

1 BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
2 OF THE STATE OF COLORADO

3 -----

4 REPORTER'S TRANSCRIPT PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING

5 -----

6 Docket No. 24A-0442E

7 -----

8 IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION OF PUBLIC SERVICE
9 COMPANY OF COLORADO FOR APPROVAL OF ITS 2024 JUST
10 TRANSITION SOLICITATION

11 -----

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12 Pursuant to notice to all parties of
13 interest, the above-entitled matter came on for
14 hearing before CHAIRMAN ERIC BLANK, COMMISSIONER MEGAN
15 GILMAN and COMMISSIONER TOM PLANT, commencing at 4:00
16 p.m., on May 1, 2025, at 495 West Jefferson Avenue,
17 Hayden, Colorado, said proceedings having been reported
18 in shorthand by Harriet S. Weisenthal.

19 Whereupon, the following proceedings were had:

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1	<u>INDEX</u>	
2	<u>SPEAKERS</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
3	RAY BECK	6
	MELODY VILLARD	9
4	RYAN WATTLES	12
	WAYNE DELUCCA	15
5	KANJIMAL MOSER	19
	EVELYN SHELLEY	23
6	TONY PEROULIS	26
	GARY ARNOLD	27
7	DOUG MONGER	30
	JEFF COMSTOCK	35
8	HEATHER DEVOSS	39
	BRUCE JOHNSON	42
9	ERIC OWEN	44
	BRANDON SULLIVAN	47
10	JOHN BRISTOL	51
	MICHELLE STEWART	55
11	ED ANDERSON	61
	NICK ARMANDO	62
12	DORIS MAYHEM	65
	TREVOR GUIRE	65
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		

1 CHAIRMAN BLANK: We're now on the record.
2 It is 4 p.m. on Thursday, May 1st, 2025. This is a
3 Public Comment Hearing, in Proceeding No. 24A-0442E,
4 Public Service's Just Transition Plan filing, or "JTS."

5 Again, I am Eric Blank, the PUC Chair. I
6 just want to start off by thanking everyone for coming
7 out, and I am very much looking forward to hearing your
8 comments. I'll have more to say in a few moments, but
9 first, can my colleagues introduce themselves for the
10 record.

11 COMMISSIONER GILMAN: Commissioner Megan
12 Gilman.

13 COMMISSIONER PLANT: Commissioner Tom
14 Plant.

15 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Thank you. Before we
16 begin taking comments, which we'll do in just a few
17 moments, I want to briefly explain how this Public
18 Comment Hearing works.

19 There is a court reporter, right there,
20 who is listening to this proceeding, taking down what
21 you say, for the record. This Public Comment Hearing
22 is formal, like a court proceeding, and we hope that
23 the audience will be respectful of the speakers that
24 comment today.

25 In our role as Commissioners, at this

1 stage of the process, we're here to listen and learn
2 and make sure your comments are accurately reflected in
3 the record.

4 We are not able to answer questions or
5 respond to statements. Like a judge, we cannot engage
6 in dialogue on a case pending before us. This case is
7 ongoing, and we will not make any decisions until after
8 the evidentiary hearing in June.

9 If you want to speak, I have a list, and
10 we'll start with the elected officials, and then we
11 will just go down the list. And I think we can now
12 squeeze by on this side, so that's good.

13 And we have a number of people signed up,
14 so if you can keep your comments to more or less three
15 minutes, that would be great. We're really hear to
16 listen and learn. So, we're not going to strictly
17 enforce that.

18 In addition to the comments today, a
19 virtual Public Comment Hearing is set for Thursday,
20 June 5th, from 5 to 7. The Commission equally weighs
21 public comments received, whether written or orally.
22 So, we encourage you to follow-up by filing whatever
23 you would like in written form.

24 Written comments can be filed through the
25 Commission's e-filings system, submitted on the

1 Commission's on-line public comment form, or e-mailed
2 to DORA underscore PUC underscore Website@state.co.us.
3 In each case, specify this proceeding number,
4 24A-0442E.

5 As I said before, we're very much looking
6 forward to your comments. We certainly don't have all
7 of the answers, which is why hearing from all of you is
8 so important.

9 With that, again, I want to thank
10 everybody for coming out, and we'll start in a second
11 but, Commissioner Gilman, any thoughts?

12 COMMISSIONER GILMAN: Yeah. Good
13 afternoon.

14 Just want to say thank you all, in
15 advance, for joining us this afternoon and this
16 evening, and really look forward to hearing from you.

17 This is an essential part of the process,
18 especially to hear from communities where we have a
19 transition of energy resources; and to hear from all of
20 you, to understand your perspectives, will be very
21 valuable to us.

22 So, just want to thank you all, in
23 advance, for coming and being willing to share your
24 thoughts with us.

25 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Commissioner Plant.

1 COMMISSIONER PLANT: Yeah. And I would
2 echo the comments of my colleagues here. And this is,
3 I think, for all of us, one of our favorite parts,
4 where we can come out and actually hear directly from
5 the folks in the communities.

6 And, as Ms. Castle pointed out, there is
7 24 different parties that have intervened officially in
8 this proceeding, and we get testimony from them. We
9 will have a hearing, and they'll present their
10 testimony there, cross examination, and all of that
11 sort of thing. This is actually our opportunity to
12 hear directly from people in the community.

13 So, we really value this greatly and
14 appreciate you taking the time to come out tonight.

15 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Thank you very much.
16 So, we're going to start with elected and former
17 elected officials, and the first one on my list is Ray
18 Beck.

19 MR. BECK: Good afternoon, Commissioners,
20 and members of the community. My name is Ray Beck,
21 JOLT Energy Co-Founder, former Moffat County
22 Commissioner, and former Vice Chair on the Advisory
23 Council for the Office of Just Transition.

24 With the loss of the coal-fired power
25 plants and the coal mine, we're in for some hard times.

1 Moffat County's No. 1 taxpayer, Tri-State, is one of
2 the top 10 taxpayers in Moffat, energy-related, which
3 includes Xcel Energy, and the loss of one of the top 10
4 taxpayers equals 60% of Moffat County's assessed value,
5 or 58% of the budget. Moffat County's Colowyo coal
6 mine, and the power plants, when they shut down, about
7 45 to 47% of the current tax base will leave.

8 Property taxes are the largest source of
9 revenue to the county, which helps us pay for those
10 traditional services that we provide, at the local
11 level, in Routt County. The direct job impact of the
12 facilities is 65 full-time equivalent positions,
13 employed at the Hayden Station, with approximately 7.7
14 million in labor income.

15 The estimated indirect economic activity,
16 supported by Hayden Station, includes 81.9 million in
17 industrial output, including 16 million in labor income
18 and 186 jobs. At a high level. Hayden Station
19 provides about 4.3 million, annually, to the county,
20 and various taxing districts within the county.

21 In addition, the total economic impact of
22 the Hayden Station is approximated to be \$310.4
23 million, with approximately 302 jobs, which are
24 directly or indirectly supported by the power plant.

25 The Commission should disregard Xcel's

1 owner/operator agreement, and its attempts to shield
2 itself from providing Moffat and Craig with just
3 transition, by finding that Xcel is both statutorily
4 and morally required to provide community assistance to
5 our communities, based on the company's ownership
6 interests in the Craig and Hayden power plants.

7 We respectfully ask the Commission to
8 closely review Moffat and Craig's Answer Testimony, on
9 the impact of the coal industry, related to Hayden
10 itself, our community's workforce and tax base.

11 The Commission should find its in the
12 best interests of the public for Craig and Hayden to
13 receive a Community Assistance Plan, which accounts for
14 two components, 14 million, which amounts to 10 years
15 of Xcel's Craig Station annual property tax payments;
16 and given that the majority of Hayden Station workers
17 live in Moffat County and Craig, an additional 14.7
18 million for the direct labor income figures relating to
19 the early closure of the Hayden Station.

20 I want to thank you for your time and
21 consideration. And, in closing, I would say we're
22 not -- our community didn't ask for this. We're not
23 looking for a handout. We're just looking for a
24 hand-up. Thank you for your time.

25 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Thank you, sir. The

1 next one on my list is Melody Villard, Ms. Villard,
2 and, then, Sonja Macys, and, then, Angelica Salinas.

3 MS. VILLARD: Thank you for your time. I
4 am Melody Villard, Moffat County Commissioner. And
5 this is my second opportunity to testify in front of
6 the PUC, as I had testified in Moffat County and was
7 the county negotiator in the Tri-State proceedings with
8 the PUC.

9 Moffat County, and the City of Craig, are
10 on record opposing early closure of both the Craig
11 Station, as well as the Hayden Station, which Xcel has
12 obligations in both. Moffat County and the City of
13 Craig should not be left out of the community
14 assistance discussions; and it's Moffat's testimony
15 that the PUC should disregard Xcel's effort to shield
16 itself from offering community assistance to Craig and
17 Moffat County.

18 Xcel has suggested that it should be the
19 operator of the Craig Station, rather than the owners,
20 who are responsible for community assistance. Nothing
21 could be further from the truth.

22 As the county commissioner, alongside the
23 Craig mayor, we were personally involved with
24 negotiating in the Tri-State community assistance
25 settlement. The testimony provided to the PUC was that

1 Tri-State was not settling or negotiating for the other
2 owners of Craig Station, because they had no authority
3 to do so. The owners were fully placed in a position
4 to provide their own proportional community assistance.

5 We request the PUC find it in the public
6 interest that Xcel is responsible for their
7 proportional share of the community assistance
8 regarding the Craig Station. Xcel's response of
9 resistance to paying their fair share should be
10 admonished by the Commission at this time. Withholding
11 community assistance is unethical, not acknowledging
12 their impact on our communities. Xcel has a
13 responsibility to Moffat County and Craig.

14 Xcel's 10% ownership in Units 1 and 2, at
15 the Craig Station, makes them responsible for 15% of
16 the property tax at Craig Station, approximately 1.4
17 million per year. Our community is asking for the same
18 assistance that upholds 10% of the property tax,
19 totaling \$14,023,800. The 14 million goes directly to
20 our school systems, fire department, hospital,
21 community college, and to keep roads maintained in our
22 community.

23 Xcel should also be responsible for the
24 direct labor income effects. Xcel must acknowledge its
25 workforce impacts in Moffat and the City of Craig. 60%

1 of the workers employed at the unit stations live in
2 Moffat County or the City of Craig.

3 We approximated lost wages, from early
4 closure, and the portion of the worker money circulated
5 in our community. We considered Moffat-based station
6 workers making an average salary of \$118,000. Over
7 five and a half years, with the early closure, spending
8 60% of that salary in Moffat County, created a direct
9 impact of \$14,797 200, which we are requesting for the
10 early closure years of the Hayden Station.

11 That number considers not all of the
12 wages from the Moffat-based Hayden workforce is spent
13 in our community; however, the portions that are spent
14 here contribute to property taxes, sales tax, and other
15 multiplier effects, such as spending with households,
16 utilities, restaurants, et cetera.

17 In summary, Moffat County respectfully
18 requests the PUC finds its in its best interests and
19 supports the \$14,023,800 10-year requests of property
20 tax, and \$14,797,200 in direct labor income tax effect
21 from the Hayden Station, totaling \$28,821,000, which we
22 will place in our community trust fund, dedicated to
23 offsetting the labor loss of coal jobs and property
24 taxes.

25 In addition, we request that the PUC will

1 find it in the public's interest to apply a just
2 transition project adder, to incentivize Xcel projects
3 to be located in Moffat County, as well as assure an
4 appointment of a representative, from Moffat County or
5 the City of Craig, on any future board created
6 involving a carbon-free future development initiative,
7 as Xcel proposes in this hearing. Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Thank you. Thank you.
9 Ms. Sonja Macys, Mr. Ryan Wattles -- oh, sorry. I got
10 it wrong. Ms. Angelica Salinas.

11 FROM THE AUDIENCE: Neither one.

12 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Sorry. Mr. Ryan
13 Wattles.

14 MR. WATTLES: Commissioners, thanks for
15 the opportunity to speak here today. My name is Ryan
16 Wattles, and I serve as the President of the School
17 Board for the Hayden District. I am here to express
18 our concern regarding the scheduled shutdown of the
19 Hayden Station, and the profound impacts it will have
20 on our community, especially on our school district.

21 This is not just an energy transition.
22 For us, it's an economic cliff. Hayden school district
23 stands to lose approximately 46% of its property tax
24 base when the Hayden Station closes. That level of
25 reduction will result in difficult solutions, including

1 staffing cuts, program elimination, and deferred
2 maintenance. Those cuts will affect the quality of
3 education we can provide to our community for years, if
4 not decades, to come.

5 We already operate under a very tight
6 budget. In fact, for our current fiscal year, the
7 board's budget deficit doubled, in an attempt to keep
8 staff salaries in line with inflation. We do not have
9 room, in our budget, to absorb this type of revenue
10 loss.

11 In 2017, school district voters approved
12 a bond to build a desperately needed 3K through 12
13 school. At the time, the plant closure for the Hayden
14 Station was 2036. Now, with an outstanding debt of 24
15 million, we're facing a financial cliff.

16 Colorado Senate Bill 19-236 requires
17 repayment of the tax losses that impact voter-approved
18 debt. Our hope is that the Commission will enforce
19 that obligation.

20 As part of our economic transition
21 strategy, the Town of Hayden is actively working to
22 increase housing stock. In order to support additional
23 students, that will inevitably come with more housing.
24 School districts will need additional school facilities
25 and staff to meet that growth.

1 Without a full property tax backfill to
2 stabilize the district's finances, and pay down
3 existing debts, we'll be forced to ask voters for a
4 mill levy increase, without any tax reduction burden,
5 the very same community that already has the highest
6 property tax rates in Yampa Valley and will be hit the
7 hardest by job loss and rising cost. This is
8 unsustainable and not the promise Colorado made to
9 pursue just transition.

10 We cannot close the door on coal and its
11 jobs, while simultaneously asking a struggling tax base
12 to carry more financial burden. Just transition must
13 included 10 years of the full property tax backfill, at
14 a minimum, which would align us with what other
15 communities have received, and genuine engagement with
16 the county, town, school district and fire district, to
17 ensure a collaborative path forward.

18 We understand the urgency of moving
19 forward with renewable energy, but this transition must
20 be just. Our districts and our town are being left
21 behind.

22 We urge the Commission to take into
23 account the devastating local impact this closure will
24 have, and to work to ensure that mitigation funding,
25 workforce transition support, and school stabilization

1 funding is not just offered in principal, but delivered
2 in practice.

3 We cannot educate tomorrow's workforce
4 with yesterday's resources. As the state changes how
5 it powers homes and businesses, we ask it does not
6 extinguish the future of children in Hayden. Thank
7 you.

8 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Thank you. I am just
9 going to go down the list. Wayne DeLuca, Kanjimal
10 Moser, Ms. Katie Boyle, Ms. Kathy Casper. Thank you.

11 MR. DeLUCCA: My name is William DeLuca.
12 Thank you for being here. I was born and raised in
13 this valley. I am going to speak with you under kind
14 of two hats, the first one being, I worked at the power
15 plant. I worked there for 35 years.

16 I have been a member of the Western Fire
17 Protection District, here in this town, for about 38.
18 When I first joined, we were an all-volunteer
19 department. We had a 250 square-mile district, not
20 very densely populated, to run probably 150 calls a
21 year. And, as volunteers, it was taxing, but we could
22 manage.

23 Now our call load is around the 500 mark,
24 somewhere in that area. Because we are densely
25 populated, that, cannot be managed by volunteers. As a

1 result, we have hired paid staff.

2 So, we have seen these numbers, and we've
3 heard about the tax load, and what it's going to cost
4 us. Let me give you, I think, some real-world things
5 that are going to happen.

6 Our tax base is around, from the power
7 plant, was around 48%, I guess it was somewhere around
8 52, earlier. If that goes away, let me tell you what
9 really happens.

10 What really happens, when you call 9-1-1
11 in this community, nobody is going to answer. There
12 will be no ambulance service. God forbid you're on
13 this highway, that we call, "Interstate 40," or God
14 forbid you are in an accident, waiting to be rescued,
15 you call 9-1-1, nobody is going to come. You lost
16 those services completely.

17 So, we can talk about numbers all we
18 want. That's what really happens.

19 As an employee of the power plant, we
20 were told, from the beginning, that Xcel Energy was --
21 they were determined that the valley would not lose any
22 jobs. We would not lose any tax base. There was going
23 to be some transition.

24 They showed up, probably just after the
25 1st of the year, representatives of Xcel Energy, and

1 said, Dang, guys, sorry. We're just not going to get
2 it done in time. And they put up a big presentation of
3 the things going through the PUC, and holdups, and this
4 kind of thing, and that we're just not going to cut it
5 by the time we close this facility down.

6 Don't worry. You can have a job if you
7 want one. You are probably going to end up going to
8 the Front Range, which they know 95% of the people
9 aren't going to do.

10 But the interesting thing to me was this:
11 One of our employees, in a moment of frustration said,
12 you know what? Shut them down. Why don't you shut
13 them down. Close all of the coal facilities in a week.
14 Shut them down, now, all of the coal units.

15 The representative from Xcel said: Oh,
16 no. We can't do that. We're not ready, in any way,
17 shape or form. We're not ready. As a matter of fact,
18 we need you guys working hard, and to keep those units
19 running, and we need dependable power. In the
20 meantime, right over his shoulder was the presentation
21 showing nothing is proposed.

22 So, if you got nothing proposed now,
23 what's going to happen in, what, two and a half years,
24 before you do shut them down?

25 So, my third person is up here as a

1 ratepayer and a consumer. I mean, I'm not sure, if
2 there is nothing in place, where the power is going to
3 be coming from. You can't just keep saying we're going
4 to put in more wind turbines, because, if you know
5 anything about transmission, the system doesn't work
6 that way. Most of the time the wind is blowing, is
7 generating, we don't need it anyway. We have got no
8 means of storing it.

9 So, there's some options out there for
10 this facility. Here's what I would ask you. To offset
11 this, we need somebody on that site, and we need it to
12 produce electricity, we need it to produce jobs, and we
13 need it to produce tax.

14 This community is on a countdown, heading
15 for disaster. We cannot sustain. We have had that
16 facility, I think, since the mid-60s. We've built
17 probably this building right here is from energy money.
18 We have had it since then, and we want something like
19 it.

20 We want to keep it, so we can sustain our
21 own tax base, and not have to worry about the state
22 kicking in money, to keep our schools open, or some
23 kind of benefits and grants coming for our emergency
24 services. We've stayed here on our own, and we want to
25 continue that.

1 Thank you so much for being here. Thank
2 you for listening, and I appreciate it.

3 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Thank you. Kanjimal
4 Moser, Kate Boyer, Kathy Casper, Tony Peroulis.

5 MR. MOSER: Hey. I am Kanjimal Moser. I
6 am a resident of Hayden, also formerly worked at the
7 power plant, in my youth. Closing down coal-generated
8 power plants, which are reliable, is amazingly, in my
9 opinion, stupid.

10 Wind generation -- you keep talking about
11 clean energy -- wind generation. What happens to those
12 blades when they degenerate? They are going to go in
13 landfills, which doesn't sound like great clean energy.
14 The blades and the motors at the top, those high tiers,
15 require lubrication from the fuels you're rejecting.

16 You are talking about the solar energy.
17 Also not reliable. You are not talking about the
18 amount of power needed to stabilize the power grid.
19 Coal generation puts out the power needed.

20 You are talking about data centers. The
21 data centers require umpteenthth more power, not less.
22 And the power generated by wind and solar can't do it.

23 If you have something reliable, you have
24 something that works, you have something that will make
25 it so that the people of the communities are not

1 suffering through blackouts, brownouts and high power
2 bills.

3 If you are considering the communities,
4 the people of the communities, the people working the
5 power plants, 24/7 shift work, keeping reliable power
6 to the communities. Not only does some of the power
7 plants here in Colorado generate power for Colorado,
8 and their communities, they generate for other states.

9 Other states that have been relying on
10 electricity powered by solar, powered by wind, who are
11 having brownouts and blackouts pretty consistently,
12 they don't have the needs this community has, for power
13 that's reliable, and in very cold winters.

14 I would hope that you would take the
15 people you serve into consideration, the people of this
16 state, and possibly other states, that rely on reliable
17 coal-generated power.

18 We talk about other nations. They have
19 coal-generated power plants. They're polluting like
20 crazy in India and in China. Our power plants are
21 required to have scrubbers on them, which helps clean
22 the air.

23 The stuff people see coming out of the
24 power plants, that some people assume is pollution, is
25 steam, because the furnaces create superheat, steam,

1 which is what runs the turbines, not only the coal.

2 Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Thank you. Is Ms. Katie
4 Boyle, Ms. Kathy Casper, Mr. Tony Peroulis, Mr. Matthew
5 Mendisco.

6 MS. BOYLE: Hey. My name is Katie Boyle.
7 I am a resident of Hayden. I am an attainability
8 professional, and I am also a member of the Hayden
9 school district.

10 I got my Master's in Environmental
11 Policy, 20 years ago, and, in my class, 20 years ago,
12 we were talking about what just transition looks like,
13 and we knew what it looked like 20 years ago.

14 That's not what we're seeing now. When I
15 moved to Hayden, in 2021, I did so knowing that the
16 power plant closure was coming, but with the
17 expectation that the State of Colorado, a national
18 leader in decarbonization, would ensure the transition
19 protected jobs, repurposed the site, sustainably, and
20 stabilized the local tax base.

21 That expectation was clearly misplaced,
22 and in what we're seeing so far. I have been stunned
23 by the failure of the state and Xcel to propose a just
24 transition for Hayden, the smallest and least
25 economically diverse community, being asked to bear the

1 burden of Colorado's energy shift.

2 Unequivocally, Hayden cannot weather this
3 transition without substantial support. As mentioned
4 earlier, our vote supported the mill levies and bonds
5 to invest in essential infrastructure, like schools and
6 community services.

7 Those commitments were made in good
8 faith, that the power plant would stay open until 2036,
9 and those communities' commitments are now in jeopardy,
10 because the plant is closing years earlier than
11 expected. As a result, Hayden now carries the highest
12 property tax rate in the Yampa Valley, with far less
13 earnings potential and power than our neighbors.

14 Due to this tax burden, it's very
15 unlikely the school district and fire district would be
16 able to support the targeted growth of Hayden. Without
17 this requested \$89 million, taxpayers will not be
18 afforded additional bonds to support growth for the
19 community.

20 I came here today, not in opposition to
21 the decarbonization. This is my field. I've worked on
22 climate policy, at the UN. I've worked in clean tech
23 start-up companies, and for the last 14 years, I've
24 trained the next generation of climate leaders at a
25 leading sustainability graduate program. I know what a

1 just transition looks like, and I expected it, when I
2 came to Hayden. This is not it. This is not it.

3 I urge the Commission to meet or exceed
4 the town and county's request for \$89 million in tax
5 backfill and direct mitigation payments; and I ask that
6 you ensure that Hayden's local governments, including
7 the school district and the fire district, are given a
8 seat at the table in future decisions that so directly
9 affect our community.

10 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Thank you. Ms. Kathy
11 Casper, Mr. Tony Peroulis, Mr. Matthew Mendisco,
12 Ms. Olivia Sheat, Mr. Gary Markle, Mr. Chris Waite and
13 Ms. Susie Ronchi, Mr. Bruce Johnson.

14 (Off the record.)

15 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Okay. No worries if you
16 don't want to speak, when I call your name, you can
17 ignore it.

18 MS. SHELLEY: My name is Evelyn Shelley.
19 I am a registered nurse, in Northwest Colorado, with a
20 Master's degree. And I want to make it clear that,
21 through all of the rumors that you hear, you are
22 dealing with uneducated people, from the boondocks, and
23 I can state, or I can disagree, that you are not.

24 As a resident, a healthcare professional,
25 in Northwest Colorado, and a Hayden taxpayer, for over

1 a decade, I strongly urge the Commission to consider
2 the detrimental impact and loss of the generation
3 station. Craig and Hayden are not just locations on a
4 map. They are a tightly knit town, built around energy
5 production.

6 The company is not just an industry here.
7 It's the backbone of our local community and the
8 foundation of our livelihood and lifeline for essential
9 services.

10 The premature closure of the coal-fired
11 facilities will have devastating effects. We will see
12 massive job losses, a sharp decline in tax revenue,
13 erosion in essential services that rural communities
14 rely on, especially health care.

15 Our local services are already operating
16 with limited resources, with reduced funds and
17 population flight. These hospitals will not survive,
18 leaving thousands without timely access to care.

19 This is not a just transition. It's an
20 economic and health care collapse in the making.

21 As an RN, I would add in this part. Just
22 now, I was working in the ER this morning, and I worked
23 a mass casualty incident event on Highway 40. So,
24 without these -- without funding from our local
25 generation station, we're not going to be here. As Mr.

1 DeLucca spoke earlier, we're not going to be here when
2 you have accidents, when you call 9-1-1, when you have
3 a fire. We're not going to be here to respond to your
4 emergencies.

5 You must ensure any transition includes
6 real sustained investment, and in infrastructure, job
7 creation and rural health care support. Otherwise, we
8 are abandoning the very communities that have powered
9 Colorado and surrounding states for decades.

10 In addition to Melody's point of 60% of
11 workforce for Hayden Station living in Moffat County, a
12 lot of those folks work in healthcare. The hospital
13 already is struggling with budget cuts, due to an
14 egregious budget deficit at the State Capitol. Rural
15 areas, with critical access to hospitals, are required
16 to attain a more intensive level of training, because
17 we don't have access to urban city resources.

18 Without the support of this generation,
19 our communities will lose critical life-saving
20 stabilization and treatment. When the coal facilities
21 shut down, it will result in job loss, population
22 drain, and revenue shortfall, which will hit the
23 hospitals hard.

24 Fewer patients, fewer dollars, and higher
25 fixed costs means service lines will close, staff will

1 leave, and access to care will diminish. For some
2 hospitals, survival may no longer be possible, without
3 serious reinvestment in health care infrastructure and
4 workforce support. We risk creating health care
5 deserts across rural Northwest Colorado.

6 This is not a just transition. It's a
7 tertiary crisis in the making. Our community, its
8 workers and patients deserve better.

9 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Thank you. Anybody who
10 wants to speak, why don't you just come down.

11 MR. PEROULIS: My name is Tony Peroulis.
12 That's not important who I am. It does not matter.
13 What we're here for does matter.

14 Yes, I am an avid Donald Trump supporter,
15 and I support Magna policies, but that's not important
16 right now. What's important is that we, as a society,
17 don't try and find convenient truths, partial truths,
18 or political truths. You need to find the whole truth.

19 The only thing I can say is, if anybody
20 hasn't, write this down: "Newsmax, A Climate
21 Conversation." Go to You-Tube, watch it. It brings
22 out the entire truths, not partial truths, and it can
23 help you decide that there is no just transition.

24 You want a just transition that can turn
25 the lights off? That's what you will transition to,

1 the darkness. And wind and solar will not be able to
2 accommodate the rising population, AI industry,
3 everything that we have. It will not work. Don't take
4 my word for it.

5 And everybody in here, this special that
6 the Newsmax had is one hour. Take one hour out of your
7 time, listen to the experts that know what they are
8 talking about. If you haven't, you should listen to
9 it.

10 I go back to an old saying of Yogi Berra:
11 It ain't over till it's over. If it's not broke, don't
12 fix it. Fossil fuel, coal energy, and everything, is
13 necessary to keep these communities going. The just
14 transition? You won't have anything to transition to.
15 You'll lose communities, you'll lose everything.

16 There's nothing to keep people going
17 without fossil fuels, and keep the local power plants
18 in operation. Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Thank you.

20 MR. ARNOLD: Good evening, Commissioners.
21 My name is Gary Arnold. I appreciate the time for the
22 public comment this evening. I have the pleasure of
23 serving as Business Manager for Rocky Mountain
24 Pipefitters Local 208, representing over 3 and 1/2
25 thousand pipefitters and plumbers across the State of

1 Colorado.

2 I will echo a lot of the sentiment and
3 thoughts already shared at tonight's Public Comment
4 Hearing. We need to focus on what is a just
5 transition, and how do we get there, that doesn't leave
6 communities and workers behind.

7 I look at the Pueblo Innovative Energy
8 Solution Advisory Committee, which studied replacement
9 of the Comanche Unit 3, but, I think that study
10 pertains to both Craig and Hayden Station as well.
11 What they found is traditional renewables, like wind
12 and solar, don't come anywhere near replacing the badly
13 needed tax revenue or the jobs that workers depend on
14 to support themselves and their families.

15 They looked at possible replacement
16 generation that did provide a just transition, that did
17 replace the lost tax revenue and the middle class jobs
18 that would be lost. It's a lot more focused on
19 advanced energy technologies.

20 I would strongly urge the Commission to
21 look at replacement generation at the site of the
22 retiring assets. We already have transmission
23 infrastructure, substation infrastructure there, and it
24 would be a waste of our resources not to utilize those.

25 And, so, when we look at how we're going

1 to come up with the almost 14 gigawatts that Xcel
2 anticipated needs to be secured for this Just
3 Transition Solicitation filing, let's do it in places
4 that have been supporting Colorado for decades and
5 decades.

6 The workers at those sites have labored,
7 and in tough conditions, for long hours, and never even
8 asked for recognition or a simple thank you. They will
9 be satisfied by having an opportunity to have access to
10 those middle class jobs that provide wages and
11 benefits.

12 And, so, we also need to take a look at
13 the study that Colorado Energy Office commissioned, by
14 System Analytic, that determined the most competitive
15 way to get to net neutral was with wind, solar and
16 battery backup. So, we know we need base load. We
17 need we need something other than wind and solar, just
18 simply from the commissioned study.

19 So, let's look at that these sites, and
20 let's figure out how we can embrace some of the
21 advanced energy generation, whether that be geothermal
22 or nuclear or gas, with carbon capture, so that these
23 communities and these workers are kept whole.

24 There's nothing just about coming away
25 with a fraction of the tax revenue needed, or workers

1 walking away and requesting to be relocated, to replace
2 the middle class jobs that they currently enjoy. Thank
3 you.

4 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Thank you.

5 MR. MONGER: Good afternoon. Doug
6 Monger, citizen. There we go. I'm sorry.

7 I am Doug Monger, 121107 County Road 69.
8 You guys know where that is. It's within shooting
9 distance of the power plant.

10 So, I'm a fourth generation Routt County
11 native. We came here and homesteaded, in 1890. So
12 we've been without power, we have been with power. We
13 moved into the Monger Farm, in 1994, and we have been
14 here, during it all.

15 So, I just want to say, my neighborhood,
16 I see the blink of the emergency signal on top of the
17 tower every night, in my bedroom. So, I love the power
18 plant. My 20 years, as a county commissioner -- I said
19 it's 20 years -- and I remember, in the 20 years, I
20 remember the plant construction. I was young enough to
21 remember the plant construction, and what a wonderful
22 thing it was, that we were going to have a power plant.
23 That was after the MacGregor plant had shut down, and,
24 yet, so we had all of this power and energy coming, and
25 we were going to be able to create power, and be able

1 to export some of our energy out of this valley.

2 And, so, we partnered -- the county
3 partnered -- before my time -- we partnered with the
4 energy companies and Peabody Coal and the rest. For
5 people that don't appreciate it, my grandpa had his own
6 coal mine, and they transported coal into Steamboat
7 Springs, with a horse and buggy, and, so, during the
8 wintertime, and on a sleigh, for people that don't
9 understand the coal.

10 And, again, today, we're not talking -- I
11 think we're way past the conversation of talking about
12 coal-fired power. That seems like that cat is out of
13 the bag. And I was against the whole concept of
14 relinquishing our coal-fired power, but we're into this
15 now, and now we're talking about just transition.

16 So, during the time that I was a county
17 commissioner, and before my time, we were working on
18 the supply issue. We had the power plant, and, then,
19 so, the county enabled Peabody, and all of these
20 people, to basically remain and pillage our lands, our
21 rural lands.

22 And then, after the Reclamation Act came
23 out, we finally got them to be responsible, but there
24 was a lot that they were not responsible for, for some
25 of that reclamation as well, before that time frame.

1 If you want to go to Mount Harris, you can see what
2 Mount Harris looks like, and what the impacts of
3 reclamation were doing.

4 You know, again, we allowed Peabody to
5 supply the coal to the power plant, and they used our
6 county roads, because it was a great thing to do for
7 our economic viability and economic development, for
8 our community, specifically, Hayden.

9 And, then, you know, all of the ranchers,
10 they worked two jobs. So, when the ranchers were not
11 working on the ranch, they were coal mining. So, you
12 do have to have two jobs to keep things going around
13 here.

14 So, as a county commissioner, I want to
15 say how important it was for us, and me, I thought, to
16 be able to support our coal-fired power plant. And,
17 so, we partnered with them on localized hauling
18 permits, down County Road 27. We partnered with them
19 to come up with a rail spur, that was enabled to put --
20 so we then could haul out Twentymile coal, then to haul
21 it down to the railroad and not have it all on the
22 highways. We partnered with them and we helped to do
23 that.

24 So, I want to talk about just transition
25 just quickly. And I'm sorry I am jumping around here a

1 little bit. So, we're talking about 60 workers right
2 now at the power plant. Well, I remember when it was
3 120 miners -- or 120 power plant workers. It wasn't
4 60. It was 120.

5 And, then, while we've been phasing them
6 out, and they told us they were going to do that, we
7 appreciated them doing that, phasing that out, so we
8 didn't have 120 power plant workers being out of a job
9 when they shut the power plant down.

10 So, but, at the same point in time, I
11 don't believe -- and I think there's been some comments
12 here too -- this is no just transition. There's
13 nothing just about it at all.

14 I agree, No. 1, and I just want to say,
15 as an ex-county commissioner, Commissioner Redmond sent
16 his testimony in, and I would totally support all of
17 what was said in that testimony. Personally, I am
18 offended and insulted and shocked and amazed at the
19 Public Service Company of Colorado's ERP, that while
20 we're six years, and, then, Pueblo's going to be 10
21 years. Are you kidding me?

22 Think about it. I'm just -- this does
23 not take a rocket scientist to figure out the impact of
24 that power plant on the community of Hayden, the
25 surrounding communities. And then, think about it, the

1 impact of Pueblo, and all of the other activities that
2 happened around Pueblo. I just, I'm shocked, and I'm
3 insulted, really, by the ERP.

4 You know, I really didn't want the power
5 plant to go away, and, again, it's my next-door
6 neighbor. I have had a fog from, basically, December
7 until March, when the winds come through, and the
8 moisture goes up in the air, I have a fog at my house,
9 until 11 o'clock in the morning, every morning, because
10 I don't see the sun.

11 So, again, back to the six years versus
12 10 years. Really? So, again, I just want to make it
13 clear, too, we keep thinking, though, this is, well,
14 this is Public Service. Well, this isn't Public
15 Service Company. This is going to be the ratepayers
16 that we have been subsidizing, are going to be paying
17 for this just transition.

18 That's who needs to pay for this. We've
19 been providing good, cheap, economical coal-fired power
20 forever. Well, they need to help us recover, because
21 we did that.

22 Again, I really don't believe there will
23 be a just transition. I won't be here. Really, I'm
24 long of tooth and gray of hair. I don't believe I'll
25 probably be here when that thing probably gets finally

1 reclaimed.

2 And, again, it's right across the street
3 from me, and the whole impact of some of that, the
4 reclamation, will be horrendous to me and my water
5 flows and everything. We're next-door neighbors. We
6 have the waters of the Yampa and the rest.

7 So, yeah, anyhow, thank you very much for
8 your time, and thank you for the remote testimony, and
9 appreciate it.

10 MR. COMSTOCK: Good afternoon,
11 Commissioners. My name is Jeff Comstock, and I have
12 served the Moffat County Commissioners, and our
13 community in Moffat County, for over 25 years, as the
14 Natural Resource Director for the Moffat County
15 Commissioners.

16 Me, myself and Commissioner Villard, who
17 spoke right off the bat tonight, were the county's
18 representatives on the recent Tri-State Settlement
19 Agreement, more commonly known now as the "Moffat
20 Mogel."

21 I would like to speak today, a little
22 bit, about Public Service Company's proposal in front
23 of you. And, for the record, Moffat County, and the
24 City of Craig, have been on the record, since the
25 beginning, opposing the closures of both Hayden Station

1 and Craig Station, but I have to share a little bit of
2 the same insult that former Commissioner Doug Monger
3 shared, but on a different level.

4 When they were looking at the
5 6-to-10-year compensation, Moffat County was completely
6 left out of Public Service Company's proposals. And
7 I'll highlight that Commissioner Villard highlighted a
8 couple of monetary asks, that our community is
9 requesting, and in just transition. I'm going to
10 highlight a couple of the nonmonetary requests that are
11 in our testimony.

12 The credit or the adders. The most
13 meaningful offset to a coal plant and coal mine closure
14 is a large, well-paying employer, that replaces what's
15 been lost or what will be lost in our community.
16 Replacing jobs and tax-paying entities go a lot farther
17 to replacing what we are losing than a simple cash
18 payment does.

19 Therefore, it's critical that our
20 community receives an advantage for new industry site
21 proposals from Xcel. The proposals in front of you
22 mention Pueblo and Routt County, but leaves out Moffat
23 County. It leaves out one of the most directly
24 impacted communities, Moffat County and the City of
25 Craig.

1 We request the PUC support a per-megawatt
2 adder, to allow our communities to be competitive for
3 new energy development. We're losing one of our top 10
4 taxpayers, out of Moffat County, and we need that
5 adder, or that credit, in a new replacement. And we
6 would support even fossil-fuel-based generation.

7 Regarding the carbon-free future
8 development initiative, that Xcel has proposed. Xcel
9 proposes to release an RFI to solicit new and
10 innovative carbon technologies. This would be tied to
11 the \$100 million budget that they are requesting in
12 their proposals before the Public Utilities Commission.

13 They propose technologies like pump
14 hydro, hydroelectric, geothermal, nuclear, geology,
15 carbon capture, hydrogen sources, that fall under their
16 carbon-free umbrella concept. And the advisory board
17 proposed to conduct the process, with eight members,
18 including Pueblo and Hayden. Once again, no mention of
19 Moffat County.

20 Moffat County Commissioners have long had
21 a long productive history of serving as members on
22 local, state and even national boards. We request the
23 Commission adjust the proposals from that eight to nine
24 members, and add a seat for Moffat County, or the City
25 of Craig, to be represented on Xcel's proposed

1 carbon-free future development advisory board, and thus
2 ultimately spending that \$100 million, and, so, it's a
3 big-picture kind of perspective.

4 As Commissioner Villard stated earlier,
5 it's frustrating to see that the Xcel proposal leaves
6 out Craig and Moffat County, and is not considering
7 them directly impacted, when Xcel is one of our top 10
8 taxpayers. And, to top it off, we host 62% of the
9 Hayden Station's workforce in our community.

10 Xcel has proposed up to 14,000 megawatts
11 of new power in this PUC hearing, which is the largest
12 expansion of power generation that the Colorado PUC has
13 before them. When you think about the billions of
14 dollars that such an expansion would cost, the \$28
15 million that Moffat County and the City of Craig
16 requested is a mere cup in the ocean. The Xcel
17 proposal is nine times larger than the Tri-State
18 proposal was, which we just finished our Settlement
19 Agreement on.

20 Despite our assistance being small in
21 scale, compared to the total proposal of the hearing
22 that's in front of you, it's large in scale for our
23 community, and it would change the future of our city
24 and county forever, that just transition. The
25 long-term impacts to our school system, hospitals, fire

1 departments and other taxing districts, is
2 immeasurable.

3 And even when you look at Routt County's
4 community assistance request, into this proposal, it
5 wouldn't even tip the scales of the entire Xcel
6 proposal in front of you today. We ask that you fund
7 both Moffat and Routt County's community assistance
8 proposals.

9 So, in summary, Moffat County's request
10 for the community assistance program is the \$14 million
11 for property tax loss, 14.8 million in direct labor
12 income tax effects, totaling 28.8 million. And we ask
13 that the PUC finds it's in the public's interests to
14 have a strong adder, in the Moffat community, and
15 provide a seat for Moffat County on the carbon-free
16 future development initiative.

17 Thank you for your time.

18 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Thank you. Would anyone
19 else like to speak?

20 MS. DeVOS: Hello. My name is Heather
21 DeVoss, and I am going to take kind of a different
22 tack, although I agree with a lot of things that we're
23 saying.

24 My first statement would be, don't close
25 the coal plants, back up this train, because the only

1 people that are going to really suffer are the
2 taxpayers and the electrical customers.

3 The tax stats, which have been said many,
4 many times, we are going to be decimated when this
5 happens. Then they are going to start to scream, but
6 they need to be screaming now, and the commissioners,
7 of course, and, then, all of the accountant people.

8 I want to tell you, I agree with the one
9 image that was up a few speakers ago. This is a SCOTUS
10 decision. This is all based on environmental factors
11 and policies coming out of the Obama administration,
12 and beyond. It is political. This isn't science, as
13 the other man said, and this -- it's just not
14 commonsense.

15 So, and now we have a new man in the
16 White House. He's already looking into this EF factor
17 and they might overturn it. And there is -- his
18 administration is saying full bore on coal, full bore
19 on oil and gas, and back to the fossil fuels, which are
20 absolutely essential at this point in time to power our
21 homes, to have the lights come on. And he had the
22 Executive Order on energy and coal, and said, don't
23 shut them down.

24 So, then, I am going to move onto
25 science. The International Climate Panel for Climate

1 Change is a political organization. It's members of a
2 board. They are not scientists. There is
3 science-based data, all over the Internet, that
4 contradicts what's going on.

5 And I would say, watch that movie the
6 gentleman talked about. The carbon emissions that you
7 are basing this on is, like, in the atmosphere .4 of
8 1%, if I remember right. Reducing it is irrelevant.

9 So, what's next. Sorry. The carbon
10 emissions are good for plant life. You go back in
11 history, tens of thousands of years, whenever the
12 plants thrived, people thrive, okay?

13 Then, next I had economic damage. I
14 think much has been said about this. It's for
15 something that doesn't add any value. Do the math.

16 So, I think my three minutes are up, but,
17 I just want to say, do the math. No matter how much
18 Xcel thinks they are going to put in, it's going to be
19 a drop in the bucket to using the 100 years of supply
20 that we have in our backyards, to produce clean, cheap,
21 reliable, 24/7, and gas won't even do it. Texas had
22 deaths when those gas things froze up, and they charged
23 me hundreds of dollars to help pay for Xcel's mistake
24 down there in Texas.

25 I don't want to see it happen. It's

1 wrong. Thank you very much.

2 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Thank you.

3 MR. JOHNSON: Good afternoon. I am Bruce
4 Johnson, and I am a recent taxpayer in Routt County. I
5 have been here since 2020, but I have lived in Colorado
6 since 1941.

7 So, I have had a little experience. I
8 want to commend you folks for the time you spend on the
9 Commission. I spent nine years, back in the '90s, on
10 the Oil and Gas Commission, as a representative from
11 Eastern Colorado, representing the agricultural side of
12 the equation. So, I understand a little bit what goes
13 through there.

14 What I am here to say is different today
15 than what I heard when I was there, is, when we were
16 out in the community, listening to the people that had
17 to speak about what was going on at that time, with oil
18 and gas activity, the audience was filled with
19 professional people who spoke strictly against
20 everything, that was wrong. Almost everything they
21 said was false information. These are real people.
22 These are real experiences. This is their livelihood.
23 They have this tax base.

24 I pay a lot of tax in Routt County. I
25 pay even a lot more tax in Weld County. And, in Weld

1 County, I did have some solar, I am speaking from my
2 experience with the solar, but this expense is big
3 time. Where we need to be going in, as they are
4 indicating here, is supplemental.

5 If you look at the growth trends that are
6 out there, they are looking at how much more
7 electricity is going to be needed over the next five,
8 10 years. Xcel is having a hard time just meeting up
9 with its growth, let alone trying to replace.

10 From a personal standpoint, and on our
11 solar, we use it to substitute for part of our
12 electricity for our center pivot irrigation system, our
13 plumbing systems, that are necessary for us to grow
14 crops. We're using mortgage payments to generate
15 electricity to replace the Xcel costs of that
16 electricity. I know that there is over -- there were a
17 lot of, like, tens of thousands of acres that were
18 submitted to Xcel/Public Service, years ago, for solar
19 activity, and every single acre was declined. So, I
20 don't see where they are looking into the future.

21 This idea about transition. This is more
22 of a pipe dream, I think, than reality. They need to
23 be looking to supplement it. Keep this stuff going.

24 I have to have electricity at night. My
25 sprinklers, my pumps have to work 24/7 in the

1 summertime. So, that's just the way they work. I
2 can't raise half a crop.

3 And this is where we need to be looking,
4 where the failure comes into the solar and wind. I
5 have lived here all of my life. Wind goes down at
6 night. In the daytime, again, we have got two sources
7 of energy in the daytime. We don't have it at night.
8 These kinds of things we get our electricity from are
9 right here.

10 So, therefore, I feel that you need to be
11 really looking at where we need to be going. I am not
12 against it. I think it has its place in the growth,
13 not as a replacement of that. It needs to be working
14 in a transition. Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Thank you.

16 MR. OWEN: Good afternoon, Chair and
17 Commissioners. My name is Eric Owen, and I appreciate
18 the opportunity to speak today.

19 For the past two years, I have served as
20 Superintendent of the Hayden School District, here in
21 Routt County, and, so, I am a relative newcomer to this
22 conversation. This is the first time I have provided
23 public comments to the Public Utilities Commission.

24 I appreciate the chance to advocate for
25 students and families. I get to represent myself, and

1 in my role.

2 As you heard, the accelerated closure of
3 the Xcel Hayden power plant is deeply concerning for
4 our community, but I am particularly concerned for the
5 public school system. You received Answer Testimony
6 from the Hayden's town manager, Matthew Mendisco,
7 describing the burden the loss of property tax revenue
8 may have on essential services. You have heard it,
9 tonight, from others.

10 Education is the backbone of any
11 resilient community, and this sudden shift threatens
12 the sustainability of ours. The Hayden School District
13 currently receives approximately 2.4 million in actual
14 property tax revenue from the plant. Of that, 1.75
15 million supports our general fund, ensuring that we can
16 recruit and retain teachers and maintain appropriate
17 class sizes and provide core instructional programs for
18 our students, and with an additional 74,000 annual
19 support from our bond repayment.

20 The school district carries approximately
21 \$24 million in bond debt, approved by voters in this
22 community, with the understanding the plant would
23 remain operational through 2036. The acceleration of
24 Xcel's closure timeline, coupled with the initial
25 proposal of the \$16 million over six years, put forth

1 by the Public Service Company of Colorado, put that
2 assumption or that trust in our financial future and
3 the future of critical community services in jeopardy.

4 The coal mine and energy production, I
5 found, have been a cornerstone to Hayden's economic
6 backbone. It is our identity, and established the
7 civic infrastructure you have heard have been built
8 around these industries.

9 The Xcel plant opened 60 years ago, six
10 decades of generation. Our school district has been
11 supported by families who work in these sectors. They
12 have contributed not just labor and tax dollars, but
13 deep commitment to the success of our students and our
14 town.

15 In a small rural district like ours, 2.4
16 million is not an abstract number. It represents
17 teachers and classrooms, special education services,
18 extra-curriculum activity opportunities, and safe,
19 well-maintained schools. It represents promises made
20 to our voters and our families, that we will provide
21 quality education, regardless of our zip code.

22 I ask the Commission to recognize the
23 gravity of this assistance transition to support a path
24 forward that does not leave our communities behind.

25 Specifically, I urge the Commission to

1 support the 44 million in property tax backfill
2 funding, and the 45 million in economic development
3 interests proposed by Routt County and the Town of
4 Hayden. These funds are essential to allow Hayden,
5 Colorado, and Routt County, the opportunity to
6 implement a thorough plan, that achieves as close to a
7 just transition for all of its citizens, and includes
8 quality education, in a safe environment, for the
9 children of Hayden.

10 Thank you, again, for your time and your
11 thoughtful consideration.

12 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Thank you.

13 MR. SULLIVAN: All right. My name is
14 Brandon Sullivan. I have lived in Hayden since 2008.
15 I'll admit I probably came a little unprepared, as far
16 as exactly what the Just Transition Plan is exactly and
17 who's representing it right now.

18 So, I'll just kind of state what I feel
19 is a little commonsense, and what I think, about with
20 green energy and the thoughts of Colorado politics, and
21 where we're going to go.

22 I think the green energy thing is a
23 delusion. Everyone wants to think about solar panels
24 and wind is somehow green, or emission-free, but, I
25 mean, is that the same type of mining of, you know,

1 rare metals, just not the same as coal.

2 That's okay. And, then, people seem to
3 forget that while we're just going to mine that
4 mineral, and just ship it to be processed into a
5 chemical, to be shipped again, processed into a product
6 that will be shipped again, to someone who is going to
7 put a label on it, to be shipped again to a store,
8 that's going to sell it, to be shipped again. It's a
9 never-ending shipping process, which, I'm sorry. When
10 you put solar and wind in those processes, and that's
11 exactly what it is, there's nothing emission-free about
12 it at all.

13 And every day, you can read the
14 newspapers. The world is trying to transition to some
15 sort of green energy. We're still claiming it raises
16 the heat, greenhouse gases, whatever the science wants
17 to say. It just isn't working and it's not going to
18 work.

19 You know, coal, yeah, it's got its
20 drawbacks, absolutely. But still, even in our own
21 valley, all of the stories I have seen presented in the
22 Craig Daily Press, and Steamboat Pilot, still can't
23 even put an up-to-date picture on the front page of
24 their story. No one wants to talk about the 10s if not
25 100s of millions of dollars these outfits put into

1 I grew up learning to turn off the lights when you
2 leave a room, and now it's, like, man, whatever you go
3 buy, make sure it's something you have to plug in.

4 And the coal is what we need to stay
5 reliable, what we want to put on the demand of our
6 grid, the coal, the oil, the natural gas, all of them.
7 I don't know what the push is, because it's bad
8 politics to turn them off.

9 I mean, sure, there's a place for wind
10 and solar. Sure there's a place for it. But there is
11 also a place to have reliable coal and natural gas
12 energy, that won't shut off at night, or go down in an
13 ice storm, or, I mean, that's all possible. There are
14 transmission lines that can all fail.

15 But it's all great to think we're going
16 in an environmentally friendly direction, but it's a
17 bunch of hocus pocus, if you look at it. And I just
18 feel like, if you really care about this community up
19 here, you would really consider the fact that we
20 provide not only to our communities and surrounding
21 areas of Colorado, but when the nation's in trouble,
22 like Texas, a few years ago, Hayden Station did extend
23 power to Texas and, in broad, to many other places.
24 I'm sure of that.

25 So, I don't know. I am just hoping,

1 whether it is politics or just an environmentally
2 friendly process, I think that we should all start
3 using some commonsense and really weigh all of the
4 options.

5 MR. BRISTOL: Good afternoon. I'm John
6 Bristol, Executive Director of the Routt County
7 Economic Development Partnership.

8 I certainly appreciate the opportunity to
9 be here, and thank you, the PUC, and the Commissioners,
10 for your efforts to listen to the community and the
11 diverse array of opinions and commentary. And,
12 certainly, I thank the attendees. This is a good
13 turnout here, of folks, taking their time today.

14 So, I have never engaged with the PUC
15 directly, so, this is a first time for me. I am not
16 necessarily the best public speaker, so bear with me a
17 little bit here.

18 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Welcome.

19 MR. BRISTOL: Thank you. Why am I here?
20 Well, my great grandparents homesteaded in the late
21 1800s, and operated a cattle and sheep ranch, in north
22 Routt County. My great grandfather was a coal delivery
23 driver. He delivered coal to the local dairy. That's
24 where he met my grandmother, and the magic happened,
25 back in the 1930s.

1 My father, then, was a rancher, born
2 here, but spent his time working over at the Climax
3 mine in Lake County. We lived just south of Buena
4 Vista.

5 In the '80s, we saw, firsthand, the
6 experience of what happens when a mine and an industry
7 transitions, and the impact of a closure. And it's
8 really a cliff, right, and certainly the lack of
9 planning by elected officials, community leaders, to
10 diversify the local economy. And this is what
11 happened: Jobs were lost, families left, friends,
12 neighbors, and the tax base, the schools deteriorated,
13 and it was tough to see.

14 That's why I am working in economic
15 development. That is why I focus on it, because it was
16 so impactful. And I don't want to see that here in
17 Routt County. We can't do that. We have to learn from
18 the past.

19 We love this community, and we
20 desperately want to avoid that devastation. I had the
21 opportunity to see the really good folks that are
22 employed at the Hayden power station, toured the
23 facility, and as well as the coal supplier, the
24 Twentymile Mine. It is incredible to see that
25 firsthand.

1 The long wall, and the work that folks do
2 both underground and aboveground, and supply chain, and
3 everything that's involved, I just appreciate and honor
4 the work that the folks do and have done for
5 generations. It's really incredible, the engineering
6 and ingenuity that's involved. These folks are
7 hard-working. They are delivering electrons across
8 America.

9 I respect and honor it, and we really
10 need to support our friends, the workers, our
11 neighbors, and the community.

12 Commissioners, your decision is
13 incredibly consequential, and has a far-reaching impact
14 here in Routt County. As you know, the reported
15 economic impact, in Routt County, is approximately \$319
16 million per year, in economic impact. That's largely
17 here in west Routt County, that's Hayden, the community
18 here and surrounding communities. Commissioner Monger
19 spoke to the right jobs, and the economy here, and I
20 certainly associate myself with his comments.

21 Every single day, folks are looking at
22 their kids, their spouses, their bank accounts, and
23 wondering how they keep moving ahead. Folks are
24 watching high school wrestling matches, basketball
25 games, and the clock is ticking. We're all in this.

1 The PUC is in this. The Sword of Damocles is over our
2 heads.

3 Routt County, and the City and County of
4 Hayden, have shown tremendous leadership. I have to
5 applaud our commissioners, town boards, special
6 districts and everybody that serves on those
7 committees. They have put in the work for planning and
8 action plans, for a thoughtful path forward, through
9 master plans. The Town of Hayden, the county, and
10 others, really have a good strategy forward, including
11 tax relief to residents and businesses, but they need
12 additional support.

13 The total request from Routt County and
14 Hayden, with both communities, and economic development
15 support, is certainly thoughtful, it's reasonable,
16 given the impact to these areas. And not only that,
17 it's supported by the data. They have provided that.

18 And this is about funding our schools.
19 It's about funding public safety, roads, libraries,
20 hospitals, districts, and other core public services
21 that we need to really think about, through this
22 transition. It's important that we provide that path
23 for folks to be able to make it.

24 I saw how it wasn't done in the '80s,
25 over in Lake County. We can avoid that here, through

1 thoughtful leadership, and through your support, now,
2 we can do that.

3 All that said, I do want to underscore
4 two key items for you. One, the importance of solely
5 focusing on the request by Routt County governments and
6 the Town of Hayden. That is the key. Focus on that.

7 And, two, is, the 10-year time frame is
8 really important. You have heard that from multiple
9 folks here. It takes time. And I certainly want to
10 focus in on that and consider that.

11 And, again, I applaud you all for your
12 public service, for being here. Having the
13 opportunities for folks to really speak up and engage,
14 that's so important.

15 So, thank you, and thank you for being in
16 Hayden, the most directly impacted community.

17 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Thank you.

18 MS. STEWART: Good afternoon.

19 Commissioners. Thank you so much for joining us in
20 person here. We spoke to Joe Pereira, earlier, and we
21 understand that it's very unique to have all three
22 Commissioners here. So, thank you for joining us in
23 Hayden.

24 My name is Michelle Stewart. I am
25 Executive Director of the Yampa Valley Sustainability

1 Council, or YFSS. We are a regional, nonprofit
2 organization, that is guided by its mission to serve as
3 a leader, resource and catalyst for building resilience
4 and stability in the Yampa Valley region. We serve
5 both Routt and Moffat County, and are focused on
6 accelerating regional decarbonization and investment
7 and resilience to the impacts of the changing climate.

8 I, myself, am a Colorado native. I grew
9 up north of Fort Collins, quite close to the Wyoming
10 border, moved here in 2016.

11 I am a mother of two sons, and my husband
12 teaches at Colorado Mountain College. I am so honored
13 to live in this area. This is my first time talking to
14 the PUC, and I rate it as an honor. Thank you for
15 letting me join, with others, and thank you all for
16 your testimony.

17 And I am here, also, because I
18 professionally and personally believe that this just
19 transition can be a success; and, I think that this is
20 the opportunity. And I am encouraged by the people
21 coming to the table, to help inform next steps, that
22 really serve our region, our community, and our
23 environment.

24 So, I think two my comments will focus on
25 two key asks for the Commission, as you determine next

1 steps at Hayden Station.

2 The first, YFSS urges the Commission to
3 grant the requests by the Town of Hayden and the Routt
4 County communities for the \$89 million in transition
5 assistance. As he referenced, John, their calculated
6 request has been informed -- and I will say that I
7 trust and know the individual who put pencil to paper
8 to come up with the figure -- and is very reasonable,
9 to guide the next 10 years in the transition, and is
10 essential to providing the financial support needed to
11 allow our community to build a robust, post-coal
12 economy, in this remote part of the state.

13 Routt County and the Town of Hayden have
14 numerous shovel-ready projects that will benefit from
15 that financial investment. Projects like the Regional
16 Transport Authority, that will bolster the regional
17 collection system, and our community's support
18 workforce needs, and reduce vehicle miles traveled or
19 greenhouse gas emissions.

20 The second is, YFSS urges the Commission
21 to make investments in clean energy. Make those
22 investments in clean energy a hallmark of this
23 transition plan.

24 Routt County, and the Town of Hayden, are
25 increasingly recognized as leaders in clean energy and

1 electrification across the State of Colorado. Just
2 this year, in 2025, Routt County and the Town of Hayden
3 received one of nine statewide energy efficiency and
4 conservation block grants, administered through the
5 Colorado Energy Office, to develop and implement plans
6 for building beneficial electrification and the
7 development of a Dashboard. Our proposal was ranked
8 No. 2 in the state, and was lauded for its IGA, with
9 five governments, and commitment to decarbonization.

10 The partnership between Routt County, the
11 City of Steamboat Springs, and Towns of Hayden, Oak
12 Creek and Yampa, as an organization, who works
13 regularly with our Energy Office staff and governor's
14 office, on decarbonization initiatives, we are proud to
15 say that Northwest Colorado is on the map for
16 Colorado's clean energy future.

17 As the PUC considers next steps and
18 investments in a clean energy solution, for the Hayden
19 Station, a model of a clean energy solution is
20 geothermal energy investment in Hayden Station, which
21 could build upon a rising tide of geothermal in this
22 region.

23 In 2022, YFSS hosted a Geothermal Energy
24 Working Group Association, with former Governor Bill
25 Ritter, which included government staff, businesses and

1 residents, and established marked enthusiasm for the
2 ways in which the state's Beneath Our Feet campaign
3 makes economic, global and energy sense for our region.

4 Since then geothermal energy options have
5 been a discussion with numerous partners, and the Town
6 of Hayden's geothermal industry park continues to break
7 ground. We have our first northwest geothermal
8 business, called, "High Altitude Geothermal," launch
9 and bring regional capacity and economic
10 diversification. So, Northwest Colorado is
11 demonstrating the ways in which investments in this
12 technology encourage economic development and job
13 creation in rural communities like ours.

14 YFSS strongly requests the Commission
15 avoid construction of new gas plants at Hayden Station.
16 Our future rests in investments in and development of
17 expanded clean energy generation, especially the new,
18 but rapidly evolving and enhanced and advanced
19 geothermal energy storage and generation industry. Our
20 region should have the opportunity to be a leader in
21 the development of this renewable energy source, and
22 the opportunity to prove that investment in geothermal
23 renewable energy, and storage, will strengthen the
24 grid, create new job opportunities, and protect
25 ratepayers from stranded natural gas investment risk.

1 A focus on geothermal energy will
2 transition the Yampa Valley into a regional
3 demonstration and investment hub for this carbon-free
4 reliable energy supply, employing the same skilled
5 workforce that has been providing electricity since the
6 construction of the Hayden Station, while also creating
7 new opportunities for careers, and in geothermal
8 technology. Of note, geothermal generation and storage
9 can be deployed on a timeline that meets the urgency of
10 the Hayden transition.

11 In closing, YFSS respectfully requests
12 that the Commission invest the full \$89 million in
13 Routt County and the Town of Hayden. I, myself, am
14 struck by the ways in which energy generation does not
15 occur in a vacuum. It occurs rooted in communities.

16 This is an opportunity, for everyone
17 involved, to really develop and define a just
18 transition that really serves Routt County, and the
19 Town of Hayden, which are the most impacted by the
20 energy transition underway.

21 Secondly, we ask that the just transition
22 use this as an opportunity to define just transition as
23 an energy transition that is guided, and in the service
24 of developing a clean energy economy that serves the
25 goals of this region. Thank you very much.

1 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Thank you.

2 MR. ANDERSON: My name is Ed Anderson. I
3 am the Finance Director of the school district. I am
4 speaking here as a resident. And I think our --

5 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Can you get closer?

6 MR. ANDERSON: My name is Ed Anderson,
7 Finance Director at the school district. And I am here
8 to speak as a resident, not as a member of the school
9 board, or, I mean, not for the school. So, I have been
10 in Routt County, for over 30 years, and worked with a
11 lot of nonprofits, and, also, with the school.

12 Looking at the process that you have for
13 the just transition, it does not look like what was
14 submitted in the testimony has anything that we've seen
15 here today. As far as people being involved, the fact
16 that you are here, you've done more than they did, in
17 setting this up, than in setting up the testimony.

18 I think, as far as just even doing quick
19 numbers, and looking at their plan, I heard people
20 talking about 100,000 -- or 100 million, so far, as the
21 funds that they want. What I've heard presented by the
22 county governments, that's 117. So, I mean, from a
23 numbers standpoint, why was that not included, if you
24 are trying to do what the process is supposed to do?

25 So, I would like you to take the fact

1 that these government officials have worked with Xcel,
2 have worked a lot in this area, and have put a lot of
3 time and energy into making this a success; and it
4 sounds to me like they are doing the process of what
5 this whole thing was supposed to be set up as, instead
6 of to just completely fund them, and give them
7 additional funds to be able to, or tax us residents to
8 fund their additional services. So, thanks for the
9 process.

10 I really like to thank the government
11 that have talked and represented the city in testimony,
12 because that seems to be a just transition. Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Thank you. Would anyone
14 else like to speak?

15 MR. ARMANDO: Hello. My name is Nick
16 Armando. I have lived in Routt County since 2009. I
17 didn't really come here prepared to speak, so I hope
18 this doesn't sound too sloppy.

19 I am going to start with one word:
20 Consequences. The value instilled in me, since I was a
21 child, is that I need to live with the consequence of
22 my action or decisions.

23 All of the testimony being heard is not
24 news. The coal industry has been telling this to
25 anyone that would listen, for ages, but has it fallen

1 on deaf ears? Lost medical services and jobs, tax and
2 school funding deficit, loss of power, unaffordable
3 power in the valley, has been staring us in the face,
4 before closures were ever announced, while all of this
5 was being advanced.

6 Even yet, people in this valley have
7 taken pride in shutting down the coal facilities, and
8 to meet their goals, and it's been part of the
9 platforms that they ran for office. And these are
10 consequences that have been known for years.

11 But, now we want more companies to
12 subsidize, instead of dealing with policy. What is 10
13 years of cash injection going to give us? What will be
14 put in place to provide this money in 10 years, after
15 those funds are run through? Where is the money that
16 governments have received from the plants, the mines,
17 from the last 50 years?

18 We've been told, for six years or more,
19 that these plants would shut down, and in Colorado, the
20 coal mines with them. There always was still one great
21 option to fund this valley, long term; that is to keep
22 the plant open. Why is the 10 years of handouts going
23 to set these counties up anymore, when it's been public
24 knowledge, these would be shut down for years.

25 The only real solution we have right now

1 is to ask Xcel to subsidize us. Our valley faces the
2 direct consequences of people placing social, feel-good
3 matters, above citizens' lives and livelihood, in this
4 region, now, and they don't want to deal with those
5 consequences.

6 There is no just transition. These jobs
7 and funds will be gone forever. It's not too late to
8 keep the plant open, and keep the vitality of Yampa
9 Valley.

10 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Thank you. Would anyone
11 else like to speak?

12 (No response.)

13 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Going once, going twice.
14 All right. I don't know if counsel is here, but I
15 think we're close enough to the --

16 FROM THE AUDIENCE: Why don't we take,
17 like, a 10-minute break.

18 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Let's take a 10-minute
19 break, until 5:50, and we'll see if anybody else wants
20 to speak at 5:50. Thank you.

21 (Recess.)

22 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Let's get started.
23 Looks like there is people who want to talk. I am told
24 there's one more, at least one more, who would like to
25 speak. So, you're up, ready or not.

1 MS. MAYHEM: Okay. If I have all of your
2 attention? Okay. I would like to have all of your
3 attention.

4 I am Doris Mayhem, and I live on County
5 Road 27. I have an adjoining property with the coal
6 mine and as well as Xcel Energy.

7 And my comment is very, very brief. I do
8 not want nuclear. I don't feel like it's safe for my
9 family and my animals. It will totally devalue the
10 value of my property. So, no nuclear. That's all I
11 have to say. Please do not them make that a nuclear
12 power plant.

13 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Thank you. Would anyone
14 else like to speak?

15 MR. GUIRE: My name is Trevor Guire. I
16 am the West Routt Fire Chief here. We are viewed as a
17 small little department here. We've come a long way.
18 We are a combination of fire departments.

19 I would like to say that Xcel has been a
20 fantastic partner to this community, to our
21 organization. They have been very responsive, over the
22 years. And I would like to thank them for being good
23 neighbors and good business partners.

24 But the one thing that I want to
25 reiterate here -- and I heard it a couple of times --

1 is I would urge the PUC to support Xcel in changing
2 over to other methods of power generation, and keep our
3 power generation within the valley, within this
4 community.

5 Let us produce the power, and keep as
6 much as that tax base, as we can, here, so, I don't
7 have to go to my guys, and say, you don't have a job
8 here anymore, and we're reducing service. But, I would
9 encourage everyone here to support Xcel in keeping
10 power generation within our valley.

11 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Thank you. Is there
12 anyone else who would like to speak? Going once, going
13 twice?

14 Well, thank you so much for coming out.
15 I learned a ton. Appreciate you taking your time to be
16 here, and join us, and share your stories and concerns
17 and thoughts.

18 And we'll have one more public comment,
19 June 5th, from 5 to 7. And there will be an
20 evidentiary hearing, in June, and decisions later in
21 the summer.

22 COMMISSIONER GILMAN: And that June
23 public comment is virtual.

24 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Yes.

25 COMMISSIONER GILMAN: Just to add that.

1 But, yeah, just want to add my thanks to all of you,
2 for spending your afternoon and evening with us, on
3 these important issues.

4 And I certainly understand the importance
5 to your community, and really appreciate you all coming
6 today, and sharing your thoughts and concerns with us
7 as well, as we navigate this filing and the path
8 forward. And very much appreciate all of you today.

9 Thanks so much.

10 COMMISSIONER PLANT: And, again, I just
11 echo that. Nothing like hearing directly from the
12 communities and directly from the people who are active
13 in the organizations that are impacted.

14 So, really appreciate you taking the
15 time. There's other things you can do in the evening,
16 that come to mind, then coming to a community meeting.
17 So, I really appreciate you taking the time and making
18 the effort of coming here, and spending sometime, and
19 sharing your views with us. Thanks a lot.

20 CHAIRMAN BLANK: Thanks, again. With
21 that, we're adjourned.

22 (Whereupon these proceedings were
23 adjourned at 6 p.m. on May 1, 2025.)

24

25

CERTIFICATE

I, HARRIET S. WEISENTHAL, Registered Professional Reporter, in and for the State of Colorado, do hereby certify that I reported the foregoing proceedings in the first instance, and that later the same was reduced to typewritten form under my direct supervision and control; I further certify that the foregoing is a true and complete transcription of my stenographic notes then and there taken.

Dated May 28, 2025.

Harriet S. Weisenthal

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