1	THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION					
2	OF THE STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA					
3	=======================================					
4	IN THE MATTER OF THE COMPLAINT BY EL11-006					
5	OAK TREE ENERGY, LLC AGAINST NORTHWESTERN ENERGY FOR REFUSING TO ENTER INTO A PURCHASE POWER AGREEMENT					
6						
7	Managarint of Drogoodings					
8	Transcript of Proceedings April 23, 2013					
9	=======================================					
10	BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION,					
11	GARY HANSON, CHAIRMAN CHRIS NELSON, VICE CHAIRMAN					
12	KRISTIE FIEGEN, COMMISSIONER					
13	COMMISSION STAFF Rolayne Ailts Wiest					
14	John Smith Karen Cremer					
	Kristen Edwards					
15	Dave Jacobson Brian Rounds					
16	Patrick Steffensen Brittany Mehlhaff					
17	Jim Mehlhaff Darren Kearney					
18	Matthew Tisdal					
19	Cindy Kemnitz Deb Gregg					
20	Sherry Dickerson					
21	APPEARANCES					
22	Al Brogan, NorthWestern Energy Michael Uda, Oak Tree					
23						
24	Reported By Cheri McComsey Wittler, RPR, CRR					
25						

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS, held in the above-entitled matter, at the South Dakota State Capitol Building, 500 East Capitol Avenue, Pierre, South Dakota, on the 23rd day of April, 2013, commencing at 9:30 a.m.

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CHAIRMAN HANSON: EL11-006, In the matter of the
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2
     Complaint filed by Oak Tree Energy, LLC against
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     Northwestern Energy for refusing to enter into a purchase
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     power agreement.
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              Northwestern Energy filed an application for
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     reconsideration of findings and conclusions in the Final
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     Order issued by the Commission on February 21, 2013.
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              The question before the Commission is how shall
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     the Commission rule on NorthWestern's application for
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     reconsideration?
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              NorthWestern, did you wish -- since you had made
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     the filing, you can be up first here.
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              MR. BROGAN: Thank you, Chairman Hanson.
                                                         This
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     is Al Brogan.
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              Basically, we have little to say. We believe
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     that the Motion, Oak Tree's Answer, and Staff's Response
     all speak for themselves. NorthWestern filed this Motion
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     pursuant to 20-10-01-29, and basically we request
     reconsideration of three narrow discrete areas where we
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     believe there is sufficient reason for reconsideration.
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              We will let the Motion and the pleading speak
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     for itself and stand ready to answer questions.
2.3
              Thank you.
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              CHAIRMAN HANSON: Thank you. Mr. Uda, are you
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on the line?

1 MR. UDA: I am, Mr. Chairman.

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CHAIRMAN HANSON: Great. And we will hear from Oak Tree at this time.

MR. UDA: Well, I guess I would agree in general terms with Mr. Brogan that I think the Motion and the Answer and Staff Answer more or less speak for themselves.

One of the things I would say is that, you know, from Oak Tree's perspective, the three issues which have to do with the manner in which the rate was levelized, the MRO's use of 20 percent, and the use of 2.25 percent as an escalator in the load as opposed to the 1 percent peak load number, it's Oak Tree's position that this information was available during the hearing, should have been raised at that time, and that raising these issues in this matter isn't typically what's done with a Motion For Reconsideration, that a Motion For Reconsideration is typically used to raise either new authority, legal authority, or new facts, and not to simply continue a debate that could have taken place during what in this case was two complete evidentiary hearings.

So, with that, we think there is good reason for the Commission to stick with its original Order, and we will stand on that.

CHAIRMAN HANSON: Thank you. Staff.

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              MS. CREMER: Thank you. This is Karen Cremer of
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     Staff.
              Staff would also rely on its Brief with the
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     following edit. On page 1, the last line of that page,
     change Conclusion 31 to Conclusion 8.
 6
              With that said, Mr. Rounds is available to
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     answer any questions, and Staff would recommend granting
8
     reconsideration.
              Thank you.
10
              CHAIRMAN HANSON: Thank you. Questions by the
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     Commission.
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              Commissioner Nelson.
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              COMMISSIONER NELSON: I do have some questions.
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     And if I could pass out a sheet that I'm going to be
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     referring to, and I believe that this sheet has been
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     e-mailed to the folks that are on the phone, and I think
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     what I need to do is I need to visit with someone from
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     NorthWestern, whoever wants to step forward.
19
              And the questions revolve around the 1 percent
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     versus the 2 and a quarter percent load growth versus
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     energy growth.
22
              Anybody from NorthWestern that wants to answer
2.3
     that? If not, I'll go to Mr. Rounds.
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MR. LAFAVE: Commissioner Nelson, this is

Blue LaFave. Could you repeat the question?

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COMMISSIONER NELSON: Certainly. I haven't even asked the question.

Blue, have you been e-mailed the document that

MR. LAFAVE: Yes, I have.

I'm going to be working off of?

2.3

COMMISSIONER NELSON: Okay. Thank you.

Obviously, a key part of the third point of the reconsideration deals with this question of whether we appropriately use 2 and a quarter percent for load growth increase.

Is it correct that NorthWestern's projection of energy consumption increasing at 2 and a quarter percent over the next 20 years is correct?

MR. LAFAVE: As of the time of the filing, yes, that is correct.

COMMISSIONER NELSON: Okay. If you look at the chart that I'm working off of, and this is one that was from Mr. Rounds's model and the one that I had modified, and this chart is exactly what we approved when we concluded this affair, with the exception of the last two columns.

And this chart using NorthWestern's load curve and inputting it into the EIPC load blocks shows in 2012 the total megawatt hours at 1,660,000. In 2035, 2,769,788 megawatt hours sold. That's what the model

arrived at using those, the load curve and the blocks.

2.3

The last column completely ignores all of the load curve and the load blocks. It simply starts with 1,697,000 and increases that number 2.25 percent per year in energy sales and comes up with the same figure, 2,769,000.

So what I need you to explain to me is why 2.25 percent inputted into this model is not correct when we arrive at the same figure in year 2035.

MR. LAFAVE: The reason why it's not correct is you're utilizing a load growth, NorthWestern's system load growth, in a model that was designed to estimate the cost associated with peak growth.

The peak growth on NorthWestern's system as identified in the Docket is 1 percent, and that is how the model is structured to follow, ignoring what the growth is below. It comes down to a model design and what it was appropriated for.

The particular model that Mr. Rounds used, and he can relay probably even more -- to you even better than I can, but the model was specifically designed to be based on demand growth, which is peak growth.

NorthWestern has a peak growth of 1 percent, but it has an overall load growth of 2 and a quarter.

If you mix the growths, you end up utilizing the

model for the purpose it wasn't designed for, and it will
give you an erred result.

2.3

COMMISSIONER NELSON: And I understand what you're saying, but where I'm confused and I'm not understanding is we arrive at the same result. When you use the model in the year 2035 total megawatt hours sold, 2,769,000, if you use a simple escalator of 2 and a quarter percent, ignoring the model completely but simply using an escalator of 2 and a quarter percent, we arrive at exactly the same megawatt hours sold in the year 2035.

So how can the model be in error when we're arriving at the same number?

MR. LAFAVE: Because the model was forced on one of the tabs as an input to go to 2 and a quarter percent. In your final model that you utilized you went to the Tab I think it's BR-9 -- or I'm sorry it's BR -- I'm trying to find which tab it was. BR-4 and changed the increased growth to 2 and a quarter percent in order for the model to kick out these numbers that you have in the sheet.

So you forced that 2.7 end result, and that's how the model -- so the model was forced to move from a demand growth to a usage growth by changing that to 2 and a quarter instead of the 1 percent or .89 percent that Mr. Rounds used. And by doing that you would end up with

the same number, but that's because it was already
imbedded or a forced change was in the model. It would
have been done in Column U, Tab BR-4.

2.3

COMMISSIONER NELSON: So let me ask one additional question. Is it accurate that utilizing the 2 and a quarter percent load growth factor, in the year 2035 NorthWestern should be selling 2,769,000 megawatt hours?

MR. LAFAVE: That is accurate. But then the load shape, as far as what it looks like, how many hours are in that top block versus how many hours in the second block versus how many hours are in the remaining blocks, would change dramatically.

COMMISSIONER NELSON: And so if we were looking at the -- so if we're looking at the -- let's use, for example, your statement about those blocks changing dramatically. If we're looking at the lowest summer block, block B-10, 1,262 hours, would that .443 go up or down by the year 2035?

MR. LAFAVE: In block -- I apologize,

Commissioner. I didn't necessarily follow your question.

But in block -- as I described in my testimony, in

Block B-10, by 2025 NorthWestern -- which is your peak

block, which would also be based on the demand -- if it

only grew at 1 percent, would be at 377 megawatts.

If it grew at 2.25 percent, which is the load growth, not the demand growth, it would be at 528. So you'd end up with significant more energy in that top block that really wouldn't exist because the peak doesn't grow that fast.

2.3

COMMISSIONER NELSON: And I understand and I get that point. But, again, we're selling this -- we're still selling 2.769 million megawatt hours. I'm going to turn to Mr. Rounds.

Mr. Rounds, you've heard my series of questions.

I think maybe you understand my confusion, and I would

like your input to help help me out here.

MR. ROUNDS: Sure. Well, the problem with the model is that it assumes a constant load shape. What I mean by that is those numbers at the top, those factors -- like, for instance, in B-10 you said it was .443, those stay constant throughout all 20 years.

And what we found out in the last evidentiary hearing is that although NorthWestern thinks their peak's going to grow at about 1 percent, they know that their energy is going to grow at about 2 and a quarter percent. So the number you get at the end as far as megawatt hours is correct.

The problem is the way that you would deal with that to make the model correct is you would adjust that

load shape every year to get those same numbers at the end.

2.3

So if you got down to the year 2035, say, under Block B-1, you should be probably under 400 megawatts there, but you're going to see the rest of the lower ones get larger so that B-10 -- you know, I would assume you're probably going to see, you know, probably be closer to .5 or even above that. And we didn't have a way to deal with that in the model.

COMMISSIONER NELSON: That explanation I understood. Thank you.

We really don't have anything in the record, however, to tell us that by the year 2035 Block B-10 would be closer to .5 and that Block B-1 would be -- we don't know.

There's nothing in the record to tell us what those numbers should be in 2035; correct?

MR. ROUNDS: The only thing I can point to is when we made the change, the load shape, that -- I believe the load shape on this sheet is something that you had derived; correct?

COMMISSIONER NELSON: Correct. Utilizing

NorthWestern's actual acknowledging their actual current
load shape, yes.

MR. ROUNDS: So in my original testimony we had

used the load shape that was in what we called MAPP,
which is what NorthWestern was part of. And NorthWestern
pointed out in follow-up testimony that that overshot
their energy in the first year by 30 percent.

2.3

And so we went back and looked and saw that MISO West mostly because of availability of natural gas was a better fit. So we switched to MISO West. And that still overshot their energy in the first year by 7 percent.

And so when we made that change and -- I think in our comments in this case we referred to that page of testimony that I was on the stand. And I don't know how clear it was.

But the point that I tried to make was although we overshot in that case by 7 percent, we undershot the load growth because we used 1 percent and used the stagnant load shape.

And knowing that the load shape was going to change basically with the lower load times increasing, you were going to see eventually the energy was going to go negative rather than positive the way it started out. And so it was sort of a fudge factor. And we kind of saw it as evening out.

COMMISSIONER NELSON: See when you use the words "fudge factor" and "evening out" this Commissioner gets

really nervous. And that's why I've been so insistent to utilize NorthWestern's actual load shape and input it into the EIPC blocks.

2.3

However, I do follow what your logic is on how those percentage numbers may change over time, but I still don't know that we've got anything in the record that would tell us exactly how -- well, nobody knows how those are going to change over time.

I mean, there's suspicion that, yeah, peak is not going to grow as fast as the lower usage hours, but we don't know for sure what that's going to be.

MR. ROUNDS: If could I make a suggestion.

COMMISSIONER NELSON: Certainly.

MR. ROUNDS: The way that I think you could do it to try and get it perfect would be to sort of look at a historical -- I mean, the way that they came up with their peak growth and their load growth or energy growth was by looking at historical.

So if you looked at the way that that load shape changes over time, you could probably come up with a better -- basically a way to change your load shape throughout the model.

COMMISSIONER NELSON: Let me ask you one last question. If you look at, you know, the top three blocks, B-1, B-2, B-3, those are your peak blocks. And

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     maybe even beyond peak. It's 110 hours out of the year.
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              And so the contention by NorthWestern is that by
     year 2035 that we're too high for those three blocks.
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     But the fact that it's only 110 hours out of the entire
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 5
     year, is that going to have a material impact on our
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     final result?
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              MR. ROUNDS: I can't remember exactly -- I read
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     it once as we were, I think, sort of in the middle of the
     evidentiary hearing, and it came out to be a difference
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     of like 3 or $4.
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              COMMISSIONER NELSON: That's material.
              I think that's all the questions I have,
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13
    Mr. Chairman.
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              And I thank both Blue and Mr. Rounds for helping
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     me with that.
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              CHAIRMAN HANSON: Thank you for your questions
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     and discussion.
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              Any other questions by the Commissioners?
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              Then we have three items before us. Are there
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     any motions?
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              We will take them one at a time if you choose to
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     take them. Are there any motions at this time?
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              COMMISSIONER NELSON: Could I offer just some
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     commentary?
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                                Please, go ahead.
              CHAIRMAN HANSON:
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motions on the first two points. But, obviously, the third point, this suggestion I've had has been very helpful to me. As much as I'd hate to say it, I'd love to spend some time given this additional information and work on this model and see if I can come up with a more solid number, but that's -- that's where I'm at.

2.3

But let's see where we can get with -- and I'd like to take each one of these individually.

CHAIRMAN HANSON: Absolutely. And that's what I suggested, yes. And you said one, two, three. I have at least three different lists, and on some of them one, two, three is different.

COMMISSIONER NELSON: Well, let me start off, if I might, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN HANSON: Please go ahead.

COMMISSIONER NELSON: I would move on the first issue, and that issue of the levelized cost not including the discount factor, I would move that we utilize the actual numbers as opposed to levelized, which if you recall is where I started out when we had this discussion several months ago.

If we use the actual costs per year, then we don't have to deal with this discount factor. We don't have to guess what the discount factor ought to be. We

eliminate NorthWestern's concern about not being treated fairly in that regard, about customers having to pay too much in that regard. And we also acknowledge Staff's concern about the use of levelized costs, which impacts customers greatly in those first few years.

2.3

And if we use actual costs, customers are going to be treated fairly over the entire 20-year period because they will be paying much closer to the actual cost of the energy than if we go with a levelized cost.

And so I believe that eliminates this particular issue. It treats NorthWestern fairly. It treats customers fairly. And it also, as Staff pointed out, eliminates the risk should Oak Tree at some point in the next 20 years fail to perform and fail to actually deliver the energy.

And so I think for a whole lot of reasons going with actual costs over the 20 years as opposed to levelized makes a lot of sense.

The last comment that I will make, when you look at levelized costs, we've got two different columns, beginning in 2013 and beginning in 2014, and there's \$2 difference between those two.

If I was Oak Tree, I'd say there's no way I'm going to start in 2013. I'm going to start in 2014 because it automatically gets me an extra 2 bucks.

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              Whereas, if we go with the actual cost, they
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     don't have that incentive to start one year versus the
 3
    other.
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              So for that reason, Mr. Chairman, I would
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    support the actual cost as opposed to levelized.
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              CHAIRMAN HANSON:
                                Thank you.
7
              And, as I recall, we were working towards using
8
    actual costs at the time and with a true-up and ran into
     some challenges with that; is that correct?
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              COMMISSIONER NELSON: I don't believe there was
11
     any discussion or any need for a true-up. These actual
12
    costs would be based on the energy produced. They
13
     include the capacity factor. That's already calculated
14
     in so there's no true-up involved.
15
              CHAIRMAN HANSON: All right. Thank you.
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              Commissioner Fiegen, did you have anything on
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    this issue?
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              COMMISSIONER FIEGEN: So there's a Motion on the
    table?
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              COMMISSIONER NELSON: Correct.
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              COMMISSIONER FIEGEN: And you talked about your
    Motion?
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2.3
              COMMISSIONER NELSON:
                                    Yes.
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              COMMISSIONER FIEGEN: I'm not going to support
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     that Motion. I believe we should just reconsider this,
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think about what we really want to do, and not make a decision from the bench today.

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And I believe that normally the PUC looks at discounted cash flows, and that's what we normally do in business. And this is a very complex issue, and you know we've spent hundreds and hundreds of hours on this and have read thousands of sheets of paper on this probably too.

And I think we need to reconsider it, and that's what I want to support and bring it to the next meeting and not switch what we're going to do today but wait until next session. Next hearing.

CHAIRMAN HANSON: Thank you. Is that your position on all three issues?

The reason I ask is I see one I clearly wish to vote against.

COMMISSIONER FIEGEN: There is one that I will ask not to reconsider.

CHAIRMAN HANSON: Okay. Thank you.

And I always give deference to Commissioners who wish to defer to a later date on an item. I want everyone to be comfortable that they're voting.

So on this particular item you wish to defer, I will give deference to that, Commissioner Nelson. And your Motion will be not laid on the table but deferred

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until that time.
              And since there's two Commissioners in that
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    position, we'll defer at this time.
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              The second item that I have down is whether the
    20 percent --
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              COMMISSIONER FIEGEN: Mr. Chairman.
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              CHAIRMAN HANSON: Excuse me. Go ahead.
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              COMMISSIONER FIEGEN: You know what I meant, and
     I probably didn't say it right. I believe in
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     reconsidering and decide on what we want to do at the
11
    next meeting. So not necessarily make our final decision
12
    at the next meeting but do move to reconsider item
13
    number 1.
14
              CHAIRMAN HANSON: So you'll make a substitute
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    motion to reconsider item number 1?
16
              COMMISSIONER FIEGEN: And defer final action on
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    the reconsideration at our next hearing.
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              So that might not be right. What you did is
19
    maybe right. I just want to be clear.
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              CHAIRMAN HANSON:
                                Thank you.
                                            No. I
21
    misunderstood what you were saying.
22
              So Commissioner Fiegen is moving to reconsider
2.3
     item number 1 but to defer action on item number 1 until
24
    our next meeting.
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Is there a discussion on that Motion?

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1 If not, Commissioner Fiegen. COMMISSIONER FIEGEN: 2 Fiegen votes ave. CHAIRMAN HANSON: Commissioner Nelson. 3 4 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Ave. CHAIRMAN HANSON: Commissioner Hanson votes 5 6 aye. 7 Item number 1 regarding the discount factor and 8 levelizing avoided cost is deferred to the next meeting and is to be reconsidered. 10 The second item that I have is whether the 11 20 percent capacity factor was in error because the MRO 12 wasn't using a 20 percent value as of the LEO date. 13 Is there a desire to reconsider and defer that 14 item, or do you wish to take that one up? 15 COMMISSIONER FIEGEN: Mr. Chairman, where I land 16 on this is I believe 20 percent was clearly during the 17 hearing. And we had lots of discussion on that so that's 18 an item that I don't think we should reconsider. 19 I do think the escalation of the capacity cost 20 until 2015, that portion should be reconsidered, but not 21 the 20 percent. 22 CHAIRMAN HANSON: I concur with Commissioner 2.3 Fiegen on that. I was not in favor of reconsideration of

Commissioner Nelson, did you have anything you

the 20 percent capacity factor.

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wished to discuss on that item?
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              COMMISSIONER NELSON: I would concur with both
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     of you. I guess we just need a motion to do that.
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              COMMISSIONER FIEGEN: So, Mr. Chairman, in item
     number 2 move that we do not consider the 20 percent
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 6
     capacity factor.
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              CHAIRMAN HANSON:
                                Thank you.
8
              Discussion on that Motion?
              Commissioner Fiegen.
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              COMMISSIONER FIEGEN: Fiegen votes aye.
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              CHAIRMAN HANSON: Commissioner Nelson.
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              COMMISSIONER NELSON: Aye.
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              CHAIRMAN HANSON: Hanson votes ayes. Motion
14
    carries.
15
              Item number 3.
16
              COMMISSIONER FIEGEN: Mr. Chairman, do I need a
17
    motion to move to reconsider the escalation of the
18
     capacity costs until 2015?
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              CHAIRMAN HANSON: If you wish to have it
20
    reconsidered, yes.
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              COMMISSIONER FIEGEN: So that portion I would
22
     like reconsidered. Please reconsider the escalation of
2.3
     the capacity costs until 2015.
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              CHAIRMAN HANSON: Discussion on that Motion?
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              Commissioner Fiegen.
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              COMMISSIONER FIEGEN: Fiegen votes aye.
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              CHAIRMAN HANSON:
                                Commissioner Nelson.
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              COMMISSIONER NELSON:
                                    Aye.
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              CHAIRMAN HANSON: Hanson votes no.
     carries.
 6
              The third item is whether the 2.25 percent load
7
     growth value was in error to the point of producing an
8
     unreasonable outcome.
              Discussion on that.
              COMMISSIONER NELSON: I would like to reconsider
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11
     this, but I certainly don't prejudge where I'm going to
12
     come down on that issue.
13
              The discussion this morning has been very
14
     helpful to me, but I would like the two weeks to go back
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     and crunch some numbers to determine where I'm finally
16
     going to end up on it. But I would like to reconsider it
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     for the time factor, if nothing else.
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              CHAIRMAN HANSON: Do you have a motion then?
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              COMMISSIONER NELSON: I move to reconsider that
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     item.
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              CHAIRMAN HANSON: Move to reconsider but to
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     defer action until the next meeting.
2.3
              COMMISSIONER NELSON: Correct.
2.4
              Discussion?
25
                                    I certainly support
              COMMISSIONER FIEGEN:
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Commissioner Nelson in that we have to make sure that our 1 2 peak load is correct and our estimation -- as correct as it can be. 3 4 This is just a forecast and, yes, there is fudge 5 numbers and et cetera because it is a forecast so we just 6 don't know. 7 But I want it as correct as possible and that 8 rate payers don't pay more than they should on that item. Because right now we're off quite a bit on the 2035 final 10 peak load growth. Or peak load. 11 CHAIRMAN HANSON: Thank you. 12 Any further discussion? 13 Seeing none, Commissioner Fiegen. 14 COMMISSIONER FIEGEN: Fiegen votes aye. 15 CHAIRMAN HANSON: Commissioner Nelson. 16 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Aye. 17 CHAIRMAN HANSON: Hanson votes aye. The motion carries. 18 19 20 2.1 22 23 24 25

1	STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA)
2	:SS CERTIFICATE
3	COUNTY OF SULLY)
4	
5	I, CHERI MCCOMSEY WITTLER, a Registered
6	Professional Reporter, Certified Realtime Reporter and
7	Notary Public in and for the State of South Dakota:
8	DO HEREBY CERTIFY that as the duly-appointed
9	shorthand reporter, I took in shorthand the proceedings
10	had in the above-entitled matter on the 23rd day of
11	April, 2013, and that the attached is a true and correct
12	transcription of the proceedings so taken.
13	Dated at Onida, South Dakota this 26th day
14	of April, 2013.
15	
16	
17	
18	Cheri McComsey Wittler,
19	Notary Public and Registered Professional Reporter
20	Certified Realtime Reporter
21	
22	
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