerk is hereby directed to
75 provide a copy of this resolution to the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin
76 Department of Natural Resources, the National Ice Age Trail Alliance, all municipal clerks
77 within Columbia County, the Wisconsin Governor's Office, all members of the Wisconsin State
78 Senate and Assembly who represent any part of Columbia County, all US Senators and House
79 Representatives who represent any part of Columbia County, and all MGS BECI project
80 managers whose contact information can be obtained.
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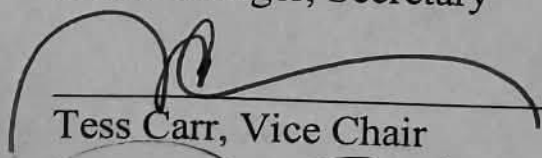
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84 Fiscal Note: N/A

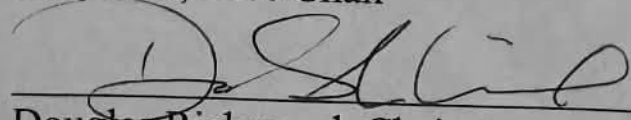
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86 Fiscal Impact: N/A
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90 Susan Schweitzer

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93 Liz Miller

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96 Steve Balsiger, Secretary

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99 Tess Carr, Vice Chair

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102 Douglas Richmond, Chair

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE