

“From the Alliance Lawyers”  
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Go to Your Informational Meeting. It’s important for you to attend your Informational Meetings in your county when they are held in the six counties on August 20, 21, and 22. Why? (1) To learn all you can about the proposed transmission line; (2) To provide RICL with an idea of the opposition or lack of opposition it will be encountering in your county; (3) To find out how to file your formal Objection to the line (if you haven’t already); and (4) to press RICL on why this transmission line is needed in the first place.

Remember this Informational Meeting is RICL’s meeting; it’s not the Hearing for opponents to state their arguments. Although the presiding officer will be a full-time staffer from the Iowa Utilities Board (Jim Sundermeyer), RICL is hosting this Informational Meeting to fulfill its statutory requirement. RICL is required by law to present the following information at these Informational Meetings:

- The utility service requirements and planning which have resulted in this project.
- When the line would be constructed.
- Details about the physical construction including the appearance and typical location of the poles and conductors with respect to property lines.
- The rights which RICL will seek to acquire by easements.
- Procedures to be followed by RICL in contacting landowners and other stakeholders in seeking to acquire voluntary easements.
- Methods and factors used by RICL in arriving at the price they offer for a voluntary easement including the range of cash amount for each component.
- The manner in which payments for voluntary easements are made, including discussion of additional easements, signing fees and time of payment.
- Other factors or damages not included in the easement for which payment would be made, including features of interest to affected parties but not limited to computation of amounts and manner of payment.

Of these eight required types of information, if I were RICL, I would want the landowners to not dwell on the first item and instead focus most on the last seven, especially the acquisition of voluntary easements from you. The Alliance would instead prefer you to focus on the first item, i.e. WHY is this high-voltage transmission line being proposed here and now?: Your Alliance Board of Directors will be able to help you think about the most instructive questions to ask. Consult them; prepare your questions in advance, and ask your questions respectfully but clearly when the time comes. And if the answer is unclear or incomplete, follow through; nail down an answer.

RICL will be able to approach you to solicit a Voluntary Easement from you immediately after its Informational Meeting is completed in your county. We are not your lawyers; we do not represent you individually. But in deciding whether to voluntarily sign an Easement at this time, please consider the overall goal of the Alliance: to defeat this line. Remember that it is still early in the franchise process. RICL does not yet possess the power of eminent domain (condemnation). RICL must request that authority from the Iowa Utility Board (“IUB”). RICL can’t even take that step until it has completed its informational meetings in all sixteen counties.

At this writing, the informational meetings haven't even been scheduled in the last ten counties. In requesting eminent domain authority of the IUB, RICL must state with specificity the names and addresses of the owners; and the legal descriptions; and a map, of each parcel over which it seeks the power of eminent domain. Think how much less paperwork it would be for RICL if at the time of petitioning the IUB it already had voluntary easements covering 90% of the land it needed. You've got months and months before the IUB would make any ruling on this request for eminent domain by RICL.

The Alliance asks you to not sign anything at this time. Go to your informational meeting. Listen carefully to the presentation that RICL gives. Ask your questions. Then tell your Alliance Board of Directors the answers you are given.

*Beving, Swanson & Forrest, P.C. represents the Preservation of Rural Iowa Alliance, a 501(c)(6) nonprofit corporation incorporated under Iowa law. The content of this article is for the informational benefit of Alliance members; and is not to be relied upon for any other purpose.*