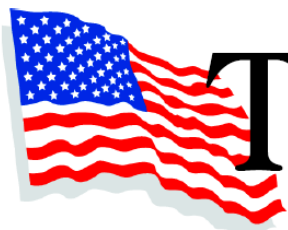


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## Town board wants alternative route for Xcel power line

By SARA NEMEC  
Staff Writer

TOWN OF EILEEN — The town board moved to recommend an alternative route for a section of power line to the state Public Service Commission to try to deter them from choosing another route favored by Xcel Energy when they rebuild it.

The existing 115-kilovolt, 130-mile line that runs from the Bay Front Generating Plant in Ashland to an interconnection with the Superior Water Light and Power Company at the Douglas County line would be replaced by newer, higher-capacity line at the same voltage mounted on new steel power poles. The older wooden ones need to be replaced because of bear, insect and woodpecker damage.

The route favored by Xcel would be a 22-pole, 2.56-mile stretch of the electrical transmission line that would run from Whipperfurth Road to State Highway 137 in the township, cutting through 10 backyards.

The board-endorsed alternative route, proposed by engineer and local resident James Sajdak, would cut through fields owned by Bayfield County, the old U.S. Hwy. 2 and three permanent residences for a total of 16 power poles spanning almost 2 miles.

Sajdak's father, Joe, said he was against the route Xcel Energy has recommended because it would cut through his property, disturbing about a quarter of a mile of the cedar trees he planted.

"It would take out over 1,000 of them (the trees)," he said, noting that he had planted about 9,000 trees and that route would also disturb his mound septic system.

And the Sajdak family weren't the only township residents opposed to the idea. Chairperson Terry Torkko was also unhappy with the idea of new steel poles in the area. He said he was concerned about the transparency of the process and that of the three alternatives brought forth at previous open houses, the one that the citizens seemed to favor had been removed.

"If I came with a bulldozer to Eau Claire and ran it through your backyard and put a pole up there, you and your neighbors would not be happy, would you?" Torkko asked of Xcel Energy's representatives.

Torkko said also the line would do damage to the residents and the surrounding land that wouldn't bounce back.

"The land will never recover. And the towers will be in the side yards and

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# TOWN: Xcel rep pleased with proposed route, calls it 'doable'

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front yards," he said. "It's there and it's imposing and it's big."

Xcel Energy Permitting Analyst Matthew McFarlane gave a presentation as to why Xcel was favoring the line along Highway 137 and fielded questions. He said the option favored by residents had been removed after the Sept. 23 open house because the railroad grade that it was proposed to travel along wasn't wide enough for equipment to get in. He also said the residents' comments may or may not have been received by that time.

In light of that, McFarlane said he was pleased that the residents had taken action and come up with a proposal they liked and one that was potentially doable.

"I feel that the proposed route is probably a viable route, one that we hadn't fully considered at the open houses," McFarlane said. "It looks like a doable

## To learn more

All paperwork filed with the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin can be viewed at [psc.wi.gov](http://psc.wi.gov). To look up documents related to the proposed power lines, see docket: 4220 CE 175.

option, but that will be up to the commission to ultimately decide if they want to take that up too."

He said he also appreciated the comments and concerns of the citizens at the meeting, as well as the work some had put in to proposing an alternative route.

"It's never too late to get the public to comment. It's great, I think, when you get the effort that folks put into this to come up with good routes," McFarlane said. "And there are things that myself and others that oversee things don't always see."

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