



Kristie Fiegen, Chairperson
Gary Hanson, Vice Chairperson
Chris Nelson, Commissioner



PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

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1-800-332-1782

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February 22, 2017

Linda Lane

[REDACTED]
Mission Hill SD 57046

Dear Ms. Lane:

Thank you for your letter regarding the farm taps docket. I understand your concern about the possibility of losing your farm tap and natural gas supply.

You state in your letter, *"But it lets Northern Natural Gas off the regulatory hook, even though they promised farm tap users natural gas service in exchange for easements...The Public Utilities Commission obviously has the authority to require NorthWestern and Northern to continue gas service to our house...Will you open a new docket concerning extending natural gas service for farm taps, negotiate with NorthWestern, Northern or other gas supplier, or issue one or more orders to keep our natural gas service available?"*

I would very much like to continue the natural gas service to you via your farm tap. Keep in mind that the commission's legal authority is provided by laws acted on by the state legislature. It is important that the commission stay within the boundaries of both federal and state law when considering and ruling on any docket before it. To act outside of the law would not only be irresponsible, but would waste critical time and money.

The PUC is not involved in the easement acquisition process that occurs between a utility or company and landowners. Therefore, the PUC cannot rule over the easement contract on your behalf.

You state, *"Will you ask the Attorney General to initiate litigation on our behalf?"* The contract you reference in your letter is between two parties – you as the landowner and Northern. It does not involve the state as a party. That contract is a matter that must be handled in the circuit court system, and thus, I suggest you seek advice from your personal attorney.

All action by the commissioners on this docket must take place during open, noticed meetings. PUC staff members have stated in these meetings that they have met with representatives of Northern and NorthWestern Energy, and likely continue having discussions with those company representatives. You may learn more by communicating directly with a PUC staff analyst or attorney working on the docket. To do so, call 1-800-332-1782 or 605-773-3201 or email PUC@state.sd.us.

Since this is an open docket before the commission, your letter and my response will be posted under Comments and Responses in the docket online for all commissioners, the parties involved in the docket, the PUC staff analysts and attorney working on this docket, and others to read.

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The enclosed Informational Guide was prepared to assist farm tap customers in understanding the PUC staff's filing of this docket and the PUC's process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kristie Fiegen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kristie" and the last name "Fiegen" clearly distinguishable.

Kristie Fiegen