Official Proceedings of the Stutsman County Commission— January 9, 2025

At 7:00 p.m., Chairman Bergquist called the special meeting of the Stutsman County Commission to order. Mike Hansen, Amanda Hastings, Chad Wolsky, Levi Taylor, and Jerry Bergquist answered roll.

Jerry Bergquist, Commission Chairman, stated that the purpose of this meeting is to receive public input and to answer questions regarding the ordinance and that the commission had received 16 written responses from individuals and companies. Bergquist stated that it is not the intent of the commission to decide tonight, but the conversations regarding the ordinance will be part of the agenda for a later meeting. Bergquist stated that if someone had already submitted a written comment, they are asked not to speak again as the commission is looking to hear from individuals who have not had an opportunity to be heard. Individuals wishing to speak must be signed in, must make their case in 2 minutes or less, and should not repeat information or opinions that have previously been shared.

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Hastings, seconded by Wolsky. Motion carried.

Levi Taylor, County Commissioner, reviewed the proposed zoning ordinance and suggested amendments. Taylor stated that Stutsman County does not currently have an ordinance for setbacks and that the Public Service Commission's guidelines have been adopted, which is currently at 500 feet from inhabited rural residences, which was proposed by the Zoning Committee.

Bergquist reminded those in attendance that there will be a Q&A portion at the end of the meeting for individuals and utility companies who have and have not submitted written opinions.

Leon Westerhausen, Stutsman County Resident, presented his concerns with the proposed transmission lines. Westerhausen stated that the line would be 500 feet from his dwelling which would be close enough to be noisy, ugly, and a nuisance to his residence. Westerhausen proposed an alternative route that would be ½ mile away from his property.

Mary Jane Westerhausen, Stutsman County Resident, stated that the future needs to be considered rather than just focusing on what is happening right now. Westerhausen presented her concerns with future possibilities of oil and wind energy coming in, the devaluation of current properties, and that she believes 500 feet from dwellings is way too close.

David Steele, Planning & Zoning Board Member, presented information from the Planning & Zoning Meeting and believes OtterTail seemed unprepared and that he did not receive all the information on the day of the meeting and that it was 1-2 weeks late. He stated that he did not see the OtterTail map until after the meeting.

Darin Orr, Stutsman County Resident, believes OtterTail and the Planning & Zoning Committee had ample time to address issues that had been presented. Orr stated that the original proposal was for 1 mile but felt that was too close and that property owner rights are being infringed on. Orr stated that the Commission and the public are not informed enough about this issue.

Mary Neva, Stutsman County Resident, stated that she does not want a tower in her yard and proposed implementing updated wiring in the current structures. Neva stated that she was not aware of this proposal and feels that the public has not been properly informed and that the project hasn't been researched properly.

Char Jung, Stutsman County Resident, stated that she believes these lines are primarily going to be used for cryptocurrency, and would like to know exactly what these lines will be used for.

Todd Langston, OtterTail, stated that this was not a project proposed by OtterTail or MDU, but Midcontinent Independent System Operator, Inc. (MISO). The proposed line between Jamestown and Ellendale is to complete the loop to be able to service customers in North Dakota, Minnesota, and South Dakota. Langston stated he was unaware of the exact percentage of the electric service going to cryptocurrency bases due to the system being connected.

Kris Koch, Ottertail, stated that 5% of the line's total load can power Jamestown and is intended to bring resilient, reliable power to the area. Koch stated that the current lines can handle heavy ice and wind conditions in comparison to the older lines. Koch stated the current lines could not be supported by just replacing them with larger conductors and that upgrading lines would have a minimal effect in comparison to replacing them.

Rob Frank, MDU, stated that Applied Digital chose Ellendale due to the stranded destination and that there is not enough power and that the energy able to be consumed in Ellendale is cheaper due to the lack of transmission and that raising energy rates there will even out the rest of the grid.

Leon Westerhausen spoke again and asked Langston where power is being generated. Langston stated that power is being transported from coal fields. Westerhausen does not believe Jamestown will benefit from this project, but Minnesota will due to solar and wind energy implementation. Langston stated that all customers within MISO will have raised rates.

Tim Lippert, Stutsman County Resident, stated his frustrations with questions not being answered properly and it is his opinion that an attempt to move wind energy out with the use of the implemented lines. Lippert stated that an application to raise rates has already been filed with the Public Service Commission.

Koch clarified that utility companies go through the Public Service Commission to ask for rate increases, but MISO has an open market that is regulated based on demand, generation, and distribution for energy.

Taylor asked what the alternative is if the line cannot be put in. Koch used the example of the Christmas 2023 winter storm when the source of power to Jamestown was lost so OtterTail had to run Jamestown on old peaking plants that were not able to support all customers and could only supply residences in the Jamestown area. The addition of this line would add a third source meaning if the proposed line had been in place, Jamestown wouldn't have been idled on power usage.

Orr stated that the plant north of Jamestown is using 100 kw which would be the equivalent of powering a skyscraper every half mile from Jamestown to Ellendale. Frank clarified that the plant is not generating power but distributing it.

Bergquist asked what began the MISO project, Langston stated that they're looking about 20 years into the future to determine future needs across 15 states. Westerhausen asked where power is being generated. Langston stated that power has been generated across all MISO's project map with 41% of that power being generated by gas.

Pat Rindy asked if the Public Service Commission can override Stutsman County's ruling and if they've been receptive to other public input. Bergquist stated that they can override the ruling and currently there is no precedence for a 2,600 foot set back in North Dakota.

Commissioner Hastings thanked everyone in attendance and at 8:03 p.m. a motion to adjourn the special county commission meeting was made by Taylor seconded by Hastings. Motion carried.

ATTEST:

Jessica Alonge Auditor/COO	Jerry Bergquist Commission Chairman