PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Date: October 27, 2026 9:00 a.m.

Place: Commissioners Room, Courthouse, Caledonia, MN

Members Present: Cindy Wright, Eric Johnson, Kurt Zehnder, Robert Schuldt, and Greg Myhre

Others Present: County Coordinator Brent Parker; Financial Assistance Director Karen Kohlmeyer, County Recorder Michelle Werner, Environmental Services Director Amelia Meiners, Finance Director Carol Lapham,

Presiding: Chairperson Myhre

Call to order.

Pledge of Allegiance.

Motion was made by Commissioner Zehnder, seconded by Commissioner Schuldt, motion carried to approve the agenda.

Motion was made by Commissioner Wright, seconded by Commissioner Johnson, motion carried to approve the October 20, 2026, meeting minutes.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

APPOINTMENTS

None

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Myhre requested that item 3, the proposed hiring of Rita Figueroa, be removed from the consent agenda and placed under action items for separate discussion. Commissioner Schuldt moved, Commissioner Johnson seconded, motion carried to approve the consent agenda as amended. Approved items included:

1) Consider approving the re-appointment of Managers Brad Felten and Arlyn Pohlman to the Crooked Creek Watershed District for a three (3) year term to expire on 11/30/29. Their current terms end November 30, 2026.

2) Consider approving an Exempt Permit for Minnesota Lawful Gambling Application LG220 for Gopher State Sportsman's Club for gambling (raffle) activities to be conducted at Gopher

State Sportsman's Club in La Crescent Township with a drawing to be held on February 6, 2027, with no waiting period.

3) Hire Rita Figueroa as an Environmental Services / Surveyor Tech Clerk with a start date of November 16th (B22 - Step 2) (Moved to Action Item)

4) Review and approve payments.

REQUEST APPROVAL FOR PAYMENT

2026/10/27 COMMISSIONER WARRANTS:

VENDOR NAME	AMOUNT
COMPUTER FORENSIC SERVICES LLC	48,301.41
HILLER COMMERCIAL FLOORS	36,660.66
MILESTONE MATERIALS	15,197.57
PAMELA ANN LARSON VAGTS	2,910.00
SECURITAS TECHNOLOGY CORPORATIO	5,913.00
SELCO	50,820.75
WIEBKE TIRE CO	2,433.88
	162,237.27
16 VENDORS PAID LESS THAN $2000.00	8,725.59
	170,962.86
PUBLIC HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES	6,846.42
	177,809.28

ACTION ITEMS

File No. 1 – The Board considered the hiring of Rita Figueroa as Environmental Services / Surveyor Tech Clerk, effective November 16, 2026, at classification B22, Step 2. At Commissioner Myhre's request, the hiring was considered as an action item rather than under the consent agenda. Coordinator Parker and Environmental Services staff explained that the position combines clerical and administrative functions supporting Environmental Services and the County Surveyor following prior staffing changes. Responsibilities include public hearing and permitting administration, front-counter and telephone service, survey-related clerical work, data requests, and assistance with processing and compliance follow-up. Commissioners discussed staffing levels, prior Personnel Committee review and vacancy justification, the previously approved competitive search, public service needs, and operational efficiencies. Commissioner Wright requested that vacancy justification materials and Personnel Committee review information be included with future hiring items. Motion was made by Commissioner Wright, seconded by Commissioner Johnson, to approve the hiring as presented. Motion carried, with Commissioner Myhre voting opposed.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Coordinator Parker reported on the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) District 9 meeting held October 26 and reminded commissioners to return strategic planning priority materials by the next meeting and to review proposed Board procedures. Parker also discussed potentially rotating the starting district for roll-call votes and noted the recent department head meeting.

Commissioners reported on the AMC District 9 meeting and department head meeting. Topics included opportunities for intercounty shared services, particularly consolidated dispatch and regional service arrangements; potential efficiencies and implementation costs; comparisons of county preliminary levies and tax bases; state mandates and county funding responsibilities; and legislative concerns about SNAP administrative costs. Commissioners also noted presentations regarding workforce development and cooperative service delivery.

The Board discussed the proposed Gopher to Badger 765-kV transmission line, including the project schedule, route review and public comment opportunities, state permitting authority, environmental review, potential construction impacts on county and township roads, landowner concerns, and the County's previously stated objections. Commissioners requested further discussion at an upcoming meeting regarding the project timeline, unanswered questions, and potential additional County comments to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission. No formal action was taken.

Coordinator Parker provided an update on the license center privatization process. County representatives had requested a status update from the state but had not received a response. The license center continues to offer service during portions of most weekdays with assistance from Preston DMV staff and county staff; Kelly Zielinski has received state authorization to issue licenses. A further inquiry to the state was anticipated.

CLOSING PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Commissioner Zehnder, seconded by Commissioner Johnson, motion unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 9:48 a.m. The next meeting would be a regular meeting on August 25thth, 2026.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
HOUSTON COUNTY, MINNESOTA

By: _____
Greg Myhre, Chairperson

Attest: _____
Brent Parker, Coordinator

BOARD OF COMMISSIONER MEETING
AGENDA REQUEST FORM

Historic Courthouse
304 S Marshall Street
Caledonia, MN 55921

Board Meeting Date: Nov 3rd, 2026
Date Request Submitted: October 29th, 2026
Submitted By (Name and Title): Brent Parker, County Coordinator

Please fill in item(s) requested for agenda in correct category below. Add numbers as needed.

Appointment Request:

Consent Agenda Request:

1) Approve Hire of Samantha Schalow as a Home and Community Based Services Social Worker (C41, Step 2), effective December 7th, 2026 (Page 5, Parker)
2) Approve the Hire of Linda Johnson as a 67-day Election Judge, effective 10/31/26.

Action Item Request:

Discussion Item:

1) Gopher to Badger 765-kV Transmission Project: Project Status, County Concerns, Regulatory Authority, and Potential Future Board Action.

Background/additional information can be typed below and/or included with request:

Note: Please submit all agenda request forms and supporting documentation to the BOC email at **BOC@HoCoMN.gov** by noon the Thursday before each BOC meeting to be included on the agenda. If your department needs a resolution number, please ask for the number ahead of time via the BOC email. Resolutions should be emailed in word format so they can be easily copied and pasted into the meeting minutes. Departments are responsible for scheduling their own public hearings, but please email the BOC to verify a date and time is available prior to advertising the hearing to ensure we do not double book times. Questions regarding agenda requests and board meetings can be sent to the BOC email. Thank you!

Human Resources
304 South Marshall Street - Room 206
Caledonia, Minnesota 55921
Phone: (507) 725-5822
Fax: (507) 725-5550

Justification to Fill Vacancy Form

Department: Public Health

Position Title: HCBS Case Manager

Position Classification / Band: C41

Date Vacancy Occurred:

Section 1: Vacancy Details

1. Reason for Vacancy (check one):
   - ☐ Resignation
   - ☐ Retirement
   - ☐ Termination
   - ☐ Internal Promotion/Transfer
   - ■ New Position Previously Approved
   - ☐ Other:

2. Is this a budgeted position?
   - ■ Yes In the 2027 budget.
   - ☐ No (explain funding source)

Section 2: Operational Impact

1. What essential services or functions are impacted by this vacancy?

   Case managers on the under 65 team currently have caseload averages of 60-70, while there is not a mandated staff to client ratio it was mentioned during our DHS lead agency review that typical caseloads are 50 or less given the additional duties our case managers have- i.e. intake, initial assessments, and a waiver case mix. High caseloads do not allow for adequate case management, create excessive wait-lists and attribute to staff burnout and can jeopardize compliance standards for mandated services.

2. What risks exist if this position is not filled (e.g., compliance, safety, service delivery delays)?

   Our MNChoices wait-list has been as long as 5 months over the last the year, case managers are doing their best to maintain current client lists and take on new clients as they can. When caseloads are too high it is difficult to meet compliance standards, such as reporting timelines, visit requirements, keep up with DHS policy changes and meetings, etc. In addition it has a negative impact on revenue captured because there is less time to complete case management per client.

Human Resources
304 South Marshall Street - Room 206
Caledonia, Minnesota 55921
Phone: (507) 725-5822
Fax: (507) 725-5550

3. Can these duties be absorbed by current staff?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☒ No

   Explain Why: We are currently absorbing what we can, our wait-list gets longer and longer. Caseload cannot continue to grow.

Section 3: Alternatives Considered

1. Have you explored restructuring or redistribution of duties?
   - ☒ Yes
   - ☐ No

   Explain Why: We have shifted what we can to our case-aide but she also supports family health.
2. Could this position be reduced to part-time, seasonal, or contract?
   - ☐ Yes
   - ☒ No

   Explain Why: Caseloads are consistently high and onces established they are assigned long-term

Section 4: Financial Considerations

1. Estimated annual cost (salary & benefits): $121,741.06
2. Funding source / budget line: LTSS database
3. Will overtime, service delays, or other costs increase if left vacant?
   - ☒ Yes
   - ☐ No

   Explain Why: See previous responses. We are keeping overtime to a minimum but it has occurred because requirements and timelines need to be met.

Section 5: Department Head Recommendation

Provide a summary justification for why this position should be filled:

This is a much needed position- trying to stay in compliance and up-to-date with DHS requirements while maintaining a large caseload is impacting current services, creating a long wait-list, leading to staff burnout and impacting revenue. With smaller case sizes staff will have capacity to maintain case management requirements and meet the needs of clients and the people served and ensure compliance.

Department Head Signature: Jordan Knoke Date: 10/28/26

Submit Form

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Date: July 7, 2026 9:00 a.m.

Place: Commissioners Room, Courthouse, Caledonia, MN

Members Present: Cindy Wright, Eric Johnson, Robert Schuldt, and Greg Myhre

Others Present: Interim Auditor/Treasurer Polly Heberlein, Fillmore County Journal Reporter Charlene Selbee, The Caledonia Argus Associate Editor Kaita Gorsuch, Finance Director Carol Lapham, Coordinator Brent Parker, EDA Director & Coordinator Support Allison Wagner, Engineer Brian Pogodzinski, Environmental Services Director Amelia Meiners, Public Health Director Jordan Knoke, Public Health Educator Bri Ceaser, Interim Attorney Suzanne Bublitz, Financial Assistance Director Karen Kohlmeyer, Emergency Management Director Mark Olson, John Pugleasa, and John Haines

Presiding: Chairperson Myhre

Call to order.

Pledge of Allegiance.

Wagner said a few last-minute items had been added to the agenda including: declaring a state of emergency for conditions resulting from the severe storms that had occurred the week prior, final acceptance of the airport fencing project, and accepting a resignation and appointing a Commissioner to serve on the Semcac board. Motion was made by Commissioner Johnson, seconded by Commissioner Wright, motion unanimously carried to approve the agenda with the additional items.

Motion was made by Commissioner Wright, seconded by Commissioner Schuldt, motion unanimously carried to approve the meeting minutes from June 23, 2026.

Public Comment:

John Haines from Houston said a Commissioner had made a comment he wanted to address. He said he had looked in old college textbooks and read to the commissioners the definition of sand. Haines asked for a moratorium on sand mines. He asked what the hurry for applications was. He said the County should define active sand mines.

APPOINTMENTS

None.

CONSENT AGENDA

The Commissioners discussed a new position that would be added to the Public Health office with Public Health Director Knoke and Coordinator Parker. Public Health Director Knoke said programs had a four to five month wait list as the department was getting two to four new referrals each week. New State requirements including waiver changes and fraud waste and abuse changes were difficult for staff with already full caseloads to keep up with. A portion of the position would be reimbursed by the State. Commissioner Wright moved, Commissioner Schuldt seconded, motion unanimously carried to approve the consent agenda. Approved items are below.

1) Transfer Michelle Burt to a 1 FTE Environmental Services Specialist (B24, Step 2), July 8th, 2026.
2) Transfer Leigh Goetzinger to a 1 FTE Child Support Officer (B24, Step 3), July 8th, 2026.
3) Hire Sarah Brown as a 1 FTE Child Support Officer (B24, Step 2), effective August 3rd, 2026.
4) Hire Alyssa Boardman as a 1 FTE Eligibility Worker (B24, Step 3), effective July 27th, 2026.
5) Approve a competitive search for 1 FTE Financial Assistance, Child Support Enforcement Aide.
6) Accept resignation from Sue Felten Effective July 7th, 2026, with thanks for her 1 year of service.
7) Approve a competitive search for 1 FTE Public Health, Home and Community Based Services Social Worker.
8) Review and approve payments. Payments are below.

REVIEW LICENSE CENTER
PAYMENTS

2026/06/26 AUDITOR WARRANTS:

VENDOR NAME	AMOUNT
HOUSTON COUNTY TREASURER	84,539.51
	84,539.51
3 VENDORS PAID LESS THAN $2000.00	1,215.24
	85,754.75

REQUEST APPROVAL FOR PAYMENT

2026/07/07 COMMISSIONER WARRANTS:

REQUEST APPROVAL FOR PAYMENT

2026/11/03 COMMISSIONER WARRANTS:

VENDOR NAME	AMOUNT
ADVANCED CORRECTIONAL HEALTHCAR	8,355.70
BKC CONSTRUCTION LLC	589,419.77
CALEDONIA OIL CO INC	2,260.00
CALEDONIA/CITY OF	10,049.29
FARRELL EQUIPMENT & SUPPLY CO INC	2,409.99
LIBERTY TIRE RECYCLING LLC	4,344.50
MICRO TECHNOLOGY SERVICES INC	2,995.00
MILESTONE MATERIALS	54,731.87
OFFICE OF MNIT SERVICES	5,853.05
SOLDO CONSULTING PC	3,753.75
STONEBROOKE ENGINEERING INC	6,964.89
WS TRUCKING & CONSTRUCTION LLC	10,422.50
	701,560.31
27 VENDORS PAID LESS THAN $2000.00	13,044.95
	714,605.26
PUBLIC HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES	30,629.40
	745,234.66

30

HOUSTON COUNTY

BOARD OF COMMISSIONER MEETING
AGENDA REQUEST FORM

Historic Courthouse
304 S Marshall Street
Caledonia, MN 55921

Board Meeting Date: **November 3, 2026**
Date Request Submitted: **October 22, 2026**

Submitted By (Name and Title): Brian Pogodzinski, County Engineer

Please fill in item(s) requested for agenda in correct category below. Add numbers as needed.

Appointment Request:

Consent Agenda Request:

Action Item Request:

1) Consider approving Resolution #26-30 to provide a letter of support for the City of La Crescent's pursuit of Local Road Improvement Program (LRIP) funds for the reconstruction of Main Street between between Walnut Street Street and County State Aid Highway 29 (Elm St).

2) Consider approving Resolution #26-31 to provide a letter of support for the City of La Crescent's pursuit of 2026-2027 Active Transportation funding from MnDot for the pedestrian improvement projects.

Discussion Item:

1)

Background/additional information can be typed below and/or included with request:

Note: Please submit all agenda request forms and supporting documentation to the BOC email at **BOC@HoCoMN.gov** by noon the Thursday before each BOC meeting to be included on the agenda. If your department needs a resolution number, please ask for the number ahead of time via the BOC email. Resolutions should be emailed in word format so they can be easily copied and pasted into the meeting minutes. Departments are responsible for scheduling their own public hearings, but please email the BOC to verify a date and time is available prior to advertising the hearing to ensure we do not double book times. Questions regarding agenda requests and board meetings can be sent to the BOC email. Thank you!

RESOLUTION NO. 26-30

RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FOR THE CITY OF LA CRESCENT PURSUIT OF 2026 LOCAL ROAD IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM FUNDING FROM MnDOT FOR THE MAIN STREET RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT

NOVEMBER 3, 2026

WHEREAS, up to $50 million in Local Road Improvement Program (LRIP) funding is available for eligible projects, and

WHEREAS, the Main Street Reconstruction project in the City of La Crescent includes reconstructing Main Street between Walnut Street and County State Aid Highway 29 (Elm St), and

WHEREAS, the Main Street Reconstruction project is regionally significant in that it supports adjacent economic development and business retentions, and connects the City's central business district to the County State Aid Highway, and

WHEREAS, the LRIP project may include installation of sidewalks and trials adjacent to county highways in coordination with Houston County, and

WHEREAS, the City of La Crescent fully understands that it is responsible for all costs not covered by LRIP funding, and

WHEREAS, the City of La Crescent agrees to maintain such improvements for the lifetime of the improvements.

WHEREAS, the Local Road Improvement Program (LRIP) administered by the Minnesota Department of Transportation makes available up to $1,500,000 to apply towards projects on local roads that are regionally significant, result in safety improvements, address transportation deficiencies, and contribute to economic development, and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS AS FOLLOWS; that

> The County supports the City of La Crescent's pursuit of Local Road Improvement Program (LRIP) funds for the reconstruction of Main Street between Walnut Street Street and County State Aid Highway 29 (Elm St).

*****CERTIFICATION*****

STATE OF MINNESOTA
COUNTY OF HOUSTON

I, Brent Parker, Houston County Coordinator, within and for said county do hereby certify that he foregoing resolution is a true and correct copy of a resolution adopted by the Houston County Board of Commissioners at the session dated November 3, 2026 as shown by the minutes of the meeting in my possession.

Signature:_____
Houston County Coordinator

CORPORATE SEAL /OR/ _____
NOTARY PUBLIC

My Commission Expires_____

RESOLUTION NO. 26-31

RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FOR THE CITY OF LA CRESCENT PURSUIT OF 2026-2027 ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION FUNDING FROM MnDOT FOR THE PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

NOVEMBER 3, 2026

WHEREAS, up to $4.8 million in Active Transportation funding is available in greater Minnesota, with a minimum of $50,000 and cap of $600,000 for each project, and

WHEREAS, the City of La Crescent adopted an Active Transportation Action Plan in 2026 and identified projects for implementation which include sidewalk infill projects throughout the city to buildout a connected sidewalk system, and

WHEREAS, the active transportation infrastructure project may include installation of sidewalks adjacent to county highways in coordination with Houston County, and

WHEREAS, the City of La Crescent fully understands that it is responsible for all costs not covered by Active Transportation funding, and

WHEREAS, the City of La Crescent agrees to maintain such improvements for the lifetime of the improvements.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS AS FOLLOWS; that

1. The County supports the construction of the projects, including the portion within County right of way.
2. The County supports the City of La Crescent's pursuit of Active Transportation grant funds.

*****CERTIFICATION*****

STATE OF MINNESOTA
COUNTY OF HOUSTON

I, Brent Parker, Houston County Coordinator, within and for said county do hereby certify that he foregoing resolution is a true and correct copy of a resolution adopted by the Houston County Board of Commissioners at the session dated November 3, 2026 as shown by the minutes of the meeting in my possession.

Signature:_____
Houston County Coordinator

CORPORATE SEAL /OR/ _____
NOTARY PUBLIC

My Commission Expires_____

RESOLUTION NO. 26-08

A RESOLUTION OF THE HOUSTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OPPOSING THE PROPOSED 765 kV "GOPHER TO BADGER LINK" TRANSMISSION PROJECT WITHIN HOUSTON COUNTY, MINNESOTA

WHEREAS, Northern States Power Company, doing business as Xcel Energy, and Dairyland Power Cooperative (collectively, "Applicants") have filed a Joint Application with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission ("MPUC") for a Certificate of Need (MPUC Docket No. ET3, E002/CN-25-121) for the Gopher to Badger Link Project, which includes approximately 105 miles of 765 kV/161 kV double-circuit transmission line extending to the Minnesota/Wisconsin border and a new three-circuit 161 kV switching station proposed within Houston County; and

WHEREAS, According to the Application, Segment 2 structures would typically range from approximately 150 to 199 feet in height, spaced approximately 1,200 to 1,500 feet apart, and require up to an approximately 250-foot-wide right-of-way; and

WHEREAS, The Application estimates total project costs between approximately $979 million and $1.273 billion (2024 dollars), and states the facilities would be placed in service by the end of 2034; and

WHEREAS, The Application states that the Project was approved by MISO as part of its Long-Range Transmission Planning (LRTP) Tranche 2.1 portfolio and is designed to address regional reliability, economic, and generation transition objectives; and

WHEREAS, Minnesota Statutes § 216B.243 and Minnesota Rules Chapter 7849 require that a Certificate of Need may only be granted if, by a preponderance of the evidence, the proposed facility will provide benefits to society in a manner compatible with protecting the natural and socioeconomic environments, including human health, and that the project will comply with relevant local policies and regulations; and

WHEREAS, Houston County has adopted its Comprehensive Land Use Plan by ordinance, which recognizes:

1. The cultural and economic importance of agriculture,
2. The preservation of scenic bluffs, valleys, and natural landscapes,
3. The protection of environmentally sensitive areas,
4. The priority of natural resource protection over large-scale infrastructure expansion; and

WHEREAS, Houston County lies within Minnesota's Blufflands and Driftless Area, characterized by steep slopes, karst topography, trout streams, agricultural production lands, tourism-based economies, and significant scenic resources; and

WHEREAS, The proposed Project would introduce the largest alternating current transmission voltage currently operating in the United States (765 kV) into Houston County, including a double-circuit configuration with a 161 kV line beneath the 765 kV circuit; and

WHEREAS, The Application acknowledges potential impacts including electric and magnetic fields (EMF), noise, corona discharge, agricultural disruption, and environmental impacts, but long-term localized effects on Houston County's agricultural economy, property values, and tourism-dependent landscape remain disputed and unresolved; and

WHEREAS, Houston County residents, landowners, and agricultural producers have expressed significant concerns including but not limited to:

1. Potential human health impacts.
2. EMF exposure.
3. Audible noise and corona effects.
4. Stray voltage.
5. Agricultural land fragmentation and loss of productivity.
6. Potential loss of homes and farms.
7. Property value depreciation.
8. Visual and aesthetic impacts to the Blufflands landscape.
9. Wildlife and livestock impacts.
10. Tourism impacts.
11. Eminent domain concerns.
12. Road damage and construction impacts.
13. Adequacy of public engagement and transparency.
14. Whether the Project delivers demonstrable, direct benefit to Houston County residents.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

Section 1. Opposition

The Houston County Board of Commissioners formally opposes the proposed routing of the 765 kV Gopher to Badger Link transmission facilities within Houston County unless and until it is conclusively demonstrated through the MPUC process that:

1. The Project is the least-impactful alternative, and is explicitly proven to provide Houston County residents with direct benefits.
2. No reasonable lower-voltage or non-wires alternatives exist.
3. The Project fully complies with Houston County's Comprehensive Land Use Plan.
4. Local environmental, agricultural, and socioeconomic impacts are minimized to the maximum extent practicable.

Section 2. Environmental and Local Review

Houston County formally requests:

1. A full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and mitigation plan with local review that includes Houston County-specific agricultural, karst, groundwater, wildlife, scenic, tourism, and property value analyses.
2. Detailed modeling of EMF, audible noise, and corona discharge at residential setbacks.
3. Independent Agricultural Impact Assessment specific to Blufflands soils and topography.
4. Full disclosure of anticipated right-of-way acquisition impacts within the County.
5. Early sharing of the Route Permit Application prior to formal filing.

Section 3. Information Requested from Applicants

Houston County requests that the Applicants provide, in written and publicly accessible form on or before April 30th, 2026:

1. A breakdown of cost allocation by state and rate class.
2. Documentation of Minnesota residential rate impacts resulting from this project projected over 1, 10, and 20 years.
3. A list of specific quantified economic benefits projected for Houston County.
4. Detailed alternative route analysis considered for Houston County.
5. Documentation of distributed energy resource assumptions used in load forecasts (Years 1, 10, and 20).
6. A list of prior combined 765 kV / 161 kV double-circuit installations constructed by the Applicants.
7. Detailed site criteria and footprint for the proposed Houston County switching station.
8. Road use agreements, construction practices, and infrastructure protection commitments to minimize risk and damages.
9. A clear explanation of eminent domain authority and compensation standards.

Section 4. Preservation of Local Authority

Houston County asserts its right to:

1. Participate as a party in MPUC proceedings,
2. Submit formal comments and expert testimony,
3. Protect its Comprehensive Land Use Plan,
4. Advocate for agricultural land preservation,
5. Protect the Blufflands landscape and tourism economy,
6. Protect residents' property rights.

Section 5. Transmission of Resolution

The County Coordinator is directed to transmit this Resolution to:

1. Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
2. Minnesota Department of Commerce
3. Xcel Energy
4. Dairyland Power Cooperative

5. MISO
6. The Governor of Minnesota

CERTIFICATION

STATE OF MINNESOTA
COUNTY OF HOUSTON

I, Brent Parker, duly appointed County Coordinator, State of Minnesota, do hereby certify that I have compared the foregoing copy of this resolution with the original minutes of the proceedings of the Board of County Commissioners, Houston County, Minnesota, at its session held on the 17th day of February, now on file and have found the same to be a true and correct copy thereof.

Brent Parker
Houston County Coordinator

HOUSTON COUNTY, MN · COUNTY AUDITOR-TREASURER · THE GREAT SEAL OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA

Brent Parker
County Coordinator
Houston County
304 South Marshall Street
Caledonia, MN 55921

February 17, 2026

Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
121 7th Place East, Suite 350
St. Paul, MN 55101

Re: MPUC Docket No. ET3, E002/CN-25-121
Gopher to Badger Link Project – Houston County Resolution

Dear Commissioners:

On behalf of the Houston County Board of Commissioners, please find enclosed Resolution No. 26- 08 formally opposing the proposed 765 kV Gopher to Badger Link transmission facilities within Houston County.

Houston County recognizes the importance of maintaining regional electrical reliability and acknowledges the evolving energy landscape described in the Applicants' Certificate of Need Application. However, the Board has determined that significant local concerns remain insufficiently addressed.

The proposed facilities within Houston County include a 765 kV/161 kV double-circuit transmission line and a new three-circuit 161 kV switching station. Structures may reach nearly 200 feet in height and require right-of-way widths of up to approximately 250 feet. These facilities would traverse agriculturally productive lands and the environmentally sensitive Blufflands region of southeastern Minnesota.

Houston County's Comprehensive Land Use Plan, adopted by ordinance, prioritizes:

- Agricultural land preservation
- Scenic and environmental protection
- Sustainable tourism development
- Protection of rural character

Minnesota Statutes § 216B.243 and Minnesota Rules Chapter 7849 require that a Certificate of Need demonstrate compatibility with protecting the natural and socioeconomic environments, including human health, and compliance with local policies. The County respectfully submits that these standards require careful consideration of local land use priorities and cumulative impacts.

The Board has heard consistent concerns from residents regarding agricultural disruption, eminent domain authority, property value impacts, environmental effects, and uncertainty about whether the Project provides demonstrable benefit to Houston County ratepayers.

Houston County requests that the Commission:

1. Require a full and robust Environmental Impact Statement specific to Houston County conditions.
2. Carefully evaluate alternatives, including lower-voltage and non-transmission options.
3. Ensure meaningful local government participation throughout the routing process.
4. Require clear documentation of localized benefits and rate impacts.

Houston County intends to remain actively engaged in these proceedings and reserves all rights to participate further as appropriate.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Respectfully submitted,

_____

Brent Parker
County Coordinator
Houston County, Minnesota

Brent Parker
Houston County Coordinator
304 South Marshall Street
Caledonia, MN 55921

February 17, 2026

Minnesota Department of Commerce
Energy Environmental Review and Analysis
85 7th Place East, Suite 280
St. Paul, MN 55101

Dear Director,

Enclosed please find Resolution No. 26-08 adopted by the Houston County Board of Commissioners concerning the proposed 765 kV Gopher to Badger Link transmission project.

Houston County respectfully requests that any environmental review conducted for this project includes a thorough analysis of:

- Agricultural land impacts
- Karst and groundwater vulnerability
- Blufflands scenic and tourism impacts
- Property value considerations
- Construction impacts on local infrastructure

Given the unique topography and environmental sensitivity of southeastern Minnesota, a comprehensive and localized review will be critical.

Houston County stands ready to cooperate with your office throughout the environmental review process.

Respectfully,

_____
Brent Parker
Houston County Coordinator

Brent Parker
Houston County Coordinator
304 South Marshall Street
Caledonia, MN 55921

February 17, 2026

Dairyland Power Cooperative
Attn: President & Chief Executive Officer
3200 East Avenue South
La Crosse, WI 54601
Phone: (608) 788-4000

Dear Branden Yates,

Please find enclosed Resolution No. 26- 08 adopted by the Houston County Board of Commissioners regarding the proposed 765 kV Gopher to Badger Link transmission facilities within Houston County.

The County's concerns center on agricultural preservation, land use compatibility, environmental impacts, eminent domain implications, and the need for clear demonstration of local benefit.

Houston County requests continued direct communication and transparency as routing decisions advance. The Board also requests the information outlined within the Resolution at your earliest convenience.

We welcome the opportunity for further dialogue and expect meaningful engagement as the process continues.

Respectfully,

_____

Brent Parker
Houston County Coordinator

Brent Parker
Houston County Coordinator
304 South Marshall Street
Caledonia, MN 55921

February 17, 2026

Midcontinent Independent System Operator, Inc. (MISO)
720 City Center Drive
Carmel, IN 46032
Phone: (317) 249-5400

Dear Mr. Bear,

Enclosed is Resolution No. 26- 08 adopted by the Houston County Board of Commissioners regarding the proposed 765 kV Gopher to Badger Link project.

While Houston County acknowledges MISO's regional reliability planning responsibilities under the LRTP Tranche 2.1 portfolio, the County remains concerned about localized impacts and compatibility with local land use priorities.

We respectfully request consideration of localized agricultural, environmental, and socioeconomic impacts within Houston County as implementation proceeds.

Houston County looks forward to continued dialogue.

Respectfully,

_____

Brent Parker
Houston County Coordinator

Brent Parker
Houston County Coordinator
304 South Marshall Street
Caledonia, MN 55921

February 17, 2026

The Honorable Tim Walz
Governor of Minnesota
130 State Capitol
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Houston County Resolution – Proposed 765 kV Gopher to Badger Link Transmission Project

Dear Governor Walz:

Enclosed please find Resolution No. 26- 08 adopted by the Houston County Board of Commissioners concerning the proposed 765 kilovolt (kV) Gopher to Badger Link transmission project.

Houston County recognizes the importance of maintaining electric reliability and advancing statewide energy policy objectives. However, the Board has determined that significant local concerns remain unresolved regarding agricultural land preservation, property rights, environmental sensitivity within the Blufflands region, and compatibility with the County's Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

The proposed infrastructure would introduce large-scale, high-voltage transmission facilities into one of Minnesota's most environmentally and agriculturally sensitive regions. Houston County respectfully requests that statewide energy planning efforts continue to balance reliability goals with the protection of local land use priorities and rural communities.

We appreciate your leadership on energy matters and ask that you remain aware of the County's position as this process moves forward.

Respectfully,

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Brent Parker
Houston County Coordinator
On behalf of the Houston County Board of Commissioners

DAIRYLAND POWER
COOPERATIVE

March 27, 2026

Dear Commissioners,

Thank you for your interest in the Gopher to Badger Link project. Our project team has met with stakeholders over the last seven months to share information and gather input on the Gopher to Badger Link project, including hosting two open houses in Houston County on November 18 and January 15. We also appreciated the opportunity to discuss the project with you during your November 18, 2025, Board of County Commissioners meeting. We remain committed to an ongoing open dialogue with all landowners, regional stakeholders, regulators and local communities, including Houston County.

The Midcontinent Independent System Operator (MISO), the regional grid operator, identified this project as a key part of a new transmission backbone that is needed to help maintain grid reliability, enable access to new energy resources and meeting growing energy demand. The Gopher to Badger Link would deliver reliable power to homes, farms and businesses across the region.

The resolution adopted by Houston County on February 17, 2026, sought additional information on a number of topics related to the Gopher to Badger Link project. Some of the information requested can already be found in the Certificate of Need (CN) application filed on February 6, 2026, with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (MPUC). The docket number for this filing is 25-121.

1. **A full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and mitigation plan with local review that includes Houston County-specific agricultural, karst, groundwater, wildlife, scenic, tourism, and property value analyses.**

   Staff from the MPUC will prepare an EIS after the Route Permit (RP) Application is submitted later this fall. Once the RP application is deemed complete, the MPUC will hold public information and scoping meetings throughout the project area to gain input on the scope of the issues and alternatives to be studied in the EIS. These meetings, along with the public comment period, allow landowners and community members to ask questions of MPUC staff and the applicants, provide input on what should be studied in the EIS, suggest alternative routes for consideration by the MPUC and address potential impacts and mitigation measures that should be studied in the EIS.

2. **Detailed modeling of EMF, audible noise, and corona discharge at residential setbacks.**

   Detailed modeling of EMF, audible noise, and corona discharge can be found in the CN filing. EMF can be found in chapter 8.6 (page 159), audible noise information can be found on 8.3 (page 155) and corona discharge information can be found in chapter 8.2. (page 153). Additional analysis on each of these topics will also be available in the RP Application, and the EIS is also likely to analyze each of these potential impacts for the studied alternatives.

3. **Independent Agricultural Impact Assessment specific to Blufflands soils and topography.**

   Environmental information, such as impacts to agricultural land, can be found in the CN filing on chapter 10 (pages 170-216). Additional information will also be available in the RP Application and the EIS (see above).

4. **Full disclosure of anticipated right-of-way acquisition impacts within the County.**

   Information on land rights acquisition can be found in the CN filing on chapter 9.2 (page 163). Additional information will also be available in the RP Application.

5. **Early sharing of the Route Permit Application prior to formal filing.**

   We welcome your participation in the routing open houses that we plan to host May 4-7. While we are not able to share a draft of the RP Application prior to filing, there will be numerous opportunities as part of the MPUC permitting process for the County to submit comments on the RP Application. We encourage your ongoing participation in this process.

Additionally, you have requested the following information:

1. **A breakdown of cost allocation by state and rate class.**

   A breakdown of cost allocation is provided in the CN filing in chapter 2.6 (page 27).

2. **Documentation of Minnesota residential rate impacts resulting from this project projected over 1, 10, and 20 years.**

   As part of the CN Application process, the MPUC granted the Applicants an exemption from certain application content requirements related to rates. Because the proposed Project's costs will be allocated across the MISO footprint, the MPUC allowed the Applicants to provide information regarding the expected Project cost, MISO's cost allocation methodology, and the share that will be allocated to Minnesota. In addition, Xcel Energy provided an annual revenue requirement impact for the capital costs of the Project for a 20-year period. Note that, because Dairyland is a cooperative, the MPUC does not regulate its rates, and, therefore, the MPUC recognized it was appropriate to grant an exemption from such data requirements. In addition, communities served by Dairyland, a not-for-profit, benefit from the utility's wholesale rates that focus on covering costs rather than maximizing profit.

3. **A list of specific quantified economic benefits projected for Houston County.**

   Details on economic benefits of the project can be found in the CN filing in chapters 3.4.3 (page 48), 4.7 (page 57), 6 (page 81), 6.4 (page 102), and 10.6.1 (page 206). Additional information will also be available in the RP Application.

4. **Detailed alternative route analysis considered for Houston County.**

The Applicants are currently evaluating a number of potential route alternatives through open houses and other stakeholder engagement. Information regarding route alternatives considered and rejected will be available in the RP Application filed later this fall.

5. **Documentation of distributed energy resource assumptions used in load forecasts (Years 1, 10, and 20).**

   Documentation on the need for the overall project can be found in the CN filing in chapter 5 (pages 64-80).

6. **A list of prior combined 765 kV / 161 kV double-circuit installations constructed by the Applicants.**

   The Applicants have not previously constructed a double-circuit 765/161 kV transmission line.

7. **Detailed site criteria and footprint for the proposed Houston County switching station.**

   As the project remains in the early stages, detailed site criteria and footprint for the proposed Houston County switching station is not available currently.

8. **Road use agreements, construction practices, and infrastructure protection commitments to minimize risk and damages.**

   As part of construction work on the project, we may enter into road use agreements with each county along the route and will govern use, maintenance and any necessary repairs to the roads. Any necessary repairs would be made in a timely fashion and at our expense.

9. **A clear explanation of eminent domain authority and compensation standards.**

   Information on land rights acquisition can be found in the CN filing on chapter 9.2 (page 163). The MPUC also maintains a fact sheet on land rights on its website at: https://puc.eip.mn.gov/sites/default/files/2025-06/Landowner%20rights_factsheet.pdf

As you may have seen in our completeness reply comments filed on February 4, 2026, we have requested that the Commission stay the CN proceeding after a completeness determination has been made and conduct joint CN and route permit proceedings once the Route Permit Application is filed in the fall. This will allow the public to raise questions regarding project need and routing in a consolidated proceeding. It will also enable more efficient public participation and development of the record related to issues of interest to all stakeholders, including Houston County.

Your resolution indicates an intent to further participate in the Commission's permitting process. We welcome and encourage such participation and look forward to continuing our dialogue as the MPUC permitting process moves forward.

We are also planning to host additional open houses in May. You will receive additional information regarding the timing and location of the open houses in the coming weeks.

As always, please reach out to the project team for additional information.

765 kV Transmission Line Project Schedule

NOVEMBER 2026	Route Permit application anticipated
JANUARY 2027	Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) scoping meetings
APRIL–JUNE 2027	Public hearings
LATE 2027–EARLY 2028	Anticipated regulatory decision
2028–2029	Easement purchases
2030–2034	Anticipated construction