

**Public Comments to Cherryland Electric, Wolverine Power, MPSC
Re: An Electrical Substation Proposal in Elmwood Township**

By Brian Beauchamp
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First of all, I'd like to thank the MPSC, Cherryland Electric Cooperative, and Wolverine Power Supply Cooperative for the opportunity to comment on the proposed substation in Elmwood Township.

My name is Brian Beauchamp and I am a Policy Specialist with the Michigan Land Use Institute, a member-based statewide advocacy organization based in Traverse City. Our mission is focused on protecting the environment, strengthening the economy, and enhancing the quality of life in northwest Michigan. We work extensively on land use and energy issues, which is why the current Elmwood transfer station proposal is of concern to us.

I'd like to address three of the Institute's concerns of this proposal:

First, this proposal goes against local zoning and is incompatible with planning for the area.

Second, the public process has been incomplete; in fact the public input has been minimized, seemingly intentionally.

Third, it is unclear whether this new substation is even necessary.

On the first point, the Elmwood Township zoning ordinance for this location does not fit with Wolverine's proposal. Sidestepping or overlooking local zoning and planning is just not going to work here. We have heard Wolverine say that its substation is essential, a point that we question. But regardless, the scenic character of M-72 *is* essential and must be preserved in order to support Leelanau County's economic future as a tourist destination.

The township made a proper decision to not allow this substation at this site through local zoning. It made a decision to keep this crucial stretch of northwest Michigan highway from being marred by such an unsightly industrial use. Clearly, Wolverine should be looking elsewhere for a better substation location.

Right now, the largest regional planning process in the state's history, The Grand Vision, is underway right here in the Grand Traverse Region. That suggests that we first consider the outcome of that process and allow The Grand Vision Decision to guide future development in this area.

Second, there is strong and growing public opposition to this substation proposal site. Unfortunately, there has been an apparent attempt to quiet public opinion and proceed

with project plans regardless of local zoning and community dissent. We believe that a project of this importance should be made open to a public process that takes account of the community's goals for the area. There are numerous other sites better suited for the project; we believe that Wolverine owes it to all of us to publicly discuss those sites. Applying for an MPSC permit to sidestep local planning simply ties the hands of the local community to decide what is best for itself.

Finally, while Wolverine Power claims that it needs a new substation in Leelanau County to meet increased energy demands, we have not seen sufficient evidence to back up this claim. Right now in Lansing the legislature is working on a package of bills that seeks to increase energy efficiency and invest in renewable energy. If passed, one bill would decrease energy demand statewide. It is not good timing to invest in increased demand when this is the case.

This substation and Wolverine's proposal to build a coal-, petroleum coke-, and wood-burning power plant in Rogers City are based on the belief that people will continue to consume energy as they always have. The Institute sees quite the opposite occurring: People are waking up to our growing energy crisis, and rising energy costs are now playing a big role in reducing energy consumption.

Again, I very much appreciate this opportunity. The mandate from the MPSC obligating Wolverine Power to hold this public meeting is intended for cases such as this, where the public's interests need to be represented. The Michigan Public Service Commission should help enforce the local zoning and master plan of the community and order Wolverine to look elsewhere if it still insists on building a new substation.