

February 25, 2018

Dan Wolf
Executive Director
MN Public Utility Commission
121 7th Place East, Suite 350
St. Paul, MN 55101

Subject: Regarding PUC Docket 17-410- Freeborn Wind Farm

Mr. Wolf:

I am addressing you as a person of interest in the permitting of the Freeborn Wind Farm. I use the term ‘person of interest’ consciously because my observations, perspectives, and opinions are based on several roles I play within the community and project. Invenergy LLC has not asked me to vocalize my personal support for this project; to the contrary – I asked for their permission to do so.

First, above all else, I am a farm wife and mother to two young children – the eldest of which I hope will be the fifth generation to farm on our century farm ground in Freeborn County. Through this lens, I view the challenge of farming and the changing rural landscape as a reality of our future as a farm family. I live on an acreage that we purchased in 2009 when our son was newly born (he is soon to turn 9-years-old) and while I was fresh in my return to Albert Lea, MN. Born and raised in the area, I was enjoying a successful business career in the Twin Cities when I had a change of heart; and decided that my hometown was where I wanted, and was ready, to be. At the same time, I fell in love with a farm boy from the small town of Hartland, MN, near my home town of Albert Lea. After we married, we purchased a small acreage near my husband’s family homestead. The acreage hosts a home built by my husband’s grandfather in 1981 and is conveniently situated across the field from the original farm homestead occupied by my in-laws. We did so in an attempt to keep the home in the family and for ease of farming for my husband. Since we moved to rural Freeborn County the landscape and scenic corn/soybean view from our five-acre paradise has changed immensely. Where we once overlooked farm land, we now overlook a 120-turbine wind farm (nearest turbine 1.47 miles away), an anhydrous transfer station (at the end of our 1/4-mile-long driveway) and a hog barn (approximately one mile south). When I look out over our landscape today versus eight years ago I am reminded of the resilience and ambition of today’s farm generation. I recall one of the first times that our son, John Paul, stepped outside and experienced the aroma of a southerly wind. The air was fresh with the scent of hog manure. He pinched his nose and remarked negatively about the smell. My husband, who was raised on a farrow-to-finish hog farm that closed up when hog prices shot downward in the mid-2000s, took him by the shoulders and, at eye-level, taught him a lesson that I carry with me still to this day. He said, “John Paul, you may smell hog manure – but, I smell a farmer doing what he needs to do to feed his family.” We, as a farm family, appreciate that pigs need to be raised to provide pork, that anhydrous needs to be stored to meet the needs of row crop farmers, and that power needs to be generated for all of those that want to plug things in and enjoy the benefit of electricity. We currently farm around turbines on rented farm ground in the Bent Tree Wind Farm. I wait under them to deliver meals, seed, and parts. We are aware of the impact on our ground, and we supported them. For these reasons, as a farm wife and mother, I support the project.

Secondly, I address you through my lens as a local business owner. I own and operate Good Steward Consulting in downtown Albert Lea, MN from an historical building my husband and I purchased in the Winter of 2016. I address you as someone who has economically benefited due to this development opportunity in Freeborn County. Since the project has been in development, I have taken on several responsibilities including the public outreach and communication of the project – both online and here on the ground. Due to the buy-local commitment of this developer, I have taken on a substantial contract. Once introduced to the project and up to speed on the development, Invenergy LLC terminated their contract with an out-of-state provider and brought their business here, to the local economy for these services. I now have additional staff members working on the public outreach and communication of this project under my purview. This opportunity for the county and our state to generate clean

energy has equated to new positions at my company –more families reaping the economic benefits of wind energy here in Minnesota. For these reasons, as a local business owner, I support this project.

Next, I address you as a prominent community volunteer. I serve as a board member of the Albert Lea FFA Alumni Association, a board member of the Albert Lea Education Foundation, President of the Experience Albert Lea Board, and co-chair of the Save Our Hospital movement in Freeborn County. I met the Senior Project Developer, Dan Litchfield, while representing the Shellrock River Watershed District at a Freeborn County Commissioner meeting last summer. Dan was a new face among several familiar faces at the meeting. I introduced myself and to my shock, Dan told me that aside from the participating landowners and a few key leaders, I was one of the friendliest people he had met in our area. Some may take this comment as a compliment but I assure you – I did not. Within all of my volunteer positions, I strive to position Albert Lea and Freeborn County as a progressive and welcoming community. This comment made me question every position I held. To have a development opportunity meeting such resistance in our community made me feel defeated and as though I was working toward a stated – but un-believed-in – goal for our area. Those in our county commonly attest that we want growth, opportunity, and economic viability but the actions of a few are stifling that at the cost of growth, opportunity, and economic viability for all. This project stands to benefit our county immensely. With the influx of roughly 200 construction jobs, the addition of 10 full-time operations and maintenance positions, and an economic impact of \$3.5-\$4.0 Million each year for our local counties – and, very importantly, I use the term ‘our local counties’ intentionally; Freeborn County, MN and Worth County, IA share an economy and several resources, we are not severed by a state border, we share in the opportunities and limitations of this state-line boundary. The Freeborn Wind Farm project stands to stoke our local economies. For these reasons, as a believer in our ability to sustain a healthy local economy, I support this project.

Lastly, I address you as a Minnesotan. I take great pride in living in the land of 10,000 lakes. Our government here in Minnesota has a stated renewable energy goal of 50-by-30 (50% renewable energy by 2030). To achieve this goal, we can either rely on the generation of renewable energy in other states – to the benefit of their local economies – or, we can contribute locally and give of our great wind resources to meet our own state’s need and for the benefit of our local economies. As you’ve heard, I believe in our responsibility to our own success on many levels. It’s not up to others to meet our needs, it is up to us. Too often I have heard the statement, “I support renewable energy, *just not in my backyard.*” I sincerely believe in the strength and commitment of the Minnesota Public Utility Commission’s mission. I hope that you will stand strong in supporting wind development right here in greatest state of our nation. For this reason, I, as a Minnesotan, support this project.

Sincerely,

Mariah Lynne
67498 310th Street, Hartland, MN 56007
Farm Wife & Mother
Owner, Good Steward Consulting
Local Volunteer
Minnesotan