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SOUTH DAKOTA PUBLIC
UTILITIES COMMISSION

Steven Bonnichsen

[REDACTED]
Highmore SD, 57345

South Dakota Public Utilities Commission
500 E. Capital Ave.
Pierre, SD 57501

Dear Sirs,

I write this letter in reference to the North Bend Wind Project in Hughes County in my capacity as a former County Commissioner for Hyde County, South Dakota. I served in this role for many years preceding the construction of the Triple H project and up until the commencement of construction. I believe that as an elected County Commissioner it was my duty to consider projects such as CAFO's and Wind Farms through a multi-faceted lens with a view to ensuring that the will of my constituents as well as their economic and health interests were protected.

When Engie came to Hyde County it was clear to me that they believed that a cursory review of their materials was all that the County Commission was owed prior to a unanimous approval of their proposal. I did not then, nor do I now believe that Engie can be trusted. Their attitude and approach to the Conditional Use Permit they sought was haphazard at best. They did not act in an open and transparent manner; They did not initially conduct public educational events to extol the virtues of the proposed project for the citizens of our county, they failed to submit fully completed paperwork and they seemed determined that the County would simply bend to their will. Their goal was to get the approval and get started on the project without consideration of the mayhem the project would beget upon Hyde County.

Once Engie had finally gained approval from our County Commissioners and construction had begun it became apparent that the Road Agreement reached between Engie and Hyde County was woefully one-sided to the benefit of Engie. While it was a wetter than normal year, our roads quickly became impassable, and the citizens of Hyde County were immediately and rather negatively impacted. Our local economy is nearly entirely agricultural and as such we rely on roads to be in good condition so that we may move supplies and equipment, haul goods to market and for our citizens to get to work and school. Engie allowed our roads to deteriorate and yet, they continued to drive extraordinarily heavy loads across them daily. Only when their equipment became mired did they begin to address the ruin they had wrought.

Their amelioration involved use of substandard, quick-fix materials and in many cases the widening of roads. These efforts have left a lasting and expensive legacy for Hyde County. Wider roads mean more passes with snowplows and graders, more man hours, fuel and wear and tear on our county equipment. The substandard materials they dumped to shore up our roads will quickly deteriorate and our citizens,

all our citizens, even those who in no way benefited from the Towers, will be left to foot the very expensive bill to undo their damage.

It is my opinion that Engie did not fulfill the letter nor the spirit of the Road Agreement with Hyde County, yet one Commissioner who had enrolled his land for a future (now defunct) Wind Project with Engie, simply signed off with no further remediation action required. I shall leave you to draw your own conclusion regarding that.

In summation, it is my belief that Engie has left a very negative footprint on the back of Hyde County. Promised economic development has yet to materialize, the job creation they suggested has resulted in a single new Hyde County job which is far short of what they promised in their pitch. Our roads have been rendered substandard across the entirety of the Engie footprint and we will be dealing with massive expenses for years to come. I implore you as Commissioners of Hughes County not to repeat the mistakes made in Hyde County. Engie is a large corporation with no ties to our communities. Their view is that we have a commodity that they want, and we should allow them to mine it at the lowest cost to them. Do not allow them to imperil Hughes County as they have Hyde. If you feel that this project must go through despite the massive negative consequences, strengthen your road agreement beyond what you can imagine you will need because, I believe you will need everything you can get. Your citizens do not deserve to subsidize Engie's profiteering through years of taxes to repair the roads rendered useless by this large foreign company.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Steve J. Burch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.