

TOWN OF COLUMBUS
COLUMBIA COUNTY, WISCONSIN

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-3

**A RESOLUTION REGARDING THE PROPOSED BECI 765-KV
TRANSMISSION LINE AND REQUESTING PROTECTION OF THE TOWN
OF COLUMBUS, ITS RESIDENTS, PROPERTY OWNERS,
AGRICULTURAL LANDS, NATURAL RESOURCES, AND LOCAL
PLANNING AND PERMITTING INTERESTS**

WHEREAS, the Town of Columbus, Columbia County, Wisconsin, is a rural and agricultural community whose productive farmland, open spaces, natural resources, family farms, residences, and quality of life are important community assets deserving protection; and

WHEREAS, generations of Town residents and property owners have maintained the Town's rural and agricultural character while supporting responsible growth and the protection of farmland, natural resources, property rights, and community interests; and

WHEREAS, the Town's Comprehensive Plan is intended to guide coordinated and harmonious development and to protect the public health, safety, welfare, rural character, agricultural resources, natural resources, and long-term interests of the Town and its residents; and

WHEREAS, the Town has adopted local ordinances and permitting procedures to provide for meaningful local review of energy infrastructure and other development that may affect residents, property owners, roads, agriculture, emergency response, public safety, natural resources, and other local interests; and

WHEREAS, the Town recognizes the importance of reliable electric infrastructure while also recognizing that major energy infrastructure should be planned and sited in a manner that minimizes unnecessary impacts on residents, property owners, agricultural lands, environmental resources, existing infrastructure, and rural communities; and

WHEREAS, a proposed 765-kilovolt high-voltage transmission project commonly referred to as the BECI 765-kV Transmission Line Project is being considered with potential routes or corridors that may affect the Town of Columbus and surrounding communities; and

WHEREAS, infrastructure of this magnitude could have substantial and long-lasting impacts on affected properties and communities, including potential impacts to agriculture, land use, family farms, residences, property interests, natural resources, viewsheds, roads, drainage, emergency response, public safety, and future land-use planning; and

WHEREAS, the Town's Comprehensive Plan protects the Town's rural and scenic character and its natural, cultural, and agricultural resources while planning for and directing necessary and reasonable growth; and

WHEREAS, following a February 2026 Executive Order, the Council on Environmental Quality rescinded rules implementing the National Environment Policy Act (NEPA) including opportunity for public comment, eliminating requirements for a draft Environmental Study (EIS); and

WHEREAS, Executive Order 14270 (Zero-Based Regulatory Budgeting to Unleash American Energy) signed on April 9, 2026 will sunset many regulations including all opportunity for public comment by September 30, 2026; and

WHEREAS, BECI has proposed a 765-kilovolt (kV) high-voltage transmission line project, with a proposed route that would slice directly through the Town of Columbus; and

WHEREAS, Wisconsin law establishes policies concerning the siting of electric transmission facilities, including consideration of existing utility corridors and other existing transportation and infrastructure corridors before the creation of new corridors, as applicable under Wisconsin law; and

WHEREAS, the Town believes that the need for, location of, and alternatives to a transmission project of this magnitude should be thoroughly evaluated before a route is selected or approved; and

WHEREAS, the Town further believes that affected towns, villages, counties, residents, and property owners should have meaningful opportunities to participate in the planning, environmental review, routing, and regulatory processes before decisions are made that may permanently affect their properties and communities; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Columbus and surrounding communities are also being considered for or affected by other significant energy infrastructure, including the proposed Columbia Wind project and potentially associated transmission facilities, substations, interconnections, battery energy storage systems, and related infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, the Town believes these major energy infrastructure projects should not be evaluated solely as isolated facilities when their combined and cumulative impacts may materially affect residents, landowners, agriculture, roads, drainage, emergency services, public safety, natural resources, property interests, and local land-use planning; and

WHEREAS, the Town therefore finds that meaningful coordination among the Town of Columbus, neighboring towns and villages, Columbia County, project developers, utilities, and state regulatory agencies is necessary before decisions are made that could permanently alter the Town and surrounding communities.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED

by the Town Board of the Town of Columbus, Columbia County, Wisconsin, that the Town declares the protection of its residents, agricultural lands, rural character, natural resources, property interests, and local planning authority to be matters of significant public importance.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town of Columbus expresses its opposition to routing the proposed BECI 765-kV Transmission Line through the Town where reasonable alternatives exist that would avoid or materially reduce impacts upon Town residents, property owners, farms, agricultural lands, natural resources, and community interests.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town requests that project developers and regulatory agencies fully evaluate reasonable route alternatives and demonstrate compliance with applicable Wisconsin transmission-siting requirements and policies, including appropriate consideration of existing utility, highway, railroad, and other infrastructure corridors before establishing new transmission corridors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town requests that the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin and other reviewing agencies ensure that the Town of Columbus and all affected local governments have a meaningful opportunity to review and comment upon proposed routes, environmental impacts, agricultural impacts, local infrastructure impacts, emergency-response considerations, land-use conflicts, property impacts, and reasonable alternatives before final approvals are issued.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town requests a comprehensive assessment of the cumulative impacts of major proposed energy infrastructure affecting the Town of Columbus and surrounding communities, including the Columbia Wind project, the proposed 765-kV transmission system, substations, interconnections, battery energy storage systems, and other reasonably related energy infrastructure.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town supports coordinated review with Columbia County and affected towns and villages so that applicable local comprehensive plans, ordinances, permitting requirements, emergency-response needs, road and infrastructure concerns, agricultural impacts, and other community impacts are identified and meaningfully considered as part of state and local review processes.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town requests that project developers engage directly with the Town Board, Town officials, and appropriate Town representatives before advancing any transmission route or related project component affecting property within the Town of Columbus.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town requests that no final routing or permitting action affecting the Town of Columbus be taken until affected local governments have been provided a meaningful opportunity to complete coordinated review of the proposed energy infrastructure and its cumulative local impacts and to participate fully in applicable regulatory proceedings.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that nothing in this Resolution shall be interpreted as opposition to electric reliability, renewable energy, or necessary energy infrastructure generally. The Town's

position is that infrastructure of this magnitude requires a transparent, coordinated, and comprehensive review process that evaluates its full impacts and ensures that the residents, property owners, and local governments required to live with these facilities have a meaningful voice in decisions affecting their communities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Town Clerk is directed to transmit a certified copy of this Resolution to the Public Service Commission of Wisconsin, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, BECI and/or the applicable transmission project developers, Columbia County, affected neighboring towns and villages, the Office of the Governor, and the members of the Wisconsin State Senate and Assembly representing the Town of Columbus.

ADOPTED

Adopted by the Town Board of the Town of Columbus, Columbia County, Wisconsin, this 3rd day of September, 2026.

Town Chair

Edward H. Wolf Supervisor I

Town Supervisor

Harold Blum Supervisor II

Town Supervisor

ATTEST:

Valerie Dwyer Clerk

Town Clerk

Vote:

Ayes: 2

Noes: 0

Abstentions: 1

Absent: 0