

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES  
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

|                      |   |                |
|----------------------|---|----------------|
|                      | ) |                |
|                      | ) |                |
| IN RE: DRAFT AIR     | ) | TRANSCRIPT     |
| SYNTHETIC MINOR      | ) |                |
| CONSTRUCTION PERMIT  | ) | OF             |
|                      | ) |                |
| VALARA HOLDINGS HIGH | ) | PUBLIC HEARING |
| PERFORMANCE COMPUTE  | ) |                |
| CENTER, SPARTANBURG, | ) |                |
| SOUTH CAROLINA       | ) |                |

Date: June 25, 2026

Time: 6:48 p.m.

Location: Spartanburg Memorial Auditorium,  
385 North Church Street, Spartanburg, South Carolina

Reported by  
Julie Taradash

APPEARANCES

SCDES Officials Present:

Kristy Ellenberg, Hearing Officer  
Tyler D. Dunlop, BAQ Permit Writer  
Derrick Stanley, Public Participation Coordinator

Speakers from the Public:

Emily Wyche, SELC  
Aldon Knight,  
Upstate Forever  
Emily Poole, SCEL  
Dr. Alva Pack  
Alex Turner  
Allison Tracy  
Gary Poliakoff  
Barb DiPalma  
Bill Scott  
Christopher Klein  
Carolyn Reed-Smith  
Courtney McClain  
Dr. Clemson Turregano  
Danielle Helf  
Ian McDonald  
Elizabeth York  
Ariel Burrow  
Janny Santos  
Emory Caraviello  
Dr. Jennifer Bradham  
Greg Mack  
Livingston Hawkins, III  
Kelley  
Lewis Blake Smyth  
Mark Gillespie  
Mark Felk  
Matthew Thomas  
Michael Ferguson  
Ryan Scott  
Nichole Gilder  
Sheila Carter  
Starret Greene

David Stroll  
Dr. Terry Ferguson  
Saville Williams  
Vanessa Lech  
Warren Bareiss  
Eric Allison  
Bob Glenn



Mary Helen Wade  
Nancy Sosbee  
Laura Barbas Rhoden  
Daniel Griffin  
Franklin McDonald  
Natalie Mullen  
Lynne Gillespie  
Frankland Watts  
Colby King  
Reverend Rob Brown  
Shawn Griffin  
Dr. Gillian Newberry  
Carmen Neal  
Garrett Gibson  
Ashley Burrow  
Emily Hane  
Kris J.  
Max Gillespie  
Stephanie Breitenbach  
William Crawford  
David Whitener  
Carlos Edward Davidson

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1 PROCEEDINGS

2 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Good evening, everyone, and  
3 welcome. It's so nice to see such a full crowd  
4 here tonight. So on behalf of the South Carolina  
5 Department of Environmental Services or SCDES, I  
6 want to welcome everyone to the public hearing for  
7 the Draft Air Synthetic Minor Construction Permit  
8 for Valara Holdings High Performance Compute Center  
9 or "Valara."

10 My name is Kristy Ellenberg. I'm part of the  
11 community engagement team for the South Carolina  
12 Department of Environmental Services or SCDES. And  
13 tonight I'm going to be serving as your public  
14 hearing officer. And I want to just kind of make  
15 sure everyone is introduced to our agency quickly.

16 SCDES is your state's environmental agency.  
17 It was launched in 2024 after the restructuring of  
18 the previous agency, the South High Department of  
19 Health and Environmental Control or DHEC. Many  
20 people still use that "DHEC" name to refer to us.  
21 But -- and our agency has many programs and  
22 responsibilities -- we got it working, Trey? Yep.  
23 -- has many programs and responsibilities across  
24 our different bureaus.

25 We have a Bureau of Air Quality, our Bureau of

1 Coastal Management, our Land of Waste Management,  
2 our Bureau of Water, and we also have statewide  
3 presence with our regional and laboratory services  
4 that are located in communities near you. As you  
5 were arriving tonight, you may have seen many of  
6 our colleagues from the SCDES team who are serving  
7 in many roles. You can see us with some of our  
8 logo shirts on. You can see us with some of our  
9 lanyards on. So if you're looking for somebody  
10 from our team, I encourage you to -- to find us.  
11 And -- and you've seen some of us even on stage  
12 tonight, as well. But find us and -- and look for  
13 ways that we can help.

14 Tonight we have staff from our Community  
15 Engagement Team, the Bureau of Air Quality, the  
16 Bureau of Water, and our regional office, who've  
17 been joining me for a very important purpose. You  
18 see, tonight we're here to listen. This is a  
19 formal public hearing, and it'll get more formal in  
20 just a few moments. But we're here to listen to  
21 you and receive formal public comments, written and  
22 oral comments, regarding the Draft Air Synthetic  
23 Minor Construction Permit for Valara Holdings High  
24 Performance Compute Center, located at 4000 South  
25 Pine Street in Spartanburg, South Carolina.

1           At SCDES, providing opportunities for public  
2           involvement is a top priority for us. And we  
3           appreciate -- we've already had 80 or so written  
4           comments that have been received by air permitting  
5           team. Those have come in through the mail, through  
6           e-mail, through our e-permitting online system.  
7           And again, tonight is just one of a number of ways  
8           for you to be able to provide additional comments  
9           into our permitting process.

10           And we're here tonight because we've already  
11           been listening to the comments that you've shared.  
12           We listened to the requests that you made for this  
13           public hearing, to be able to bring more voices  
14           into the process. And we saw your requests, noting  
15           we were going to need a larger venue to help the  
16           community gather tonight. And so we adjusted that  
17           location to be here at the Spartanburg Memorial  
18           Auditorium. And we saw the significant community  
19           interest, and we extended the public comment period  
20           for this draft permit until July 31st, 2026, to be  
21           able to continue to hear from you beyond tonight.

22           So tonight there's not going to be a vote.  
23           There's not going to be a decision made here  
24           tonight, because we're continuing to hear from you.  
25           We're continuing to receive your comments and

1 review them, and our team will have a response to  
2 those comments and all the comments that are shared  
3 throughout this process.

4 So I will note, we have a really large crowd  
5 tonight, and as the Community Engagement Team, I'm  
6 really happy to see such a large crowd here  
7 tonight. We had --

8 (Applause)

9 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: We had over 400 pre-register  
10 to attend the night. We had, I believe, 80 or so  
11 that pre-registered asking to be able to make an  
12 oral comment. And so I'm going to ask that you  
13 please help us. We want to hear from as many of  
14 you as possible tonight. But help us make sure  
15 we're kind of respecting those time limits so that  
16 we can hear from as many of you as possible  
17 throughout the evening.

18 And again, I want to thank Spartanburg  
19 Memorial Auditorium. They've been a great staff to  
20 work with. They are hosting us tonight, and just  
21 respect their rules for helping us come here  
22 tonight.

23 I want to make sure that we are here for our  
24 court reporter, Julie. Julie's going to be able to  
25 receive those comments to help us create that

1 formal record, and so making sure that we can hear  
2 each other, making sure that our court reporter can  
3 hear you, is going to be really helpful. So I'm  
4 going to ask you to really help us not have a lot  
5 of interruptions through the night to make sure  
6 we're able to capture those comments that are being  
7 received.

8 Earlier, we did have an availability session  
9 in the pre-function space where you may have seen  
10 members of our SCDES Air Quality Team. They have  
11 some information sheets. They had some boards.  
12 They had some information that they were sharing.  
13 And for that session, we also invited  
14 representatives from Spartanburg Water and from  
15 Valara and its parent company NorthMark, who also  
16 agreed to attend to be able to provide information.

17 The information that's provided by DES,  
18 including the fact sheets and the visuals from that  
19 availability session and really all of the other  
20 reference documents about this permitting process,  
21 related to this Draft Air Permit are going to be  
22 easy for you to find beyond tonight, as well, with  
23 our webpage. We have a dedicated webpage of  
24 [des.sc.gov/valara](https://des.sc.gov/valara). And so I encourage you to -- to  
25 go to that page, not just tonight, but use it as a

1 resource beyond tonight.

2 So again, as you were coming in, you may have  
3 received one of these like little one-page sheets  
4 that we have. They were all about tonight and how  
5 to provide a comment and also noting, if you wanted  
6 to share a written comment tonight, we can also  
7 accept that as well. So if you don't have pre-  
8 written comments, I encourage you take the back of  
9 that sheet or take the back of some paper that you  
10 have. Make sure you find somebody with your DES  
11 lanyard or shirt on, give it to them or go to our  
12 registration table, because those comments will be  
13 part of the record as well.

14 And I will say we're going to have a formal  
15 project description read into the record shortly.  
16 But as we begin tonight, I just wanted to give an  
17 overview of our agency's role. So SCDES's Bureau  
18 of Air Quality issues air permits that limit the  
19 amount of regulated air pollutants emitted by a  
20 facility. And the air construction permits are  
21 used by that facility to specify what conditions  
22 they have to meet to demonstrate compliance with  
23 state and federal air quality regulations and  
24 standards. So those air quality regulations and  
25 standards are established to be protective of

1 public health and the environment.

2 Now, Valara has applied for a Synthetic Minor  
3 Construction Permit. And a Synthetic Minor  
4 Construction Permit is issued when potential air  
5 emissions are at or greater than major source  
6 threshold levels. But the facility requests  
7 federally enforceable limits to restrict or cap  
8 their emissions potential. So for some reference,  
9 SCDES did previously issue Valara a Synthetic Minor  
10 Air Construction Permit. That is permit CP-  
11 50000316 on September 17th, 2025. That was for 24  
12 generators that were fueled by natural gas.

13 But tonight we're focusing on the current  
14 application that our team has under review, which  
15 is for the proposed 11 simple-cycle turbines fueled  
16 by natural gas. So the air permitting process that  
17 we're looking at tonight started with the  
18 application being received on March 4, 2026. And  
19 Valara would have submitted an application to our  
20 agency for that second Synthetic Minor Air  
21 Construction Permit.

22 So as with all air construction permit  
23 applications like this, the applicant -- the  
24 applicant will provide an application to us. It  
25 defines the -- the scope of the project, provides

1 modeling. It has emissions estimates. It has  
2 what's in the regulatory applicability and also how  
3 they need to continue to provide the compliance.  
4 Our air permitting staff then undertakes its own  
5 technical review, its own modeling review, and it  
6 uses information to be able to draft a permit and a  
7 statement of basis. And so that is what has been  
8 provided ahead of tonight, and that's what starts  
9 that public comment process. That's what starts  
10 that public notice process. So in kind of the  
11 lineup, we are here, where that star is.

12 And so, once it goes into a public notice and  
13 public comment, that's what brings us here tonight  
14 for the public hearing. So after that public  
15 comment period ends on July 31st, our air  
16 permitting team has more work to do, starting with  
17 looking and reviewing all the comments that we have  
18 received and being able to consider those and  
19 respond to comments, and -- before any decision is  
20 made.

21 So the -- the other note that I will add is  
22 that, when and if any air permit is issued in our  
23 state, that's not the end of that process. The  
24 facility must continue to demonstrate compliance  
25 with the permit. It has detailed requirements for

1 emission limits and monitoring and record-keeping  
2 and reporting. And DES has an ongoing role of  
3 continuing our commitment to monitor for compliance  
4 and take any enforcement actions that would be  
5 needed.

6 So tonight, with that being kind of the -- the  
7 background of what brings us together, I want to  
8 make sure we start to transition to our more formal  
9 public hearing and proceeding so that we can hear  
10 from you and receive your oral comments.

11 The time is now 6:58 p.m., and -- on Thursday  
12 June 25th, 2026, and this public hearing is  
13 officially called to order. Again, for the record,  
14 this public hearing is being held by the South  
15 Carolina Department of Environmental Services to  
16 accept written and oral comments regarding the  
17 Draft Air Synthetic Minor Construction Permit for  
18 Valara Holdings High Performance Compute Center  
19 located at 4000 South Pine Street in Spartanburg,  
20 South Carolina. My name is Kristy Ellenberg, part  
21 of the SCDES Community Engagement Team, and tonight  
22 I'm serving as your public hearing officer.

23 Again, providing meaningful opportunities for  
24 public involvement is a priority for our agency.  
25 We appreciate everyone taking the time to be here,

1 attend, and participate this evening. This is a  
2 formal proceeding. It is being recorded by a court  
3 reporter, and all oral comments provided during  
4 this hearing will become part of the official  
5 administrative record for this permit.

6 So the purpose tonight is to receive comments  
7 from you regarding the Draft Air Permit. A final  
8 decision has not been made by the Department, and  
9 all timely comments received will be reviewed and  
10 considered as the Department makes any final  
11 permitting decision.

12 Before we continue, I'd like to just note the  
13 -- the status of -- of where we are again. We  
14 received over 80 comments already into this  
15 process. Those comments have been entered into our  
16 administrative record. They're already part of the  
17 official record. If you've previously submitted  
18 comments, you're not required to resubmit or -- or  
19 repeat those comments. And previously submitted  
20 comments receive the same consideration as comments  
21 provided during or after this hearing. But we do,  
22 you know, welcome any additional comments that you  
23 have or new information you want to share, and  
24 encourage you to still share tonight.

25 The public comment period for this permit has

1           been extended through July 31st, 2026, and the  
2           written comments must be received by the Department  
3           no later than the close of that comment period. So  
4           again, we can also accept written comments during  
5           tonight's hearing. Please use those comment forms  
6           at the registration desk or if you have any  
7           prepared written statements or supporting  
8           documents, please provide those to our staff as  
9           well.

10           If you provide an oral comment and have a  
11           written copy, you may also submit that. You can  
12           hand it to one of our team that will be at the  
13           microphones receiving comments, or again, any of  
14           our staff. There are other ways to submit written  
15           comments as well, and we'll try to make sure you  
16           see this graphic through the night. Those written  
17           comments can be received online. We have SCDES  
18           e-permitting public notice webpage. You can access  
19           that from the Valara webpage as well. You can send  
20           things by e-mail to [airpncomments](mailto:airpncomments), that's for  
21           public notice comments, [@scdes.gov](mailto:@scdes.gov). You can also  
22           send things by postal mail to our Air Permitting  
23           Division Director at the Bureau of Air Quality at  
24           2600 Bull Street, Columbia, South Carolina 29201.

25           Make sure your comments do identify the

1 project, if you were submitting comments on and air  
2 related issues of concern as much as possible.  
3 Again, all timely comments are reviewed and  
4 considered and weighted the same before a decision  
5 is made to approve, disapprove, or modify any draft  
6 permit.

7 So while the availability session earlier this  
8 evening was a little more informal opportunity for  
9 you to connect with our staff, the formal public  
10 hearing is -- is different. And this portion of  
11 the evening, we're going to start very shortly  
12 receiving comments for the official record. I do  
13 want to share a few hearing guidelines. To allow  
14 the hearing to proceed efficiently, safely, and  
15 respectfully, the following guidelines are  
16 established: The hearing is to be held to receive  
17 public comments so questions aren't answered during  
18 public hearing -- during the formal hearing.

19 Secondly, we ask that you limit your comments  
20 to three minutes for individual speaker or five  
21 minutes if you are an elected official or person  
22 speaking on behalf of an organization. We have a  
23 timer on stage that's going to be used to help us  
24 keep track of that remaining time. And the  
25 auditorium may adjust, as the timer sounds, kind of

1 help us use both microphones to help us hear from  
2 as many people as possible tonight. So as you see  
3 that timer getting close to 0, please kind of help  
4 wrap up those comments a little bit. And again, if  
5 you aren't finished with your comments at the end  
6 of the allotted time, please give us the remainder  
7 of your comments in writing, because we do want to  
8 hear from as many of you as possible tonight. If  
9 you do have time remaining, we ask that you not  
10 allocate that time to any other individual or  
11 group, because we've got so many that have already  
12 pre-registered to speak tonight. Again, we want to  
13 make sure we hear from as many as possible.

14 Thirdly, please be respectful while others are  
15 speaking. Fourth, make sure you're directing those  
16 comments to SCDES or to me, as the hearing officer.  
17 Please don't interrupt or address other speakers or  
18 members of the audience. Because, again, we want  
19 this record from our court reporter to be very  
20 accurate and full and complete for our team.

21 And, you know, thank you again for complying  
22 with all the rules and -- and policies and being  
23 good guests of the Spartanburg Memorial Auditorium.  
24 So thank you for helping us follow these rules and  
25 hearing guidelines.

1           And again, if we have a lot of disruptions or  
2           things that are interfering with us being able to  
3           hear, we may try to make sure we're going back to  
4           those respectful rules, and -- and it may result in  
5           us being asked to kind of stop that behavior, or --  
6           or leave the hearing area so we can make sure that  
7           we're able to hear everyone. So again, before we  
8           hear the public comment portion tonight, we have a  
9           brief overview of the proposed project and draft  
10          permit that's going to be provided by Tyler Dunlop  
11          of Bureau of Air Quality, our permit writer  
12          assigned to this permit. Tyler?

13   MR. DUNLOP: Valara Holdings, LLC, has applied to the  
14          South Carolina Department of Environmental Services  
15          for a Synthetic Minor Air Construction Permit.  
16          This permit would allow the company to install  
17          additional equipment to generate power for the  
18          facility's on-site operations, alongside the  
19          facility's previously permitted natural gas fired  
20          engines. This equipment includes six simple-cycle  
21          54-megawatt natural-gas-fired turbines, and five  
22          simple-cycle 17-megawatt natural-gas-fired  
23          turbines. Each turbine will be equipped with  
24          selective catalytic reduction and oxidation  
25          catalyst air pollution control devices to reduce

1 potential nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide,  
2 volatile organic compounds, and hazardous air  
3 pollutant emissions.

4 The turbines would also have continuous  
5 emissions monitoring systems installed for nitrogen  
6 oxides emissions monitoring. A Draft Construction  
7 Permit and Draft Statement of Basis have been  
8 written outlining this proposed project, the  
9 applicable state and federal regulations, and how  
10 the facility would meet these requirements. The  
11 draft permit also contains a change regarding the  
12 facility's future operating permit requirements.  
13 The facility would -- would no longer have limits  
14 necessary to avoid meeting a Title V Operating  
15 Permit. However, the facility would be maintaining  
16 the limits previously established to keep the  
17 facility below major source threshold for PSD.

18 When the first turbine or engine becomes  
19 operational, the facility would have 12 months from  
20 that time to submit a Title V Operating Permit  
21 application, per state and federal regulations.

22 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you so much, Tyler.

23 So again, we're going to move on to the public  
24 comment portion of tonight's hearing. As stated  
25 earlier, our staff is here to listen and receive

1           comments. And all comments are being recorded. So  
2           we're going to start with those who pre-registered  
3           or registered and asked to speak. When your name  
4           is called, please make your way towards the front.  
5           I'm going to call a few names in a row, so that  
6           again, we can try to make sure we're hearing from  
7           as many as possible. And if you can come to the  
8           nearest microphone at the end of the aisle, one of  
9           our staff will be able to help you. Derrick,  
10          you're on call, as -- as well, to help with that as  
11          people are coming up. So Derrick Stanley is part  
12          of our team.

13                 If you have difficulty coming to the  
14          microphone, please raise your hand, and we'll make  
15          sure one of our team members assist and kind of  
16          bring the microphone to you. So before beginning  
17          your comment, I want to ask that you please clearly  
18          state your name and spell your full name for the  
19          court reporter. You may also want to share your --  
20          the city or the community where you live or the  
21          organization you represent, although providing that  
22          information is optional. And individual speakers  
23          will have three minutes. Elected officials and  
24          those speaking on behalf of an organization will  
25          have five.

1           So I do have noted tonight we have three  
2           speakers presenting on behalf of an organization.  
3           That would be SELC, SCELP, and Upstate Forever.  
4           And I'm going to call y'all in just a moment. I  
5           did want to note that Senator Martin reached out.  
6           He's not attending tonight. He's out of -- out of  
7           state. But he reached out to our agency again this  
8           afternoon. He's had a lot of interest in this  
9           project and communication about this project  
10          already. And so while he's not able to be here to  
11          speak tonight, he did want us to note that he has  
12          shared some formal written comments with our agency  
13          about this project today, as well.

14                So as we start to call some people up, I just  
15          want to note: Do we have any elected officials  
16          here tonight that would like to speak as well?

17                Then I want to make sure that we work with our  
18          first three speakers, and that would be: Emily  
19          Wyche from SELC, I believe Emily Poole from SCELP,  
20          and Aldon Knight from Upstate Forever. If y'all  
21          want to come forward. Y'all have got five minutes.

22                                (Applause)

23   HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: You'll see the three-minute  
24          timer start after two minutes. So -- there you go.  
25          And if you want to have a seat down closer. You

1           ready to go?

2       MS. WYCHE:   Yes.   Should I -- can I start?

3       HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG:   Yeah.

4       MS. WYCHE:   Okay.   Good evening.   My name is Emily  
5           Wyche.   That's E-m-i-l-y W-y-c-h-e, and I'm a  
6           senior attorney with the Southern Environmental Law  
7           Center.   I am based in Greenville, South Carolina,  
8           which where -- which is where I was born and  
9           raised.   And I'm providing comments tonight on  
10          behalf of SELC and the concerned citizens of  
11          Spartanburg County.   And in addition to tonight's  
12          comments, we will also be submitting written  
13          comments laying out the many problems we have  
14          identified with the Draft Air Permit.

15                To start, this data center power plant will  
16           pollute the air of the surrounding community with  
17           dangerous pollutants that can cause cancer and hurt  
18           people's health.   I want to briefly address  
19           something that was said about this air pollution  
20           during a teleconference town hall last night that  
21           Valara hosted.   Representatives -- representatives  
22           of Valara attempted to minimize the significance of  
23           the air pollution that this power plant will emit.  
24           They said, "Even if the power plant may be a large  
25           source of industrial air pollution, when compared

1 to other facilities in the county, it only  
2 represents 5 percent of all air pollution in  
3 Spartanburg." Valara may have believed that  
4 5 percent sounded like a small and insignificant  
5 number, but a single facility amounting to  
6 5 percent of all air pollution in the county is  
7 actually very significant. And unlike the mobile  
8 or fugitive --

9 (Applause)

10 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Again, let's -- let's  
11 minimize interruptions. Thank you.

12 MS. WYCHE: -- unlike the mobile and fugitive sources of  
13 air pollution that Valara mentioned during last  
14 night's teleconference, which account for a lot of  
15 that countywide pollution, the Valara data center  
16 will emit air pollution constantly right next to  
17 numerous neighborhoods. And just to put this in  
18 context, a 5 percent increase in diesel trucks  
19 idling 24/7 would be really bad if they were all  
20 idling in your backyard the entire time. That's  
21 what we're talking about here, and I can imagine  
22 many of the residents living near the proposed data  
23 center power plant did not appreciate Valara's  
24 attempt to minimize the harms that this facility  
25 will bring to the community.

1           With my remaining five minutes, I want to  
2           highlight the most significant flaws we have  
3           identified with the air permit. First, DES has to  
4           deny the permit, because the data center plant  
5           power plant will cause an exceedance of the  
6           national air ambient quality standards for  
7           particulate matter pollution. Particulate matter  
8           pollution is harmful to human health, and it has  
9           been linked to premature death in people with heart  
10          or lung disease, to heart attacks, aggravated  
11          asthma, decreased lung function, and increased  
12          respiratory symptoms. EPA sets standards for  
13          harmful pollutants like particulate matter, and  
14          when a new source of air pollution will emit so  
15          much pollution that it will cause the air in the  
16          surrounding area to exceed this EPA standard, DES  
17          is legally required to deny the permit.

18          Here, DES appears to have used the wrong  
19          background level for existing levels of particulate  
20          matter pollution in the county and, as a result,  
21          would allow this data center power plant to  
22          discharge illegally large amounts of particulate  
23          matter into the surrounding air, putting at risk  
24          the health of the people in the community. Using  
25          the correct number, Valara's power plant will cause

1 an exceedance of EPA's particulate matter  
2 standards, and so DES has to deny the permit.

3 Second, formaldehyde is a known cancer-causing  
4 pollutant, and this data center power plant will  
5 discharge large amounts of formaldehyde into the  
6 air of the surrounding community. Yet, DES did not  
7 look at the cancer risk posed by this facility.  
8 The public deserves to know this information before  
9 DES allows the data center power plant to emit from  
10 formaldehyde. At the same time, according to DES's  
11 draft permit, the initial 48 megawatts of onsite  
12 gas generation is going to emit approximately  
13 9 tons per year of formaldehyde. But incredibly,  
14 the additional 400 megawatts, almost 9 times more  
15 generation, will supposedly add only about 0.2 more  
16 tons per year of formaldehyde. That just doesn't  
17 make sense. And using EPA's own numbers for  
18 formaldehyde emissions from gas turbines, DES  
19 appears to have severely underestimated the data  
20 center power plant's formaldehyde emissions. We  
21 believe, in all likelihood, that Valara's power  
22 plant will be a major, not minor source of  
23 formaldehyde. And DES must deny the permit for  
24 failing to properly account for formaldehyde  
25 emissions and risk.

1                   Finally, I just have to say the lack of  
2                   transparency around this data center proposal has  
3                   been stunning, even for a data center.

4                                           (Applause)

5   HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG:   We want to make sure we're  
6                   capturing these comments.   Thank you.

7   MS. WYCHE:   The fact that the Spartanburg community and  
8                   particular -- particularly the people living around  
9                   this proposed data center had no idea that the plan  
10                  was to build a 450-megawatt gas plant is terrible.  
11                  It is undeniable that this gas plant will emit  
12                  harmful air pollution, that it is surrounded by  
13                  neighborhoods, and that it will be one of the  
14                  largest industrial sources of air pollution in  
15                  Spartanburg County and in the Upstate region.

16                  I cannot believe that these folks in these  
17                  neighborhoods had to find out about this gas plant  
18                  proposal from a local newspaper a year after the  
19                  county approved tax incentives for the facility and  
20                  months after DES issued initial permits for this  
21                  facility.   The public should have been told about  
22                  this from the start, either from the company or  
23                  from the local and state elected officials and DES,  
24                  who knew about this.   For these reasons, we ask  
25                  that DES deny the permit.

1 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, thank you,  
2 Ms. Wyche.

3 (Applause)

4 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: If I may -- if I may --  
5 thank you, Ms. Wyche, first of all. We do want to  
6 make sure we're capturing these fully. Ms. Wyche,  
7 I believe you have those comments in writing. I  
8 want to make sure we get your additional comments.  
9 If we can lower the disruptions down, we can make  
10 sure that we're able to hear from everybody. I  
11 want to make sure we're capturing everything  
12 accurately and fully for the record. Thank you so  
13 much. Aldon?

14 MR. KNIGHT: Sure. See if I can get closer up here.  
15 I'm Aldon Knight. I am Executive Director of  
16 Upstate Forever. We are a conservation  
17 organization working to protect lands, waters, and  
18 communities in Upstate South Carolina. I am a  
19 Spartanburg resident. I live very close to the  
20 center of metropolitan downtown Pauline. Proud to  
21 be here. Thank you for our DES folks being here  
22 tonight and for the opportunity to make comments.

23 Data centers have become a component of our  
24 digital infrastructure, but the rapid growth of  
25 this industry has also raised important questions

1           about the energy demand, environmental impacts,  
2           community impacts, and the adequacy of the existing  
3           review process. One of the primary concerns we  
4           have heard from residents is that the project now  
5           before DES is dramatically different from what was  
6           originally presented to the public. The proposed  
7           generation capacity has grown from roughly  
8           50 megawatts to approximately 450 megawatts, a  
9           nearly tenfold increase. When a project changes at  
10          that scale, it's reasonable for residents to want  
11          to better understand air quality impacts associated  
12          with the facility, which will affect areas beyond  
13          the project site.

14               Communities surrounding the site deserve a  
15          review process that fully evaluates the potential  
16          impacts associated with a facility of this  
17          magnitude. Those include air emissions, cumulative  
18          environmental effects, and the long-term  
19          implications of hosting a major power generating  
20          facility alongside a large data center.

21               Ultimately, this decision is more about -- is  
22          -- is about more than an air permit modification.  
23          It is about ensuring that projects of this scale  
24          receive a level of review that matches their  
25          significance and that the public can have

1 confidence in the process used to evaluate them.

2 For those reasons --

3 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Wait. I think --

4 MR. KNIGHT: Sorry.

5 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Derrick, was there time left  
6 for the -- is that five minutes?

7 That's -- this is five. I'm sorry. I'm  
8 sorry. Keep going, Aldon. We've got -- we've got  
9 the time.

10 MR. KNIGHT: Very good. I just have one more line.

11 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Sorry.

12 MR. KNIGHT: For those reasons, we respectfully urge DES  
13 to refrain from taking positive action on this  
14 permit modification, until -- at least until  
15 questions regarding appropriate review have been  
16 resolved. Thank you.

17 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, Aldon.

18 (Applause)

19 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: And, Derrick, this will --  
20 this will be another five minutes, so -- then  
21 we'll --

22 MS. POOLE: All right. Good evening. Oh, is it on?

23 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: I hope it's -- I think it's  
24 on.

25 MS. POOLE: Okay.

1 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Let's see. Is it --

2 MS. POOLE: Okay. Sorry, guys. Good evening. My name  
3 is Emily Poole, and I'm the Upstate Staff Attorney  
4 at the South Carolina Environmental Law Project.  
5 SCELPA is a non-profit, public interest law firm,  
6 and our mission is to use legal expertise to  
7 protect land, water, and communities across the  
8 state. I am here to share my concerns with the  
9 Draft Air Permit that you are considering issuing  
10 to the Valara data center currently under  
11 construction on South Pine Street.

12 Valara has asked you for permission to  
13 multiply its onsite gas generation ninefold and  
14 ramp up their energy production at the facility  
15 from 50 megawatts to 450 megawatts. Unfortunately,  
16 the gas-fired generators and turbines that would  
17 make this expansion possible produce harmful air  
18 pollution in the form of particulate matter, sulfur  
19 dioxide, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic  
20 compounds, and hazardous air pollutants, all of  
21 which are linked to adverse health outcomes such as  
22 respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses, asthma,  
23 and in more severe cases, heart attack, stroke, and  
24 cancer.

25 Given the site's location, the threat to human

1 health cannot be overstated. The facility is  
2 encircled by countless neighborhoods with hundreds  
3 of homes and all kinds of places and spaces that  
4 are indicative of the area's residential character.  
5 That includes a total of 17 elementary, middle, and  
6 high schools, as well as numerous businesses,  
7 medical offices, nursing homes, places of worship,  
8 parks, preserves, and other recreational spaces,  
9 all located within just a few miles of the Valara  
10 data center.

11 To make matters worse, screening tools show  
12 that this area is already overburdened and  
13 sensitive to environmental pollution, scoring in  
14 the 98th percentile for existing toxic air  
15 pollution and in the 97th percentile for proximity  
16 to facilities that are monitored closely for  
17 handling substances with significant environmental  
18 and public health risks. Substantially increasing  
19 the amount of harmful air pollution produced at  
20 this site, therefore, raises significant  
21 environmental justice concerns and only exacerbates  
22 current environmental and public health inequities.

23 Of course, the injustice surrounding this data  
24 center hardly ends there. From the beginning, the  
25 citizens of Spartanburg were not included in, nor

1 brought up to speed on the true scope and  
2 detrimental impact of Valara's plans for this  
3 property. Without full knowledge of what was being  
4 proposed or that the facility's onsite gas  
5 generation would soon balloon by 800 percent, all  
6 those who call this area home had no opportunity to  
7 protect what they hold dear. And now, after being  
8 left in the dark over and over again, the  
9 communities who could not see this coming, are  
10 being forced to carry the brunt of significant  
11 harmful air pollution. The people of Spartanburg  
12 County deserve better. And while the mistakes of  
13 the past can never fully be rectified, your  
14 Department has the power to hold Valara  
15 accountable, as it asks for your permission to  
16 pollute our air, and to only issue a permit after  
17 all protective measures are imposed.

18 In conclusion, the community located around  
19 and affected by this data center and the proposed  
20 gas-fired generators and turbines that will power  
21 it deserves assurance that their air quality,  
22 health, and safety will be protected. Existing  
23 pollution and health disparities in this area must  
24 inform the permit and lead to more protective  
25 criteria being included in its terms. And the

1 comment letter we will submit will demonstrate  
2 those required permit additions and changes. If  
3 SCDES is unwilling to make those modifications, as  
4 well as those voiced by my colleagues at the  
5 Southern Environmental Law Center, then the permit  
6 must be denied. We implore SCDES to do all within  
7 your power to stand for justice and safeguard this  
8 community. Thank you.

9 (Applause)

10 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, Ms. Poole. Are  
11 there any others who are representing an  
12 organization who would like to make a comment  
13 tonight?

14 I think we're going to start calling on some  
15 of the individuals who indicated they want to speak  
16 tonight. So I'm going to give a few names, so you  
17 can kind of get a little closer. And again, that  
18 way we can hear from as many of you as possible.  
19 So, Alex Turner, Allan Arthur, Allison Tracy and  
20 Alva Pack. We have Alex Turner, Allan Arthur,  
21 Allison Tracy, Alva Pack. Sir?

22 MR. PACK: Y'all, I don't mind going first if I can get  
23 up.

24 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: If you're near a mic, come  
25 on -- come on down. Yeah.

1 MD. PACK: Okay. I am Alva, A-l-v-a, Pack, P-a-c-k. My  
2 lovely wife Janice and I live at [REDACTED]  
3 [REDACTED], which is 400 feet away from the data center.  
4 I want to talk about air. The air we breathe and  
5 the pollutants in it and the DSS monitoring -- DES.  
6 DS -- DES knows control of fugitive particulate  
7 matter, AQI PM2.5. We do not understand these  
8 formulas and scientific lingo, but we know about  
9 the dust in our -- on our cars and the dust in our  
10 lungs. DES knows what NorthMark Strategy told them  
11 and will tell them. We, the neighborhoods  
12 surrounding the data center -- our quality of life  
13 is destroyed, and we do not know what the future  
14 brings. DES knows what the future brings, because  
15 they look at mathematic formulas.

16 We know at 48 megawatts and 450 megawatts, gas  
17 turbine plants will emit pollutants. These will  
18 affect sensitive groups of people like infants and  
19 elderly. DES does not know I have nine  
20 grandchildren -- great-grandchildren, playing 400  
21 feet next to the top 10 percent of all power plants  
22 in the state. We do not know what 450-megawatt  
23 jet-turbine-powered plants will affect our great-  
24 grandchildren's health in the future.

25 DES knows the data center located on North

1           Blackstock Road by the name of DartPoint. It has  
2           1.6 megawatts of power. It is located in an  
3           industrial compound with no houses within 400 feet.

4                   We know that 450-megawatt jet-engine power  
5                   plant on Pine Street is 284 times -- 284 times of  
6                   what DartPoint is. We are the -- are in the  
7                   neighborhood where people, homes, children, pets,  
8                   not warehouses, tractor-trailers and security  
9                   guards. NorthMark, the investor of \$3 billion  
10                  projects, knows why they did not ask for  
11                  450 megawatts in the beginning. Could it be 48  
12                  megawatts was a foot in the door?

13           Would you want your family to live across the  
14           street from a jet airport, a jet-turbine 450-  
15           megawatt data center for the next 40 years? It  
16           will be like having a 747 on the runway 24/7.  
17           Please vote no to this 400-megawatt increase.

18 I have 10 seconds. I've asked NorthMark for  
19 six weeks who took Jennifer Byrne's place as their  
20 president who started this damn thing, and I can't  
21 get an answer.

22 (Applause)

23 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, sir.

24 MR. TURNER: So I apologize. I didn't prepare anything.

25 I didn't know I was speaking. But I have two

1           questions. Who wants the data center in  
2           Spartanburg? Stand up.

3   HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Sir.

4   MR. TURNER: Who wants it? Stand up.

5   HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Could I -- could I at least  
6           ask you to give your name for the court reporter,  
7           for the record, sir?

8   MR. TURNER: I -- I apologize.

9   HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you.

10   MR. TURNER: My name is Alex Turner. I'm running for  
11           District 6 County Council, and I'll be on the  
12           general ballot in November.

13                               (Applause)

14   HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Let's make sure we capture  
15           the comments. Thank you.

16   AUDIENCE MEMBER: Nobody wants it.

17   MR. TURNER: My next question: Please stand up if you  
18           do not want the data center in Spartanburg.

19           There's your answer. Thank you very much.

20   HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, sir. Thank you,  
21           sir.

22                               (Applause)

23   HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Please make sure you start  
24           with your name for the court reporter, please.

25   MS. TRACY: Sure, and thank you. Hi. My name's Allison

1 Tracy. I'm a resident of Cherokee County and an  
2 employee in Spartanburg. I'm commenting in  
3 opposition to NorthMark's permit request to  
4 increase power generation at their facility on  
5 South Pine. What I want this Department to  
6 consider is what this increase means for the  
7 people, animals, and natural spaces that surround  
8 this site. The South Carolina School for the Deaf  
9 and Blind is approximately three miles away. I'm  
10 proud to work there to help students with multiple  
11 disabilities ranging from visual impairments and  
12 deafness, to autism and intellectual disabilities,  
13 to physical and emotional impairments. For many of  
14 them, our school is so much more than a classroom.  
15 It is their temporary home.

16 Students travel from across this state because  
17 our school is one of the only places that can meet  
18 their needs. These are children who already face  
19 challenges that most of us will never fully  
20 understand. Increased air pollution and noise  
21 pollution from this expansion, will affect the  
22 quality of air they breathe in the environment  
23 where they learn and live. For students who rely  
24 on hearing aids or cochlear implants, how will the  
25 increased noise and electrical interference from

1           these turbines affect their ability to communicate  
2           and learn? These are not minor inconveniences.  
3           They affect the child's ability to function in  
4           their daily life.

5           Also, Croft State Park is approximately eight  
6           miles from this site. Residents, families, and  
7           wildlife depend on these woods, creeks, and lakes.  
8           All of this is at risk when we allow the proposed  
9           expansion without fully understanding the  
10          environmental consequences. Pollution doesn't sit  
11          still. It moves through air and water and affects  
12          everything around it. The people of this  
13          community, the students at our schools, and the  
14          natural resources of this area did not agree to  
15          carry the cost of this expansion. Thank you.

16   HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, Ms. Tracy. Did  
17          we have Allan Arthur? Is Allan Arthur here?

18                 Going to ask for a few more names here:  
19          Amanda Page, Gary Poliakoff? Y'all help me. Okay?  
20          Amanda Stewart, Amy Collins. Please start and  
21          state your name, sir.

22   MR. POLIAKOFF: Thank you. Gary Poliakoff. I'm an  
23          attorney in Spartanburg, and I'm currently on the  
24          board of Upstate Forever. I was on the board of  
25          South Carolina Environmental Law Project for many

1           years and been on the boards of lots of other  
2           environmental groups. I've litigated against DHEC  
3           in every court in the state over the course of 48  
4           years, from --

5                               (Applause)

6   MR. POLIAKOFF:  -- DHEC hearing officers, to the DHEC  
7           board, the ALC Court -- Administrative Law Court,  
8           Court of Common Pleas, Court of Appeals, South  
9           Carolina Supreme Court. In all of my cases, I've  
10          never represented a person or entity with  
11          environmental violations of any kind. Never  
12          represented the violator, and I've never had DHEC  
13          on my side ever. In fact, in most of my cases,  
14          DHEC's lawyers huddle up with the polluters lawyers  
15          on what to do next and the strategy, etc. DHEC has  
16          a long history of not only allowing companies that  
17          have no qualifications to do what they're proposing  
18          to do, but allowing them to bend the rules, and  
19          that's what's occurring here.

20                       The history of --

21                               (Applause)

22   HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG:  Please limit your  
23          interruptions. Thank you.

24   MR. POLIAKOFF:  -- history of DHEC is that it will  
25          counsel companies on how to provide as little

1 notice as is possible to the public. In the  
2 present case, they're not only providing as little  
3 notice as possible, they're actually in violation  
4 of a number of federal regulations -- state and  
5 federal. State Regulations R61-62.5 and 61-62.70,  
6 in particular. In every way that the term "major  
7 facility" is defined, this is a major facility.  
8 They -- DHEC -- DES now, formerly DHEC, has allowed  
9 them to continue to call this a minor facility.  
10 These things are well defined in the regulations.  
11 There is no legitimate basis to call this a minor  
12 facility. It is a major facility.

13 The difference is there's a lot more scrutiny  
14 for a major facility than there is for a minor  
15 facility. Number 1, a lot more scrutiny in terms  
16 of public notice, opportunity to be heard, public  
17 hearings, information, etc. Additionally, there's  
18 far less requirements for them to prove they're  
19 able to handle this. We don't know a whole lot  
20 about Valara or NorthMark at this point, other than  
21 NorthMark appears to be, not a company in the  
22 business of handling environmental issues or  
23 problems, but mostly an investment group. Seems to  
24 be a holding company. They've done a lot of  
25 banking in the past. It seems to be investors.

1       None of them are from South Carolina. Even the  
2       current facility contact is from Texas. These are  
3       people who do not care what goes on in the place  
4       where they're going to affect -- adversely affect  
5       the quality of life for many people here. DES,  
6       formerly DHEC, will often claim, "Well, if there  
7       are problems, you can bring that up with DHEC  
8       enforcement." Mark my words, DHEC enforcement is  
9       among the laxest in the United States. They  
10      allowed --

11 (Applause)

12 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Again, if we can hold the  
13 interruptions, we can get more comments.

14 MR. POLIAKOFF: There are a few examples DHEC can -- can  
15 point to where they have done some type of -- of  
16 monitoring or enforcement. But enforcement by DHEC  
17 comes after years of people suffering. There are  
18 many examples as to why companies come to South  
19 Carolina. Lots of companies come here because they  
20 do like the people here. Lots of other companies  
21 come here because they know they can get away with  
22 environmental violations.

23 (Applause)

24 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Please.

25 MR. POLIAKOFF: Another thing, it wasn't long ago when

1 South Carolina nationally was known as the dump  
2 state of the country, because for every category of  
3 waste that the federal law defines, from nuclear to  
4 hazardous, toxic, infectious waste, every kind of  
5 waste on down to municipal solid waste, we had  
6 among the largest dump facilities in the country,  
7 taking back those kinds of waste from so many other  
8 states. Reason being for they are located here,  
9 it's much easier to get a permit in South Carolina  
10 than it is most states. And once you're up and  
11 running, there's virtually no monitoring and  
12 enforcement. Is -- it's a wet noodle. It barely  
13 takes place at all.

14 And so you cannot count the -- the public of  
15 Spartanburg cannot count on DHEC to do anything  
16 when this facility is out of what they're currently  
17 saying it is. Again, I -- I could go into more  
18 detail about what the differences are between major  
19 and minor. This meets the definition of major.  
20 DES is allowing them to pursue a fraud and a  
21 misrepresentation by calling it minor.

22 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, sir.

23 (Applause)

24 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Gary, thank you. If we can  
25 continue to -- to have others come up. I'm going

1 to make sure that we hear from as many as possible.

2 (Audience members shouting out)

3 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: I'm --

4 (Audience members shouting out)

5 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: I would like to see if we

6 have Amanda Page, Amanda Stewart, Andy Collins.

7 Are y'all in the building and wanting to comment?

8 I'm going to continue to call some names. Please

9 come forward so we can continue to hear these

10 comments that we do value. Angela Adams, Ann

11 Bryan, Ann Brown, Arlene Williams, Barb DiPalma.

12 Do we have Barb DiPalma?

13 MS. DIPALMA: That's me.

14 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Oh, thank you.

15 MS. DIPALMA: Hi. I appreciate you hearing me. After

16 hearing a couple of other people speak, I actually

17 ditched my speech. My name is Barb DiPalma. I'm

18 from Inman, South Carolina. And I would actually

19 like to address something for Dr. Pack regarding

20 Jen Byrne. And I believe that she still is there.

21 She serves as the group COO and president of the

22 High-Performance Computing Division. She leads

23 operations and strategic data infrastructure

24 initiatives, including the company's multi-billion-

25 dollar compute center expansion.

1           She previously worked at G-Research, owned by  
2           Peter de Putron and she spent six years there as  
3           the Chief Operating Officer for leading London-  
4           based quantitative research and technology firm.  
5           And she also worked at Lockheed Martin for  
6           overseeing military and commercial space programs.  
7           And she also held previous roles as VP of Technical  
8           Operations and Technology. And she also serves as  
9           a board member for SES Satellites and healthcare  
10          tech providers, which generally, I feel like the  
11          data center is more of a power plant and military  
12          installation than just for your AI and your  
13          Netflix.

14                 In terms of the DES qualifications to properly  
15          identify the pollutants on this permit, it seems  
16          like this air construction permit modification got  
17          signed off on by some people from Jacobs, which is  
18          a consulting firm for data centers. And I lost my  
19          notes on the other person, but I -- I have to  
20          question that Tyler Dunlop has been in this  
21          position for nine years, but it seems like he came  
22          right out of school and then is just probably told  
23          what to do and how to sign off on these things when  
24          intimidating lawyers and third-party consultants  
25          are involved and intimidating him. And that's all

1 I have to say. Thank you.

2 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Are there others that we've  
3 called on? Let's see. I think we're -- next we  
4 have Bill Scott, Carolyn Reed-Smith, Chris Klein.  
5 Mr. Scott?

6 MR. SCOTT.: Thank you. My name is Bill Scott, B-i-l-l  
7 S-c-o-t-t. I've been a resident of Spartanburg for  
8 over 25 years. This is where I raised my family,  
9 and I currently have children and grandchildren who  
10 live here. I live about 3 miles from the -- the  
11 proposed site. I'm concerned about air, water, and  
12 noise pollution that this data center will emit.

13 Valara is not above the law. According to the  
14 Southern Environmental Law Center, Valara was  
15 supposed to have a certificate of environmental  
16 compatibility and public convenience and necessity  
17 before commencing construction. This certificate  
18 includes a public process that involves case  
19 dockets, public witness hearings, and evidence from  
20 the utility environmental groups and the public.  
21 They didn't do this.

22 They were supposed to have this certificate  
23 before they started construction. They're  
24 basically thumbing their noses at the Spartanburg  
25 community. If they are in violation of the law

1           before the center is even built, one can only  
2           assume that it'll get much worse for the residents  
3           of our county.

4                       When I --

5                               (Applause)

6   HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG:   Again, please, let's --

7   MR. SCOTT:   When I asked them about this, this evening,  
8           they said, well, they couldn't really comment on it  
9           because it was pending, okay?   No one likes to see  
10          a vacant manufacturing plant, and I understand the  
11          city and county's desire to generate tax revenue at  
12          the former Kohler plant.   The Kohler Company was  
13          great for Spartanburg.   Mike Kohler, the CEO, was a  
14          community-minded individual who loved this city.  
15          Unfortunately -- unfortunately, this data center  
16          with their no-name CEO, has no interest in the  
17          health/welfare of our community.   And the absence  
18          of this phantom CEO from this meeting tonight  
19          speaks volumes.

20               With regard to noise pollution, I asked them  
21          what the -- the noise pollution would be like, and  
22          they said, well, they would be underneath the limit  
23          that Spartanburg County has, which is about 70  
24          decibels.   That's not good enough for me.   I want  
25          to know what it's going to be right there at the

1 street level 24/7. And she did say that she would  
2 give me that information. Please do not allow  
3 Valara to expand their data center to generate nine  
4 times more electricity than they initially  
5 proposed, equaling nine times more pollution. The  
6 health of our community is more important. Thank  
7 you.

8 (Applause)

9 MR. KLEIN: Hello. My name's Christopher Klein. I live  
10 within three miles of where this proposed data  
11 center is going to be located. If NorthMark is  
12 allowed to have a 450-megawatt facility, this would  
13 mean that Spartanburg would be hosting one of the  
14 top 20 data centers in the country by megawatts.

15 We shouldn't be calling this a data center.  
16 This is called "hyperscale." Let that sink in for  
17 me. One of the top 20 largest hyperscale data  
18 centers in the country.

19 The amount of carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide,  
20 carbon -- or nitrogen oxide would drastically  
21 change the city. If allowed, this facility would  
22 produce between 870 and 960 million tons of carbon  
23 dioxide annually. And that's if they're operating  
24 at 55 percent capacity. The likely number is well  
25 north of 1 billion tons of carbon dioxide. The

1 smog, the foul smell, and the noise it would  
2 create, not to mention the higher electricity bills  
3 we all saw back in January and February, will be  
4 swapped for higher natural gas bills.

5 What are we doing? If any of you have family  
6 and children, I implore you to think of them. The  
7 tech industry's motto is, "Move fast and break  
8 things." Well, NorthMark has been moving very fast  
9 to build its facilities out. And if allowed, they  
10 will break the City of Spartanburg. Do not allow  
11 them to do so.

12 NorthMark and the City have thrown out numbers  
13 like \$2.8 billion investment like that's a great  
14 thing. But this doesn't in any way, shape, or form  
15 the benefit or investment to the people of  
16 Spartanburg. Let me throw out a couple numbers for  
17 you. At full capacity, it would produce 23,000  
18 pounds of nitrogen oxide and 10,000 pounds of  
19 carbon monoxide daily. Those are real numbers that  
20 the people of Spartanburg care about. DES needs to  
21 vote no to the pollution permit and keep  
22 Spartanburg clean. Thank you.

23 (Applause)

24 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, Mr. Klein. Ms.  
25 Reed-Smith?

1 MS. SMITH: Thank you for coming. My name is Carolyn  
2 Reed. C-a-r-o-l-y-n. Last name R-e-e-d-Smith.  
3 I'm in Boiling Springs, Spartanburg, and I'm in the  
4 Spartanburg water area. Today, I wanted to attend  
5 this meeting to make a comparison of the plan that  
6 was made in 2025 to what is needed for the changes  
7 that is being requested. And to say please do not  
8 approve any of their expansion. I feel like what  
9 is done today should have been done in 2025. The  
10 meetings like this should have been done during the  
11 planning stages in 2025.

12 What was said about 2025 about the resulting  
13 use or misuse of environmental? The initial  
14 meetings with -- with NorthMark were held in  
15 secret. In 2025, they did not lower -- they did  
16 not lower the possibility of stronger restrictions,  
17 imposing moratoriums, or even knowing that they had  
18 banning of the construction. And these are the  
19 things that they've overlooked because they did it  
20 in secret. When you have a mis-reputation  
21 (verbatim), it should not be legalized. An  
22 intention or something negligent, false  
23 representation made verbally or by conduct or  
24 sometimes by non-disclosure or concealment and all  
25 for the purpose of deceiving, defrauding, or

1 causing anything to rely on that in a different  
2 way.

3 This appeal should be not -- this should not  
4 be -- we should repeal this ordinance. They are  
5 not protecting our children, our jobs, our  
6 environment. Where are the studies that will show  
7 the transfer from 45 watts to 450? And what will  
8 be done to the land use, to our community, our  
9 environment? The use of water will be contaminated  
10 and the land. And water -- and how do we eliminate  
11 it? So many of these waters that will be polluted,  
12 our different lakes and our rivers. Animals will  
13 be killed. And what about the noise level? This  
14 move by NorthMark is abusive. It is extortion. It  
15 is a -- it is criminal. It is shady business.  
16 They want to take ten times the advantage of 30  
17 years of no tax and no real contracts to follow  
18 environmental regulations. Thank you.

19 (Applause)

20 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, Ms. Reed-Smith.

21 We have Chris Klein, Clemson Turregano, Courtney  
22 McClain, Danielle Helf. Thank you for coming down.  
23 And if you could introduce yourself to start.  
24 Thank you.

25 MS. MCCLAIN: My name is Courtney McClain, and I am a

1           lifelong resident of Spartanburg. And I am also  
2           currently running for the United States House of  
3           Representatives to represent Spartanburg and  
4           Greenville. And today, I am requesting -- I'm  
5           requesting that the South Carolina Department of  
6           Environmental Services deny the requested quality  
7           permit for the data center that is being built by  
8           NorthMark -- NorthMark Strategies and Valara  
9           Holdings on Pine Street.

10           Nationwide data centers are at the center of a  
11           public health crisis and people that are being  
12           impacted by them are being ignored. I am one of  
13           the residents that live near this center, and we  
14           are currently seeing an increase in our electricity  
15           bill and a decrease in our water pressure.  
16           Environmental experts have also warned that the  
17           increase to 450 megawatts of power that has been  
18           requested will likely cause harmful pollution,  
19           including fine particulate matter, smog-forming  
20           compounds, and cancer-causing agents. So not only  
21           would our electricity bill continue to rise, water  
22           pressure continue to decrease, but then the very  
23           air that we breathe would not be suitable.

24           The county council is now considering a  
25           moratorium on data centers in the area and nothing

1 should be approved until the county council  
2 finalizes and votes on this moratorium with the  
3 regulations, restrictions, and protections that are  
4 needed to prevent harm to residents like myself  
5 that are living around the center. The people of  
6 Spartanburg have resoundingly rejected Project  
7 Sparrow, and now we are standing here, again,  
8 overwhelmingly asking you to reject NorthMark  
9 Strategies and the Valara data center permit  
10 because we need to protect people and not  
11 corporations. Thank you.

12 (Applause)

13 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, Ms. McClain.

14 DR. TURREGANO: Madam Commissioner, with your  
15 permission, I'd like to turn my back to you so I  
16 can face out this way.

17 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Sure.

18 DR. TURREGANO: Madam Commissioner, thank you very much  
19 for the opportunity to speak tonight. My name is  
20 Dr. Clemson Turregano, that is C-l-e-m-s-o-n. Last  
21 name Turregano, T-u-r-r-e-g-a-n-o. And in  
22 transparency, I am the Democratic candidate for  
23 South Carolina House District 33, the house  
24 district where the data center is located.

25 I live in one of Glendale's suburbs near the

1 impact zone of the NorthMark data center, and I  
2 respectfully oppose this request for additional  
3 generating capacity, not only because of its  
4 environmental impacts but because of what it says  
5 about trust, transparency, and our community.  
6 Tonight's hearing is officially about an additional  
7 400 kilowatts of generating capacity that was not  
8 included in the original proposal. But for the  
9 families who live around this facility, this  
10 hearing is about much more than generators. It's  
11 about trust. It's about transparency. It's about  
12 protecting the quality of life for the families who  
13 live in these neighborhoods today and for those who  
14 will live here long after we're gone.

15 As you know, the mission of our environmental  
16 agencies goes beyond public health and  
17 environmental quality. Ultimately, it is about the  
18 livability of the communities we call home. And  
19 that's what is at stake for our families tonight.  
20 Families know that good neighbors build trust.  
21 When you're putting up a fence, you ask the  
22 neighbors first. You build trust before the  
23 construction begins. The people living around this  
24 hyperscale, major facility deserved to know the  
25 full scope of this project before the construction

1        started, not after millions of dollars had already  
2        been invested and major decisions had already been  
3        made.

4           Now, when I taught public policy and  
5           government, I used to tell my classes that good  
6           public policy depends on informed consent. The  
7           need for more generators was not disclosed, and now  
8           the burden and the air pollution and the noise  
9           pollution and the water increases fall on the  
10          surrounding neighborhoods, as well as the air  
11          pollution on the families who call those  
12          neighborhoods home.

13           One thing the community was unaware of is the  
14           noise. And I'm aware that DES does not regulate  
15           noise, but these generators are going to create a  
16           significant noise issue. NorthMark estimates these  
17           generators could operate at approximately 65 to 70  
18           decibels, about the sound of a household garbage  
19           disposal. Imagine hearing that sound continuously  
20           in your house day after day, year after year.

21           It's about whether trust, transparency, and  
22       community still matter. I believe they do. Thank  
23       you.

24 (Applause)

25 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, Dr. Turregano.

1 MS. HELF: Hey, guys. It's kind of wild following to a  
2 lot of candidates, but, hello. My name is  
3 Danielle, D-a-n-i-e-l-l-e. Can you hear me?  
4 Hello?

5 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Use the mic.

6 MS. HELF: Yes, ma'am. Yeah. I guess I wanted to start  
7 by asking everyone if they're familiar with the  
8 parable of "Give a Mouse a Cookie." Right? If you  
9 give a mouse a cookie, like 50 megawatts of data,  
10 maybe they're going to want a little bit more.  
11 Then they're going to want some more. And then a  
12 little more. And that's exactly what we're seeing  
13 now, right? We're seeing a little bit by little  
14 bit this company growing and -- I don't know. I  
15 work in project management. If I failed in my job  
16 that poorly that the scope has changed entirely  
17 before the project opens, I'd be absolutely on my,  
18 you know, butt out the door, right? That's not an  
19 appropriate way to do business, and it's not an  
20 appropriate way to act within our community.

21 I guess my main thesis is we don't need to  
22 subsidize this random company's profit line with  
23 our community's lungs. You know, we don't need to  
24 subsidize their profit margins with our children's,  
25 you know, schools, with our families, with our

1 neighbors. That's just -- we have very different  
2 visions of what helping Spartanburg looks like.  
3 And I think helping people move into affordable  
4 housing, giving them clean water, I don't know,  
5 making sure the potholes are filled, making sure  
6 things like, you know, environmental pollution  
7 isn't rampaging. I think it's just important that  
8 you can serve the public, and I think it's really  
9 critical that you don't just do whatever you want.  
10 So that's my time. Thanks y'all.

11 (Applause)

12 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you. My apologies. I  
13 hit the wrong button. My apologies. Hang on one  
14 second. I'm going to use some of the paper copies  
15 that we have. So we have Elizabeth York and Ian  
16 McDonald and Ariel Burrow? Do we have someone  
17 ready to start?

18 MR. MCDONALD: Do you want me to go first? Okay. Ian  
19 McDonald, I-a-n, M-c-D-o-n-a-l-d. And my wife and  
20 I are here from -- actually, Mill Spring, North  
21 Carolina. So this is very much of interest to see  
22 what could be happening in our backyard.

23 As a retired mechanical engineer who spent an  
24 awful lot of time in the mining and the oil and gas  
25 industry, I can tell you that major projects are

1           very clearly defined in the outset. But how they  
2           roll them out is part of the appeasement to the  
3           public and making sure that they can clear the  
4           hurdles as those hurdles come up.

5           So I would say to, you know, DES that the time  
6           to get involved is not when there's an application  
7           for the most recent air permit. It's too late.  
8           You need to be involved up front with whoever's  
9           invested in your area to truly understand the real  
10          scope of the project and what the impact will be.  
11          And the reason those companies don't sell that is  
12          because it's unpalatable. Right? So it's much  
13          easier -- if you're going to expand roadways, you  
14          do it a little bit at a time, right? Because you  
15          don't want to disrupt someone. But over a period  
16          of time, it's happened.

17          And -- and, you know, there's a possibility  
18          with all of this capital -- intensive capital  
19          buildout that's taking place, you're going to end  
20          up displacing communities. And that's the price  
21          that you could pay. So it -- it comes back to  
22          knowing up front what is the scope and getting  
23          involved early for the regulatory and permitting  
24          agencies. Once you do it in the drip-feed method,  
25          it's too late.

1 MS. YORK: Hello. Thank you for the opportunity to  
2 speak. My name is Elizabeth with a Z. Last name  
3 is Y-o-r-k. I'm a retired college professor at  
4 Converse University and a concerned citizen. I was  
5 born and raised in Spartanburg, South Carolina.

6 My comment is very brief and mirrors many of  
7 the comments that have previously been made, and so  
8 my comment will be short. I'm extremely concerned  
9 that construction of this facility has begun  
10 without the informed consent of the citizens of  
11 Spartanburg. Thank you.

12 (Applause)

13 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: (Inaudible) Ms. Burrow?

14 MS. BURROW: Hello. My name is Ariel Burrow. That's  
15 A-r-i-e-l, B-u-r-r-o-w. A few months ago, I saw  
16 this video, and it was this elderly couple deciding  
17 -- or describing why they decided to retire in  
18 Grand Prairie, Texas. They said, "It was real  
19 quiet, still. We had all kind of animals out here,  
20 and we loved it." I related. The forest beside  
21 the roads and the quiet nights where what drove me  
22 back to Spartanburg after a couple years away.

23 But today, they must worry about their brains  
24 not working right and they talk about headaches  
25 that never go away, mystery strokes and pulmonary

1           embolisms happening to completely healthy people.

2           The difference was a data center built to mine  
3           Bitcoin. Another resident just said, "Every family  
4           here is sick."

5                   After various reports and health crises, the  
6           data center made several promises to engineer  
7           processes to keep sound out, to be a better  
8           neighbor. When they did finally do something, it  
9           was simply an ineffective wall. The residents of  
10          Grand Prairie are still sick.

11                   As stated earlier by Emily Wyche,  
12          approximately 220 tons per year of nitrogen oxide,  
13          158 tons per year of particulate matter, 9 1/2 tons  
14          per year of sulfur dioxide, 200 tons per year of  
15          carbon monoxide, 60.9 tons per year of volatile  
16          organic compounds, and 9.39 tons per year of  
17          formaldehyde are the emissions proposed in the  
18          draft. This permit asks to pump nearly 10 tons of  
19          formaldehyde into our air each year for data center  
20          operations to host computing services for internal  
21          use, as stated in the application.

22                   While the study conducted by the University of  
23          Michigan found that most data centers fall short of  
24          their flowery economic promises, this project, in  
25          particular, promises less than 30 jobs. While

1 reading the application, I tried to access  
2 equipment information and facility emissions  
3 documents that were linked there. Each time, I was  
4 denied access. Please give me one moment.

5 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: You have a few seconds left  
6 here.

7 MS. YORK: I'm sorry. I apologize. I have several  
8 health issues, and I started feeling faint.  
9 Basically, the only thing I could find on this  
10 company was a promise to be a better neighbor --  
11 or, sorry, to be a good neighbor, that they want to  
12 be a good neighbor. But good neighbors care  
13 whenever you say that you don't want something.  
14 When you ask them to stop doing something, a good  
15 neighbor listens, because they care about your  
16 well-being, too, and not their bottom-line profit.  
17 Thank you.

18 (Applause)

19 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBURG: Thank you, Ms. York. Next,  
20 we have Emory Caraviello, James Mack, Janny -- is  
21 it Janny Santos? Jennifer Bradham. And forgive me  
22 if I mispronounced a name. I'm -- my apologies.  
23 Yes, ma'am. Would you like to speak now?

24 MS. SANTOS: Janny Santos, J-a-n-n-y S-a-n-t-o-s. Good  
25 evening. My name is Janny Santos. I'm a combat

1           veteran, a mother, a student at USC Upstate, a  
2           neighbor. My children and I live here in  
3           Spartanburg County because this is where we go to  
4           school, where we have also cared deeply -- come to  
5           care deeply about this community.

6           Service did not end when I took off the  
7           uniform. Today, service means standing here  
8           speaking up for people who will live with the  
9           consequences of the decisions that will come from  
10          this process.

11          During the NorthMark presentation last night,  
12          one statement stayed with me. We were told this  
13          facility's emissions would represent the percentage  
14          of South Carolina's total emissions. What stayed  
15          with me was not the number, it was the comparison.  
16          Because when we choose the comparison, we also  
17          shape the conversation. Comparing one facility to  
18          an entire state's emissions made me stop and asked  
19          whether we are looking at this from the perspective  
20          of South Carolina or from the perspective of the  
21          families who live here. Those are two different  
22          ways of understanding the same information.

23          I hope, as this permit is reviewed, we keep  
24          our focus on the people who will experience the  
25          cumulative impacts of -- if it is ultimately

1           approved. When we compare one facility to an  
2           entire state's emissions, I worry we stop asking  
3           what those emissions mean for the people who  
4           actually live here. Spartanburg is not an empty  
5           spot on the map. It is home, it is families,  
6           neighborhoods, schools, churches, and generations  
7           of people who have built their lives here. We  
8           already live alongside manufacturing, freight rail,  
9           inland port, airport, major employers. I hope we  
10          are asking not only whether this one project meets  
11          the law, but also what it means when it is added to  
12          everything that already exists.

13                 As a mother, I think about unintended  
14          consequences. We rarely see them coming. We  
15          recognize them only after they become someone  
16          else's burden to carry. I want my children to  
17          inherit more than economic opportunity. I want  
18          them to inherit clean water, healthy air, thriving  
19          wildlife in a community that values people as much  
20          as progress.

21                 I want them to inherit a community where  
22          people matter enough to ask difficult questions  
23          before making permanent decisions. A place where  
24          we value clean water, healthy air, the character of  
25          our community just as much as we value growth.

1           Business comes and goes, markets change,  
2           investments move. Families stay, homes remain.  
3           The choices we make today become part of the place  
4           our children will call home tomorrow.

5           Before a final decision is made, I ask that we  
6           consider one question: Are we evaluating the  
7           project only on what it promises today, or what --  
8           also on what it asks the future generations to  
9           accept? Thank you.

10       HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, Ms. Santos. Next  
11       if you could please introduce yourself.

12       MS. CARAVIELLO: Hi, my name is Emory, E-m-o-r-y,  
13       Caraviello, C-a-r-a-v-i-e-l-l-o. I'm a Spartanburg  
14       resident. Since November, we've been gathering as  
15       a community to share concerns about our county  
16       being impacted by high powered computing centers  
17       coming to our county. This air permit will allow  
18       the proposed 450 megawatts of power be generated on  
19       site. To give some reference, 450 megawatts is  
20       enough to power around 270,000 homes. As of 2026,  
21       our county as a whole only has 140,000 homes,  
22       almost double the current residential use.

23           This air permit might seem small on a state  
24           level, but these data centers are a nationwide  
25           expansion where every small town is at risk of

1 pollution. We need to understand on a worldwide  
2 scale that the past year gas-fired power demand has  
3 jumped 31 percent. The US, as always, is leading  
4 the front and demands a quarter of that. In a  
5 study by Cornell University in November of last  
6 year, we found that this expansion pace is  
7 estimated to add 24 to 44 million metric tons of  
8 carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, the emission  
9 equivalent to add 5 to 10 million cars worldwide.

10 I'm asking you to consider denying this air  
11 permit for Valara as the emissions will not only be  
12 harmful to our county as a whole, it will also add  
13 to the rapid decline of our natural resources  
14 worldwide. We have to be preemptive now for a  
15 clean future. Thank you.

16 DR. BRADHAM: Hi. First off, I want to thank you for  
17 providing this opportunity for us to speak. We  
18 really appreciate you all being here. My name is  
19 Jennifer Bradham, B-r-a-d-h-a-m. I have a PhD in  
20 environmental science from Vanderbilt University.  
21 I'm also an associate professor of environmental  
22 science here. I am also a mom, a resident that  
23 lives within three miles of the data center. And I  
24 want to plainly state that as a mom, as a resident,  
25 and as a scientist, based on published scientific

1 research, that I oppose granting this permit.

2 So as -- as part of my research from October  
3 2024 through April 2025, my research team and I set  
4 up Purple Air air quality monitors throughout  
5 Spartanburg's urban footprint. We particularly --  
6 we specifically quantified particulate matter 2.5,  
7 which is just one way of measuring air quality.  
8 According to the EPA's air quality index metric,  
9 only about 48 percent of the time was our air  
10 quality qualified as "good." That is less than one  
11 out of every two days was our air quality in  
12 Spartanburg's urban footprint categorized as good  
13 based on EPA standards. The rest of the time our  
14 air quality was categorized as moderate, unhealthy,  
15 or hazardous.

16 Particulate matter 2.5 is a pollutant that we  
17 already have problems with, based on these data,  
18 but it's also a pollutant that's going to be  
19 emitted from this data center. So we can expect  
20 these values to be minimum values and only increase  
21 in severity. Research -- recent scientific  
22 research modeling the impact of increased air  
23 pollution on data centers is incredibly alarming.  
24 We're talking increases in asthma, COPD,  
25 cardiovascular disease, neurological effects,

1           cancers, premature mortality, and many more. One  
2           study from Virginia found that data centers  
3           emitting less than 10 percent at their permitted  
4           levels of emissions resulted in an additional 220  
5           to 300 million dollars in associated healthcare  
6           costs. When those emissions were equal to what the  
7           data centers were actually allowed to permit, those  
8           increased health costs were estimated to be 2.2 to  
9           3 billion dollars per year. So those numbers are  
10          astounding.

11                 Moving forward with this data center is not  
12          what's right for the Spartanburg community. Many  
13          of those who are experiencing the financial  
14          benefits of this in the short term are not those  
15          who are going to experience the negative healthcare  
16          benefits in the long term. That's us, those who  
17          live here. Moving forward with the data center and  
18          permitting increased emissions will require that  
19          everyone involved with this decision-making process  
20          look in the mirror and admit to themselves that  
21          profit and development are more important than the  
22          health of our loved ones, friends, neighbors, and  
23          fellow residents of Spartanburg. Thank you.

24                                 (Applause)

25          HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: (Inaudible.) Could we

1           please -- we have more comments to receive. Thank  
2           you.

3       MR. MACK: Good evening. My name is Greg Mack, G-r-e-g  
4           M-a-c-k. Just like the trucks. My wife and I live  
5           in The Oaks subdivision. Our home sits about  
6           three-quarters of a mile away from the South Pine  
7           Street site. My first thought on this project was,  
8           "Great. Somebody's using the old Kohler plant  
9           productively and they're going to pump about  
10          \$15 million a year to our school and public works  
11          for the next 25 years after a multi-billion dollar  
12          investment. What could be wrong with that?"

13               Then I learned of the power plant, 450  
14          megawatts of generating power, new gas turbine  
15          technology, etc. And I tried to be okay with that  
16          too, but I did wonder: Just how big is 450  
17          megawatts? Sounds big, but is it really?

18               Well, here's the comparison. You folks are  
19          from Columbia, you'll be familiar with this. The  
20          hydroelectric part of Lake Murray Dam has a net  
21          generated capacity of 207 megawatts. The McMeekin  
22          Gas Turbine plant located in proximity to the dam  
23          has a generating capacity of 250 megawatts. If you  
24          add both these together, you get 457 megawatts,  
25          approximately the same capacity as this project

1           that will sit across the street from my house and  
2           within a three-mile radius of 15,000 homes.

3           The Lake Murray plant has about 7,000 homes in  
4           a -- within a three-mile radius, and it's buffered  
5           by a mile-and-a-half long earthen dam, a lake, a  
6           dense natural space on either side of the Saluda  
7           River and just under half its power comes from  
8           hydroelectric turbines that use lake water as a  
9           propellant with no pollution, making that part  
10          practically green. The proposed NorthMark plant  
11          will be in wide open spaces spewing close to 800  
12          tons of polluted -- pollutants each year. Let that  
13          sink in. To me 800 pounds is a big number. We  
14          were talking 16,000 pounds. Where will all that  
15          pollution go? Which brings me to the punch line.

16          If Duke Energy or Dominion Energy had asked  
17          for a permit to build a power plant with 98.5  
18          percent of the capacity of Lake Murray generating  
19          an estimated 800 tons of pollutants annually within  
20          a three-mile radius of 15,000 homes, would you even  
21          remotely consider approving it? I doubt it. That  
22          is exactly what we're looking at here.

23          When we bought our homes, we invested in the  
24          safety and peaceful character of Spartanburg  
25          County, and none of us signed up for a Lake Murray-

1           sized power plant next door without the pretty  
2           lake. Thank you.

3                               (Applause)

4   HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, Mr. Mack. We  
5           have someone who signed in just as Kelley. I don't  
6           know if that's her first or last name, but K-e-l-l-  
7           e-y. We have Lewis Smith -- or Lewis B. Smyth,  
8           Livingston Hawkins, III. I see some people coming  
9           forward. Sir?

10   MR. HAWKINS: Yeah. My name is Liv Hawkins. I'm an  
11           employee at Wofford College. I'm a board member  
12           for Keep Spartanburg Beautiful. I'm the chair of  
13           the city's Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee. I  
14           live about five-ish miles away from this hyperscale  
15           data center. It's about -- sits about a few miles  
16           outside of our city limits. Community's important  
17           to me; sustainability's important to me; the future  
18           of our planet and our community is important to me.

19                   I've heard the word "neighbor" a lot tonight,  
20           and of course it sounds like on NorthMark's  
21           website, they aspire to neighborly associations. I  
22           think what we all can agree on in this room is that  
23           they have not met that. Having a former county  
24           council member who's now a state employee appointed  
25           by Governor Henry McMaster say that this is not a

1 data center, that's not neighborly. Having a --  
2 you know, being approved for one level of power and  
3 then asking for another before you're even open,  
4 that's not being a good neighbor.

5 All of these tech corporations, NorthMark,  
6 OpenAI, Cloud, all of them constant -- Meta --  
7 looking at us and telling us hyperscale data  
8 centers are inevitable and they need to be in your  
9 neighborhood and you have no choice. That is not  
10 neighborly. Especially when they have proven time  
11 and time again that the infrastructure is not  
12 ready, the environmental impact is not ready.

13 Ultimately, I believe that DES has a  
14 responsibility to say no, especially as we look to  
15 the federal administration and we have an executive  
16 order stopping AI from being regulated on the state  
17 level. We have environmental restrictions being  
18 eased. As a community, as a state, as a county, we  
19 need to pick up that slack and hold these  
20 corporations accountable. Corporations are not  
21 going to be a good neighbor out of the goodness of  
22 their hearts. They need to be forced.

23 I think that the message to NorthMark, who  
24 hobbled together a website and, you know, created  
25 some shitty logo for St. Pine -- I think that they

1           should be told either they can be a good neighbor  
2           or they can leave. And ultimately, I hope that the  
3           next community they try -- they try to do this in  
4           do the very same thing and tell them the same  
5           message and they keep getting kicked, kicked,  
6           kicked, kicked until hopefully NorthMark is no  
7           longer a thing. So that's my message. Thank you.

8                               (Applause)

9   HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, sir. Ma'am?

10   KELLEY: Hi, my name is Kelley. I have lived in  
11           Spartanburg County for a large chunk of my life,  
12           and I'm raising my family here. I signed in with  
13           just my first name because I don't think it's  
14           necessary for the company that is seeking approval  
15           to know everything about us and our information and  
16           how to contact us when they will tell us nothing  
17           about them.

18                       They are now trying to be good neighbors, just  
19           like the other gentleman said. They're following a  
20           policy of secrecy and subterfuge like so many other  
21           data companies. You -- you -- there is -- there is  
22           a plan. You say, "Oh, we're going to do this and  
23           it's going to be so good. We're going to bring  
24           economic development." Where is the proof? There  
25           is no proof. They start small. They get their

1 foot in the door, and they go, "what are you going  
2 to do about it?"

3 Well, what they're doing about here is they're  
4 telling us, "Well, you know, our original proposal  
5 did state that we wanted to have this huge  
6 generation facility, and we started small because  
7 we weren't sure about what equipment would be  
8 needed." These were answers -- answers they gave  
9 last night during the impromptu tele-town hall  
10 where they gave our community of 350,000 residents  
11 of Spartanburg County the opportunity for up to  
12 1500 people to be heard -- or to participate in the  
13 call. Maybe 20 were heard. Okay? But what they  
14 said in their answer to one of the questions was,  
15 "Well, what happens if -- if DES doesn't approve  
16 your request?" And it was very telling.

17 These beautifully transparent, good neighbors  
18 said, "Well, you know, we don't know." We don't  
19 know what we'll do if we don't get that rubber  
20 stamp because we don't have a Plan B. We're here.  
21 This is what we're going to do, and y'all may as  
22 well just get used to it." That was the message  
23 that our good neighbors gave us.

24 Y'all, please, please think about it. What  
25 would you do if somebody were treating your family,

1           your community -- they're going to turn this into a  
2           wasteland, yet another toxic waste dump. Thank  
3           you.

4                                           (Applause)

5   MR. SMYTH: Good evening. My name is Blake Smythe  
6           spelled Bravo-Lima-Alpha-Kilo-Echo Sierra-Mike-  
7           Yankee-Tango-Hotel. Blake Smyth.

8   HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, sir.

9   MR. SMYTH: I was in a neighborhood meeting two weeks  
10           ago, and it was with three of the NorthMark reps.  
11           And it was stated in that meeting that they have  
12           not any experience in this type of construction  
13           that -- or this type of a plant. That we're going  
14           to be the guinea pigs. So we're going to be the  
15           guinea pigs for all these numbers that have been  
16           presented previously. And let me bring up a couple  
17           of them. It's a power plant. The high-performance  
18           data center or data compute center possibly will  
19           have some problems with water pollution. If they  
20           meet their expectations, it'll be very minimal, but  
21           it'll still be there. The power plant, there's  
22           going to be air and noise pollution and problems.  
23           Even if they meet the EPA limits, it's still going  
24           to be pollution and a noise.

25                           They said that -- last night, on the

1 previously mentioned telecon, they said that the  
2 pollution would only be 5 percent of the county  
3 overall pollution, that they would -- that would be  
4 what their emissions would be. However, that's  
5 still going to be the largest pollutant in the  
6 county, and it's still going to be coming into our  
7 air and possibly water.

8                   They say that they're going to meet the EPA  
9                   standards. That's well and good. But as the  
10                  doctor said earlier, the pollutant -- or the  
11                  pollution in the county, according to their  
12                  monitors for the air pollution, we've got less than  
13                  one out of two days that are good quality and we're  
14                  going to -- and that was before this five --  
15                  additional 5 percent of the pollutant is going to  
16                  be added. Their testing was in the last several  
17                  months without the data center there, without the  
18                  turbines. So I think that one out of two days is  
19                  going to shrink.

20 (Applause)

21 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, Mr. Smyth. We  
22 have some additional names here. Mark Felk, Mark  
23 Gillespie, Matthew Thomas, Michael Ferguson,  
24 Michelle Lutke.

25 MALE: Miss, are you going in alphabetical order?

1 MALE: No.

2 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: When we were -- we were  
3 sorting by who pre-registered and who is in  
4 attendance and who had said they would like to make  
5 a oral comment. That's where we're starting so --

6 MALE: Well, I pre-registered yesterday, but I didn't  
7 get -- I thought you was . . .

8 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Sir, if you're ready.

9 WITNESS GILLESPIE: Good evening. My name is Mark  
10 Gillespie, M-a-r-k G-i-l-l-e-s-p-i-e, and I'm a  
11 lifelong resident of Spartanburg. I am standing  
12 here tonight to urge the state to deny the air  
13 construction permit for the Valara Holding  
14 expansion. Let's look closely at what is happening  
15 on South Pine Street. This facility originally  
16 bypassed a full public review by keeping its  
17 initial energy footprint under 48 megawatts. Now  
18 the developer is coming back to retroactively drop  
19 a massive 450-megawatt continuously running natural  
20 gas plant right into our community.

21 All of this environmental destruction is being  
22 asked of us just to fuel a private data center.  
23 Our community has spent decades carrying the heavy  
24 weight of manufacturing and intense industrial  
25 traffic. We are already overburdened. According

1 to the American Lung Association State of the Air  
2 Report, the Greenville-Spartanburg metro area  
3 already suffers from a D grade for ground level  
4 ozone pollution. We simply cannot afford to slip  
5 any further.

6 If this permit is approved, 11 massive gas  
7 turbines will pump an estimated 990 tons of new air  
8 pollutants into Spartanburg's air corridor every  
9 single year. We aren't just talking about carbon  
10 dioxide, we're also talking about massive amounts  
11 of nitrogen oxide and sulfur dioxide. When these  
12 compounds mix with our humid South Carolina  
13 summers, they create ground level ozone and toxic  
14 fine particular matter known as "PM2.5." These are  
15 not harmless invisible particles. PM2.5 slips  
16 directly past our body's natural defenses, deep  
17 into our lungs, and directly into our bloodstreams.

18 Peer review medical studies from Stanford and  
19 EPA proves that living near continuous combustion  
20 gas plants leads to documented spikes in asthma  
21 attacks, cardiovascular disease, strokes, and  
22 premature death. There is no safe level of  
23 exposure to this type of pollution. Worst of all  
24 draft permits that this facility will emit uncapped  
25 amounts of formaldehyde, a known human

1 carcinogenic. This will immediately make one of  
2 Spartanburg County's single largest polluters. The  
3 county council recently passed a one-year  
4 moratorium on data centers because they know our  
5 resources are at a breaking point. I ask the DES  
6 to do its job.

7 (Applause)

8 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Sir?

9 MR. FELK: Yes. My name is Mark Felk, M-a-r-k F-e-l-k.  
10 We purchased our property at The Oaks. We built  
11 our home in 1995. Up until late 2025 and early  
12 '26, we enjoyed the peace and quality of life  
13 offering a living six miles outside the city  
14 limits. Our home sits between 1200 and 2700 feet  
15 from the power plant presently under construction.  
16 There are nine neighborhoods that surround this  
17 site nobody wants to talk about that also range  
18 between 500 feet and 1 1/2 miles. We're talking  
19 about The Oaks, Spring Lake, Sundance, Camp Croft,  
20 Keswick Farms, Glen Forest, Oak Creek Plantation,  
21 Four Mile Branch, representing thousands of people,  
22 pets, livestock, and priceless animals.

23           What was described to us about this project by  
24           former county council chairman David Britt was,  
25           "This will be a high-performance computing center

1 supporting engineering technology and the aerospace  
2 sectors." Britt confirmed this is not a data  
3 center. Y'all might remember that. "This center  
4 will not be a burden of our power grid by  
5 generating their own power of 48 megawatts, similar  
6 to the Kohler facility." This project is a power  
7 plant surrounding innocent people and generating  
8 450 megawatts, polluting our air, creating constant  
9 noise, and consuming and adding pollutants to our  
10 water.

11 Because of all the scheming Congressman Shane  
12 Martin said it best when referring to Project  
13 Mark 1, Block 1 as a bait-and-switch scheme. You  
14 might remember that, too. This is a fact. I heard  
15 it. NorthMark admits we never -- to never having  
16 built anything of this size and scope before. And  
17 everything about this project proves it.

18 My air concerns are pollutants like  
19 formaldehyde, nitrogen oxide, particulate matter,  
20 carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, volatile organic  
21 compounds. My health concerns are asthma, chronic  
22 bronchitis, reduced lung function, increased  
23 respiratory infection, heart disease, just to name  
24 a few. Noise. There's going to be constant  
25 humming from chillers, running backup generators,

1 running turbine jets -- or jet turbine generators.  
2 Low frequency noise. Infrasound; that's very  
3 harmful to humans and worse to animals.

4 In 1776, our father's fought because of  
5 political overreach and coercion. Strangely enough  
6 in 2026, we're in the very same fight and preparing  
7 for the same outcome. Thank you very much.

8 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you.

9 (Applause)

10 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, Mr. Felk. Is  
11 this mic on? Going to you, sir.

12 MR. THOMAS: Hello, my name is Matthew Thomas. That's  
13 M-a-t-t-h-e-w T-h-o-m-a-s. I'm just a guy. I  
14 think this is important. Don't have too many  
15 prepared comments, so I'll try to keep it short.  
16 Tonight we've heard from a lot of very intelligent  
17 people. We've heard from lawyers; we've heard from  
18 environmental scientists. And the consensus is  
19 pretty clear: This is not what Spartanburg County  
20 needs. This center is a power plant. This center  
21 is not going to benefit the people and the citizens  
22 of Spartanburg County in any material way and will  
23 only make things worse for us in terms of polluting  
24 the air, noise pollution, and polluting our water.  
25 Thank you.

1 (Applause)

2 MR. FERGUSON: Hey. My name is Michael Ferguson. What  
3 I've heard here tonight has said everything that I  
4 wanted to say, except so much more eloquently. DES  
5 seems to be a Bureau of Air Quality, and what we  
6 are hearing is a ninefold increase in the power  
7 generators and likewise, a ninefold increase in the  
8 pollutants. It's going to impact all of us in this  
9 room. Those going to be closest to the site are  
10 going to be affected a lot more in a concentrated  
11 area. For what? For a private data center that is  
12 basically going to profit hedge funds, polymarkets  
13 maybe, but certainly not the benefit of Spartanburg  
14 County with only 27 jobs being created. And  
15 NorthMark has just been very untransparent, very  
16 opaque on everything that they've been doing around  
17 this project. It's disgusting. DES listening to  
18 just the statistics that's being put out here  
19 tonight by the first three speakers should take  
20 those seriously under consideration and deny this  
21 permit. That's it.

22 (Applause)

23 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, Mr. Ferguson. We  
24 have Michelle Lutke, Nichole Gilder, Ryan Scott,  
25 Sheila Carter. Is it Starret Greene? Or Sturett?

1 Starret? If you would go ahead. Thank you, sir.

2 MR. SCOTT: Thank you. My name is Ryan Scott, R-y-a-n  
3 S-c-o-t-t. I live in Spartanburg in one of the  
4 nearby communities. Large projects such as the  
5 Valara NorthMark data center require significant  
6 planning prior to construction. These steps would  
7 include continual engagement with all stakeholders,  
8 including the residents of this community,  
9 providing transparent plans and details so that  
10 informed decisions can be made by all parties.  
11 This is not a new subject as it is referred to  
12 directly on the SCDES website.

13 Our community received no such details, and we  
14 were completely left in the dark until the surprise  
15 of major construction activities commenced at the  
16 Kohler facility. So I'm asking: Why did DES not  
17 hold a public hearing for the initial air permit?  
18 I asked that same question earlier tonight and the  
19 response I was given is that it wasn't requested.  
20 That is not good enough for me. That's not good  
21 enough for you. And the proof of that are the  
22 concerned citizens here this evening.

23 It's not too late to start moving in the right  
24 direction and listening with both ears to the  
25 concerned residents of Spartanburg. I'm urging

1           you, do not approve the second air permit requested  
2           for 450 megawatts. This amount of onsite  
3           generation is equivalent to major Dominion Energy  
4           and Santee Cooper gas-fired power plants in South  
5           Carolina. Why wouldn't this even be considered in  
6           a once peaceful residential area? According to  
7           pollution estimates detailed in the draft permit,  
8           the data center could become one of the largest  
9           industrial sources of harmful air pollution in the  
10          upstate South Carolina, essentially blanketing a  
11          residential community with polluted air. When the  
12          data center was first announced, the public was  
13          never informed of the harmful air pollution and  
14          noise that was coming with it. This project, even  
15          though currently incomplete, has already changed  
16          the lives of many for the worse. Please make the  
17          right decision. Listen to the people of this  
18          community. Do -- please do not approve the permit  
19          to expand to 450 megawatts. Thank you.

20       HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, Mr. Scott.

21           Whenever you're ready.

22       MS. GILDER: I apologize. I had prepared notes, and  
23           between what happened tonight and what I learned  
24           tonight, I had to change everything. My name's  
25           Nichole, N-i-c-h-o-l-e, Gilder, G-i-l-d-e-r. I

1 live in Oak Creek Plantation, which is, from what  
2 I've been able to determine, less than a mile from  
3 the data center. I met with several people out  
4 including Valara and NorthMark.

5 And I have to say my original questions were,  
6 since the project was only previously approved in  
7 2025, how has the scope of the initial project  
8 changed that it now requires going from the 24  
9 megawatts or 48 up to the 485 megawatts? I was  
10 shockingly informed that it had not changed. The  
11 original scope was for the 485, and that everything  
12 that was presented was due to the process that they  
13 had to -- for the permitting through DES was that  
14 it's a staged process. And so they went with the  
15 48 because that's what they were building  
16 initially, and now we're onto Phase 2, which is why  
17 they had to go with the construction permit, which  
18 now brings in the additional 450. This is not  
19 acceptable.

20 Like, we were never informed. No one in my  
21 community knew -- that I know of, knew anything  
22 about this data center going up. We did not know  
23 until construction had begun. If you-all had put  
24 this forth or if they had put it forth truly as the  
25 485, and it was a major contract at that point, and

1 the permitting was such how this got through Britt  
2 and everyone else is abhorrent. The lack of  
3 transparency is unbelievable. There is no wonder  
4 that there's not one public official -- state  
5 elected official in this audience.

6 (Applause)

7 Spartanburg is not for sale. We live here.  
8 We want to have everything that we purchased. We  
9 want a home that has trees and nature and water  
10 that is consumable and air that we can breathe.

11 My family has health issues. We came here  
12 because of the environment we were in was going to  
13 sustain us, not what this is bringing on. I defer  
14 to all the people with all the environmental  
15 science degrees and the lawyers who have done all  
16 the facts. I had some of those. You were much  
17 more eloquent.

18 This permit application must be denied.  
19 Valara NorthMark took a gamble on starting this  
20 project with the DES requirements of having staged  
21 applications. We have a chance to stop this second  
22 phase. Twenty-seven jobs are not worth this.

23 (Applause)

24 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, Ms. Gilder.

25 Again, I appreciate all the comments that we're

1           receiving. I want to make sure we're accurately --  
2           accurately able to record these. Ma'am would you  
3           like to go?

4    MS. CARTER: Hi. My name is Sheila Carter. And my  
5           father, he worked at Kohler, and he built his home  
6           on [REDACTED], which is less than  
7           five minutes from the Kohler plant. I am concerned  
8           of all of these chemicals that are out here. We've  
9           already had water contamination in the -- the Camp  
10          Croft, Glendale, Whitestone area, which I was  
11          diagnosed with interstitial cystitis; that is a  
12          water contaminated disease from plants with their  
13          chemicals and things. And also I'm concerned --  
14          you know, we've also had issues with hand grenades  
15          in our area. My grandfather was blown up by a hand  
16          grenade in that area. We were never compensated.  
17          All of that to say, what we're going through right  
18          now, if we do not stop this power plant, we're  
19          going to have more medical issues, more respiratory  
20          issues, neurological issues, cancer issues.

21                 And when my dad built his home and worked hard  
22          at Kohler, he planned to be able to have something  
23          for his grandchildren, for us to be able to enjoy  
24          our property, for us to be able to relax and spend  
25          time with our, you know, families and friends. How

1       are we going to be able to do that if we're  
2       constantly hearing noises, we don't know if we can  
3       go outside and not have a breathing problem or  
4       heart problem?

5           It is going to be a severe financial hardship  
6           and emotional hardship, not just to me, but  
7           everyone in this area. And also what happens if  
8           this is allowed to proceed and then you start  
9           taking people's homes. It's a lot to consider.  
10          And I'm -- I -- I've been asked to ask -- and yes,  
11          I'm upset about it. I've been asked to ask how is  
12          it that we were chosen but Tyger River -- Tyger  
13          River, they were able to say no, and they did not  
14          be pushed into something that they do not know  
15          about?

16 (Applause)

17 MS. CARTER: We didn't know anything -- we didn't know  
18 anything about this. It's just like -- yes, my dad  
19 worked for Kohler. Mike Kohler was a good man.  
20 Y'all bought the property. You went ahead and  
21 said, yeah, this is -- this is good, this is good.  
22 But now we need almost triple the amount of energy,  
23 power, water to keep these computers or whatever  
24 you have in there that's private to us. It's not  
25 fair. We do not know anything. And it's just like

1 we are going to either have to stay in these houses  
2 or -- or move out. And if you sell your house,  
3 it's going to be a depreciated value. If you stay  
4 in your house, you may have some severe medical  
5 situations, and you may not even know what it's  
6 coming from, but it's coming from the "power plant"  
7 "data system plant." What is actually going on? I  
8 ask, please do not proceed with this because we  
9 have not been given enough information.

10 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you. Thank you,  
11 Ms. Carter. Sir?

12 MR. GREENE: My name is Starret Greene, S-t-a-r-r-e-t  
13 G-r-e-e-n-e. I want to thank DES for organizing  
14 this public hearing. I am in full support of all  
15 those who have spoken before me, that DES should  
16 give the highest consideration to reject this  
17 permit. There is something that wasn't said.

18 The permit implies an increase in the  
19 operations of the current data center. There will  
20 be a demand for more water. The current center is  
21 pulling about nearly half a million gallons of  
22 water each day. And expansion means it'll -- it  
23 will pull more. Now, let's bear in mind that 97  
24 percent of the world's water resources is in the  
25 ocean -- is in the ocean.

1 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: We have mic -- there we go.

2 Microphone out of range?

3 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Pause his time.

4 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Pause time.

5 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: We'll -- we'll allow more

6 time. Mr. Greene? Derrick, we can pause the time.

7 That might be a battery issue in the mic. My

8 apologies, Mr. Greene.

9 MR. GREENE: Yes, thank you very much.

10 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: So sorry.

11 MR. GREENE: I was saying that 97 percent of the world's

12 water resources is in the ocean. That means only

13 3 percent is left for 8.2 billion people, which is

14 the population of the world. It also says that

15 Spartanburg County has a minuscule quantity of

16 fresh water. And to be pulling so much water each

17 day means that eventually we will be paying more

18 for water because, as the demand for water

19 increases, so will be the price. I'm going to stay

20 there. Thank you very much.

21 (Applause)

22 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, Mr. Greene.

23 Thanks for our Spartanburg Auditorium AV for

24 helping with the microphone issue. Yes, sir? Go

25 ahead.

1 MR. STROLL: Good evening. My name is David Stroll. I  
2 live on [REDACTED], about six-tenths of a mile  
3 from the data center. And I'm here as a neighbor  
4 and a father, and I respectfully ask SCDES to deny  
5 the permit as currently written. SCDES says it is  
6 dedicated to helping people live healthy lives in  
7 healthy communities. Its environmental justice  
8 work says no community or neighborhood should be  
9 left behind when environmental impacts are at  
10 stake. Those commitments matter most when a multi-  
11 billion-dollar project asks to place utility scale  
12 combustion besides homes. This is not just a data  
13 center permit. SCDES's own statement of basis says  
14 Valara proposes 517 megawatt turbines and 654  
15 megawatt turbines for continuous onsite power, 409  
16 megawatts of new natural gas generation on top of  
17 24 permanent gas generators already permitted at  
18 the site.

19 For nearby families, this is not minor. It is  
20 a fossil fuel power plant beside neighborhoods.  
21 The phrase "synthetic minor" may be legal, but the  
22 health risk is not synthetic. That classification  
23 depends on pollution controls, calculations,  
24 testing, and record keeping working exactly as  
25 promised. SCDES's own table shows controlled

1 emissions of about 223 tons per year of nitrogen  
2 oxides, 202 tons of carbon monoxide, 158 tons of  
3 fine particulate matter, 9.39 tons of formaldehyde,  
4 and 19.65 tons of total hazardous air pollutants.  
5 The uncontrolled numbers are far higher. This  
6 permit is only as protective as its weakest  
7 assumption.

8 I support responsible economic development.  
9 But a \$2.8 billion project that creates at least 27  
10 jobs should not shift its real cost onto nearby  
11 families in the form of polluted air, health --  
12 health risks, monitoring burden, noise, and fear.

13 My children are eight and 11. They live,  
14 play, sleep, and go to school within the area of  
15 the emissions from this project. So do my nieces  
16 and nephews. My parents and my in-laws are in  
17 their 70s and they live here, too, dealing with  
18 asthma, cancer, and various other health issues.  
19 Our neighborhood is full of young families and  
20 retired residents. Exactly the people most  
21 vulnerable to air pollution. Our health is not an  
22 acceptable trade-off.

23 South Carolina law treats electric generating  
24 plants above 75 megawatts as major utility  
25 facilities. This project is many times that size.

1 Behind-the-meter power should not erase the  
2 physical reality of these emissions. Please deny  
3 this permit. Please put people before paperwork.  
4 Do not let Spartanburg become the test case for  
5 placing a private fossil fuel power plant beside  
6 our neighborhoods and calling it minor. Thank you.

7 (Applause)

8 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, Mr. David. I do  
9 want to make sure that we have Michelle Lutke. I  
10 don't know that we had her out earlier. Michelle  
11 Lutke, and we have Terry Ferguson, Thomas Wright,  
12 Vanessa Lech. I'm seeing some people move -- move  
13 around. Some are coming towards me; some are maybe  
14 going towards the back. I do want to encourage  
15 anyone to -- again, please, we continue to receive  
16 comments through July 31st. There are a number of  
17 ways to share those comments by e-mail, our e-  
18 permitting system, by writing a letter. And so  
19 please reach out to us if you're leaving and if we  
20 have not heard from you tonight. Sir, please go  
21 ahead.

22 DR. FERGUSON: Terry Ferguson. I'm -- T-e-r-r-y  
23 F-e-r-g-u-s-o-n. I'm a retired PhD professor in  
24 environmental science, and, also, I live 450 yards  
25 from the -- from the plant. So my concerns that

1 I'm going to talk about come from both my  
2 background and also my proximity to the facility.  
3 I'm greatly concerned about the nature and scope of  
4 this project. As has been pointed out repeatedly.,  
5 the hallmarks of this project have not been  
6 transparency and truth, but opacity and  
7 obfuscation. You know, the -- the permitting --  
8 the initial permitting of this last year again  
9 happened -- has been described multiple times  
10 today. It was originally a permit for 24 gas  
11 generators. Well, that permit was amended this  
12 spring to add an additional 21 generators to that.  
13 That's 45 gas generators at the plant. Now, we're  
14 being asked to add 11 turbines to that. As been  
15 stated before, this is -- this is a major power  
16 plant, and it's going to produce a major amount of  
17 pollution, air pollution, that is going to have  
18 harmful physical and mental effects.

19 I'm concerned about scope creep. We -- we're  
20 seeing that now. I mean, what's to prevent, you  
21 know, NorthMark coming back next year for an  
22 additional 450 megawatts. We're going to be  
23 talking maybe, you know, a gigawatt or a gigawatt  
24 and a half to, you know, this facility. That's a  
25 grave concern.

1 I'm concerned even today, the -- as best I can  
2 tell, there have been no environmental assessments  
3 done of what was an industrial and military site,  
4 and the dust that's been coming off this plant with  
5 the massive movement and cutting down acres and  
6 acres of trees is -- you know, there's a lot of  
7 very harmful chemicals. There were -- there were  
8 -- basically, we -- we've already probably been  
9 exposed to and there's -- there's no monitoring of  
10 that.

11 I think it is imperative that the  
12 responsibility of South Carolina DES ought to be  
13 to, if this is going to be a major plant that does,  
14 God forbid, get, you know, built, that they need to  
15 monitor this plant. The assessment, the ability  
16 for NorthMark to send us once a year a report of  
17 what they find or what they monitor is not  
18 adequate. Thank you.

19 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, Mr. Ferguson.

20 Ms. Wilson (verbatim), do you want to go ahead?

21 MS. WILLIAMS: All right. Thank you so much. And my  
22 name is Saville, which is S-a-v, as in victory,  
23 i-l-l-e, Williams with an "s," and I'm actively a  
24 candidate for South Carolina House District 34,  
25 west side of Spartanburg County. So tonight I

1           actually want to come here just to speak about the  
2           residents, the people who will be impacted if this  
3           plant is allowed to operate here in Spartanburg  
4           County. I learned some new information tonight, so  
5           I had to adjust my speech just a little bit.

6           I have a question regarding the level of due  
7           diligence conducted by the South Carolina  
8           Department of Environmental Services before  
9           considering approval of the turbines and the  
10          generators associated for this project. In the  
11          past South Carolina sent a delegation to Missouri  
12          to visit and evaluate an ethanol plant, and that  
13          was before moving forward with the project. We  
14          didn't get that with this type of project. I want  
15          to know why we didn't get that level of due  
16          diligence, why a delegation was not sent to inspect  
17          other plants, listen at the sound, actively talk to  
18          the engineers, talk to the residents that live near  
19          those data centers, and then come back and make an  
20          informed decision. It seems that this moved a  
21          little fast and it's being forced down our throats,  
22          and I'm not happy about it.

23          I believe that all of us here -- all of us  
24          residents here want to protect our quality of life.  
25          We value the natural beauty, our clean air, our

1 forest, our rivers, and our wildlife that make  
2 Spartanburg special to all of us. Has the  
3 Department of Natural Resources or any wildlife  
4 experts been consulted regarding the potential  
5 impact of this project? I didn't see them in the  
6 lobby. I didn't find anything online. So I'm  
7 wondering if they were included in the  
8 conversation, if they raised any concerns, and if  
9 those concerns were addressed.

10 Is there any equipment failure? If there's  
11 any critical incidents that happened at the former  
12 Kohler plant, who is going to be responsible to  
13 protect our residents? What's the response going  
14 to be? Is there independent oversight that exists?  
15 Who ultimately has authority to hold Valara  
16 accountable for the actual impact on our community?

17 As it stands right now, I can't see that any  
18 one organization is responsible. The public is  
19 being asked to place its trust in this process.  
20 The people's trust, our quality of life, and  
21 protection of our natural resources are at stake.  
22 The decision warrants the highest level of  
23 scrutiny, transparency, and due diligence. And I  
24 understand that your agency has been asked to  
25 approve turbines and generators, not the entire

1 data center, but respectfully, I would ask --  
2 encourage you-all to push back and make that actual  
3 delegation visit to another site. Skip the  
4 conference rooms. No fancy hotels. Put a tent in  
5 the community right across the street from the data  
6 center, spend the night, and come back and tell us  
7 you will not approve it.

8 (Applause)

9 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you. Do we have  
10 Thomas Wright? Vanessa Lech?

11 MS. LECH: I'm here.

12 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Oh, thank you. Come on  
13 down. Thank you, ma'am.

14 MS. LECH: Hi, my name is Vanessa, V-a-n-e-s-s-a. My  
15 last name is Lech. It's spelled L-e-c-h. I don't  
16 want a data center or this permit approved anywhere  
17 where I live or where I work. And I do both in  
18 Spartanburg. I also want to point out that it's  
19 very clear, because I've been going to a lot of  
20 government meetings to include the county level of  
21 Spartanburg, that these data centers in general --  
22 general are wildly unpopular and unwelcome. I  
23 haven't heard from not one person in Spartanburg  
24 come to any of these governmental meetings I've  
25 been going to and say that they want a data center

1           here.

2                   Quite the opposite, they've been pleading to  
3           get rid of these data centers and to stop them from  
4           showing up and taking over the precious natural  
5           resources that we need to survive and to live. And  
6           I live in the third District, Spartanburg City.  
7           There's a lot of quality of life issues there  
8           already. A data center's only going to make that  
9           exponentially worse. And it's striking to me that,  
10          when you pointed out and asked if there's any  
11          elected officials here that wanted to stand up and  
12          speak, that no one stood up. And it appears that  
13          none of them are here, these elected officials.  
14          And that really proves to me what I've been saying  
15          recently is that there is no real representation in  
16          Spartanburg from the current elected officials.

17                                   (Applause)

18   MS. LECH: And that needs to change. I support quality  
19          of life, civic engagement. I encourage each and  
20          every one of you to run for local public office.  
21          And I'm not joking. Because there are people on  
22          the city council right now in recent history that  
23          are running unopposed, and they're also not here  
24          tonight, if you haven't noticed already -- to  
25          represent because there's a lack of real

1 representation from our elected officials clearly.  
2 And after something big happened a few days ago  
3 that I experienced, I decided to run, and I  
4 officially launched my campaign for 2027  
5 Spartanburg City Council, 3rd District.  
6 VoteVanessaLech.com to learn more. And you should  
7 run too. You need to look at your local offices  
8 and you need to run. Everyone needs to start  
9 running. You don't have to have a history of  
10 politician, I've never run before in my life. I've  
11 never organized a campaign. I'm just figuring it  
12 out. But you need to run too, seriously. If you  
13 care, you're here, you need to run. And take these  
14 people out of office. Okay? Thank you, and good  
15 night.

16 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Did we have Warren Bareiss?  
17 Eric Allison? Come on down.

18 MR. BAREISS: Hello my name is Warren W-a-r-r-e-n,  
19 Bareiss, B-a-r-e-i-s-s. I live on [REDACTED]  
20 [REDACTED], which is about four-tenths of a mile from the  
21 building site. My family and I have lived there  
22 for 15 years. We're just about to make our last  
23 payment on our house so that we would fully own our  
24 home. I looked at the picture out in the lobby,  
25 the aerial picture of the building site, and I see

1 my home and how close it is to this place. I feel  
2 betrayed by the county leadership.

3 I worry about my family's health. I worry  
4 about the value of my home. I wonder who would buy  
5 a house four-tenths of mile from this place. I  
6 wonder why -- if this power was needed, why they  
7 didn't ask for it on the first round. I don't know  
8 what I can say to convince you to stop this  
9 expansion, except -- except to say that my family  
10 and many other families are dependent upon you to  
11 do the right thing. Stop this catastrophe from  
12 getting worse. Please don't betray us again. And  
13 -- and I'd like to take about 30 seconds and ask  
14 everyone to join me in giving the folks from the  
15 state a little -- a little taste of the droning  
16 that we're all going to have to hear. So I'm going  
17 to drone for 30 seconds, and I hope you will join  
18 me too. Ready? 1, 2, 3.

19 (Audience joins in making noise)

20 MR. BAREISS: Thank you.

21 (Applause)

22 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you all. Whenever  
23 you're ready, sir.

24 MR. ALLISON: I'm just going to raise this.

25 MR. BAREISS: Did you record that?

1 MR. ALLISON: Sorry. Sorry. Not used to --

2 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Derrick, you might want to  
3 stop that clock for a second.

4 MR. ALLISON: All right. Good evening. My name is Eric  
5 Allison, and I'm a proud resident of Spartanburg  
6 County. I'm here to formally request South  
7 Carolina Department of Environmental Services to  
8 deny the Synthetic Minor Construction Air Permit  
9 for 11 natural gas turbines requested by Valara  
10 Holdings for the South Pine Street site. This  
11 expansion -- expansion changes the project from a  
12 localized 48-megawatt site to a massive 450-  
13 megawatt utility-scale power plant.

14 A change of this magnitude, an astounding 800  
15 percent increase, requires rigorous scrutiny across  
16 three critical technical issues. First, we are  
17 told by applicants that regulatory oversight is a  
18 straightforward, transparent process. But if you  
19 look closely at the timeline of this project, it  
20 reveals a deeply troubling pattern of procedural  
21 manipulation designed to keep the public in the  
22 dark until it's too late.

23 Let's look at the facts. September 17th,  
24 2025, this body issued an air permit for 24  
25 permanent natural gas generators. That was

1           presented as the baseline environmental footprint.  
2           March 4th, 2026, before the ink was barely dry on  
3           the original framework, NorthMark quietly turned  
4           around and applied for a massive layout overhaul,  
5           asking to swap those generators for 11 industrial  
6           grade natural gas turbines capable of generating up  
7           to 450 megawatts of power.

8           To make matters more deceptive, and nobody  
9           knows about this, while that massive 450-megawatt  
10          power plant application was ready sitting on your  
11          desk, NorthMark pushed through an amendment to the  
12          original permit on April 21st, 2026, just to  
13          squeeze in additional 21 temporary generators,  
14          almost doubling their current onsite power  
15          capacity. This is textbook segmentation --  
16          segmentation. It is a calculated piece-by-piece  
17          permitting strategy.

18          If NorthMark had walked into Spartanburg on  
19          day one and announced they were building a massive,  
20          heavily polluting, 450-megawatt fossil fuel power  
21          plant on the old Kohler site right off South Pine  
22          Street, the immediate public outcry and  
23          environmental scrutiny would've stopped them in  
24          their tracks. Instead, they got their foot in the  
25          door with a smaller permit, locked down local tax

1 incentives, and are now attempting a massive bait-  
2 and-switch. We're talking about bringing heavy  
3 duty industrial turbines that emit nitrogen oxides,  
4 fine particular matter, and carcinogenic  
5 formaldehyde into an area already overburdened by  
6 decades of manufacturing activity in the highly  
7 trafficked South Pine Street corridor.

8 Next, the operational reality of 11 massive  
9 turbines introduces immediate opacity and physical  
10 environmental risks. Continuous gas consumption at  
11 this scale creates persistent exhaust streams. Any  
12 start-up or operational deviation will lead to  
13 visible smoke plumes, violating state opacity  
14 standards. Furthermore, the low frequency acoustic  
15 noise and vibrations from a 450-megawatt generation  
16 site will destroy the quality of life for  
17 surrounding neighborhoods.

18 Finally, they have applied for selective  
19 catalytic reduction units for these new 11  
20 turbines. Operating SCRs at a 450-megawatt scale  
21 requires storing thousands of gallons of highly  
22 regulated toxic ammonia on South Pine Street. This  
23 application completely glosses over the intense  
24 localized storage hazard and the risk of ammonia  
25 slip directly into our neighborhoods. By approving

1       this permit SCDES would be rewarding a total lack  
2       of corporate transparency and validating a process  
3       that circumvents meaningful public oversight. This  
4       community refuses to be an afterthought. On behalf  
5       of the health, safety, and clean air of Spartanburg  
6       County residents, I urge you to look at this.

7 (Shouting from the audience)

8 MR. ALLISON: Decline the permit.

9 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: (Inaudible.) Thank you,  
10 sir.

11 (Applause)

12 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: We also have Bob Glenn,  
13 Kenneth Roach, James Jones. Mr. Glenn? Mr. Roach?  
14 Mr. Jones?

15 MR. GLENN: I'll speak from here.

16 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Will that work for you,  
17 Julie? I think our court reporter --

18 MR. GLENN: It'll have to. I'm speaking from here. I'm  
19 too pissed off to be --

20 MALE: We -- we can't --

21 MR. GLENN: -- clutching a mic.

22 MALE: She can't hear you up here.

23 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Can we take a mic to you,  
24 sir, to help the court --

25 MR. GLENN: My name is Bob Glenn. That's B-o-b for the

1 poor spellers. I'm a retired educator. This is  
2 people at One Spartanburg who recommended -- folks  
3 with One Spartanburg, who recommended this project  
4 with local governmental agents. They're idiots.  
5 This is an illogical plan. This is an illogical  
6 build.

7 FEMALE: But we can't hear you there.

8 MALE: We can't hear you though.

9 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Please, sir.

10 MR. GLENN: It's an illogical plan.

11 (Audience members shouting out)

12 MR. GLENN: I'm fine. Okay. I got it. I got it.

13 (Inaudible.) Also I'd like to share with those on  
14 the county council who made decisions on this thing  
15 and said "okay" for this project. They're not only  
16 idiots, they are buffoons. Also state governmental  
17 agencies who made illogical recommendations to  
18 allow this project to proceed: Idiots.

19 Because this project is illogical, it makes me  
20 think that palms are being greased. Now, gifts,  
21 cash, money, dark money for anybody and any one of  
22 these agencies who has accepted anything, a favor,  
23 if you have accepted anything, you have sold your  
24 soul to the devil for it (inaudible). And please  
25 make some smart -- some wise decisions in the

1 future. Thank you so much for allowing me to  
2 speak.

3 (Applause)

4 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, Mr. Glenn. Bring  
5 the mic back up. Thank you, sir.

6 MR. ROACH: All right.

7 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Sir, whenever you're ready.

8 MR. ROACH: Okay. Good. Well, anyway, my name is  
9 Kenneth Roach, and I'm a Roebuck resident here in  
10 Spartanburg, South Carolina. And I just want to  
11 first of all tell you thank you for having this  
12 public forum and this public -- I guess we should  
13 call it Town Hall or Public Hearing. I really  
14 appreciate that. It's a great opportunity for us  
15 to voice our opinions and issues that we have. And  
16 I definitely -- it's getting a little later in the  
17 night, and I think this probably accumulated to  
18 four or five really main issues that's going on  
19 here with this -- with this permit process.

20 But I just want to point out a couple of  
21 things that's -- I think is more material issue to  
22 the actual permitting process itself that I know  
23 that you've got access to actually conduct or  
24 actually required to conduct on this permit. The  
25 draft statement of basis and fact of the permit on

1 CP-5000422, and that's -- for the record does not  
2 appear to include any detailed environmental  
3 justice screening or any robust cumulative impacts  
4 analysis. So one of the common themes is the  
5 cumulative impact that we've had here in  
6 Spartanburg County for past heavy burdens of  
7 industry, and the Kohler plant being one of them.

8 So the question really lies really on -- on  
9 two main issues. Has the Department of  
10 Environmental Services -- have you guys conducted  
11 or actually required an environmental justice  
12 analysis or a cumulative impact analysis for this  
13 permit? In other words, how has these 11 new gas  
14 turbines been assessed of, actually, its impact on  
15 existing pollution that's already here in the  
16 community and the health risks for nearby  
17 neighbors? How much of that cumulative impact can  
18 we really actually accumulate to -- to the existing  
19 impact that's already here in the community? So --  
20 and if you haven't done it, why haven't you done  
21 it?

22 And those two things are very easily going to  
23 be assessed once this permit's actually permitted.  
24 I mean, once this permit's approved or not. And  
25 actually at the -- the bottom line is -- is will

1           this agency ensure the project does not unfairly or  
2           disproportionately harm the communities that are  
3           already overburdened by the cumulative effect of  
4           pollution and stuff here in Spartanburg? Thank  
5           you.

6 (Applause)

7 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, sir. Do we have  
8 James Jones? We have just a few left here. We  
9 have the -- in the pre-registration side or those  
10 who registered even coming in tonight. So Aiden --  
11 Aiden Kongkeo, [REDACTED], Tim Brown, Eric  
12 Norheim. Yes, ma'am.

13 MS. [REDACTED]: I am [REDACTED], [REDACTED]  
14 [REDACTED]. I live in The Oaks a half mile  
15 from -- from this power plant -- gas-powered power  
16 plant. On behalf of the 25,000 people who live  
17 within three miles of NorthMark and in the broader  
18 air basin of five miles, 70,000 people, 15 schools  
19 with 10,000 students: We beg you to reject this  
20 permit.

21 (Applause)

22 MS. [REDACTED]: (Inaudible) I, too, have changed my  
23 remarks. In our neighborhood meeting in The Oaks,  
24 an important question was asked of the NorthMark  
25 team: "Please direct us to centers you are

1 building or have built of similar size." They  
2 looked at us, the three NorthMark team members, and  
3 said, "We have never attempted to build a center of  
4 this size." Make no mistake, this was a private  
5 equity deal that will invite and encourage new  
6 ownership with additional frightening permit  
7 options.

8 In 1940 when the future of Great Britain was  
9 in peril, Winston Churchill responded, and I  
10 paraphrase, "We shall go on to the end. We shall  
11 fight with growing confidence and growing strength.  
12 We shall defend our island. We shall not  
13 surrender." We do not have Winston Churchill, but  
14 we do have each other, Spartanburg. Together we  
15 shall not surrender.

16 (Applause)

17 MS. [REDACTED]: [REDACTED], [REDACTED].

18 Please don't tell NorthMark.

19 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: No. This record is for  
20 SCDES. So thank you for being here tonight. Yes,  
21 sir?

22 MR. BROWN: My name is Tim Brown. I'm a resident of  
23 Spartanburg, have been here for 25 years and am a  
24 librarian. I just have questions to ask, questions  
25 I think that should be addressed before any further

1 work is done on the permitting. The first question  
2 is actually on the fact sheet distributed by Valara  
3 tonight. It's: Will the facility draw water from  
4 local groundwater or aquifers? And its answer here  
5 is, "No, the project's large supply will come from  
6 the municipal system and is not expected to rely on  
7 groundwater or aquifer withdrawals." But my  
8 question is: What confidence or comfort are we  
9 defined here after learning that its stated  
10 expectations as far power needs has increased  
11 tenfold in less than one year? So I'd like to  
12 point out that it has been documented by South  
13 Carolina's leading newspapers, including our -- our  
14 own "Herald Journal," that the Spartanburg County  
15 Council did not inform the public of the health-  
16 related concerns of this data center before voting  
17 to approve on Valara's permit.

18 So related questions concerning the health-  
19 related aspects. What has been done to identify  
20 the residential communities in the Spartanburg  
21 County and greater Upstate that would be impacted  
22 by this data center's air pollution? Question 2,  
23 who will be responsible for monitoring continually  
24 the impact of the data center on these communities'  
25 health? And then Question 3, will any environment

1           -- environmental science organization that is not  
2           corporate run or profit driven and is non-  
3           governmental be involved and involved regularly in  
4           this monitoring?

5                               (Applause)

6       HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG:   Thank you, Mr. Brown.

7       MS. WADE:   My name is Mary Helen Wade.   For 29 years, I  
8           have lived on [REDACTED] 0.6 miles from  
9           Valara Holdings' gas power plant.   I request that  
10          the DES of South Carolina deny this air permit  
11          application.   Valara will be the eighth largest gas  
12          power plant in the state of South Carolina.   None  
13          of the current top ten are located in a suburban  
14          infill location, and are instead in rural areas  
15          surrounded by forest, rivers, and vast tracks of  
16          land and have no schools or neighborhoods within  
17          four to five miles.   For this gas power plant,  
18          three schools are located within three miles and 15  
19          schools within five miles.   Notably, the state  
20          residential school for multi-handicapped children  
21          or the School for the Deaf and Blind is just 1.8  
22          miles away.   70,000 people reside in this five-mile  
23          radius around this plant.

24                       I also request that DES look carefully at the  
25          potential to emit.   Valara's application reveals an

1           alarming 90 percent pollution control efficiency in  
2           order to remain below the major source thresholds.  
3           So let's take nitrogen oxides as one example of the  
4           plant's nine different air toxins. The  
5           uncontrolled emission of nitrogen oxides is a  
6           massive 2,106 tons per year. A drop in control  
7           efficiency of just 1.6 percent would immediately  
8           push the facility past the 250-ton PSD limit.  
9           Relying on such a razor thin margin for error is a  
10          severe threat to public health, especially given  
11          its proximity to our neighborhoods and our schools.  
12          Also for perspective, this facility will emit more  
13          nitrogen oxide by a factor of seven than the entire  
14          10 million square foot BMW manufacturing complex.  
15          And BMW is located on 1,270 acres. This plant is  
16          on 260 acres.

17                 Also, I confirmed tonight with Sarah, and you  
18          have heard this already from NorthMark, that they  
19          have never built a gas power plant and they have  
20          never even built a data center. That is scary.  
21          This 450-megawatt facility -- did I get my full  
22          three minutes? Anyway, it's catastrophic for this  
23          community and I hope that you deny the permit.

24   HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Ms. Wade --

25                                 (Applause)

1 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: And, Ms. Wade, again, if you  
2 have some written comments, please make sure you  
3 share those with one of our staff, for the record,  
4 as well. Did we have David Slade Glenn or Nancy  
5 Sosbee?

6 MS. SOSBEE: Yes.

7 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Ms. Sosbee, thank you.

8 MS. SOSBEE: Hello, my name is Nancy N-a-n-c-y, Sosbee  
9 S-o-s-b-e-e. I really came out tonight because I'm  
10 angry about how the system works. We have planning  
11 commissions, zoning commissions, county council  
12 meetings, this meeting tonight. We're stretched  
13 thin or we would've even more people here. And I'm  
14 here now representing over a dozen people who also  
15 couldn't come out tonight due to health and other  
16 reasons or being elderly with COPD or asthma or  
17 other conditions. This is just going to worsen  
18 things for them.

19 And I'm very discouraged because in the lobby  
20 I saw the chart the environmental services showed  
21 that, on paper, how conservative this place is  
22 going to be towards contamination and things. And  
23 I don't believe it. When you look at the other  
24 states that have these data centers there, even a  
25 less scale, the people who speak up around those

1 areas are moving because they're so bad, and this  
2 one is going to be a lot bigger scale than that.

3 So I just hope that -- that we can make some  
4 change where environment -- environmental services  
5 will not just look at on paper 189, on paper 190,  
6 okay, they're over the limit. Now we're going to  
7 give them a chance to comply. Okay. They're back  
8 down to 189. Those things make no sense when it  
9 comes to the pollutants that are in the air that  
10 are hurting these people that are so close to the  
11 plant.

12 And I feel sorry for the people who came up  
13 tonight and said how close that they live to that.  
14 I -- I hurt for them because they -- they put their  
15 money into that and it's their home. And I'm a  
16 fifth-generation Spartanburg County resident. My  
17 family's from here, always been here. We hope to  
18 be six generations. And I think to myself, if I  
19 were in their position, I would take a loss and  
20 move because of my health. I would rather have my  
21 health. But that's not really an option for  
22 everyone to get out, and eventually it won't be for  
23 me. If we had not shut down Spero, I would've been  
24 looking for another place to move, too. And sooner  
25 or later there will be no place left to go. Please

1 keep these things in mind. Thank you.

2 (Applause)

3 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Let's see. Sir, are you  
4 heading towards the mic? Okay. I know we have  
5 been calling on people who pre-registered or  
6 registered saying they were here, and they want to  
7 speak. I want to make sure we're not missing  
8 anyone. If there's anyone who still wants to  
9 speak, let's just -- let's just come one at a time.  
10 And -- like I said, I might be on the wrong spot on  
11 the spreadsheet.

12 MS. RHODEN: Thank you. I pre-registered. My name is  
13 Laura Barbas Rhoden, L-a-u-r-a B-a-r-b-a-s  
14 R-h-o-d-e-n. I am a resident of Spartanburg County  
15 within a five-mile radius, and I am strongly  
16 opposed to granting this facility permission to  
17 pollute. I'll explain my opposition.

18 Spartanburg County has thousands of residents  
19 whose health is imperiled by worsened air quality.  
20 9.8 percent of people in this county live with  
21 asthma. 1,062 people went to the ER for asthma in  
22 the county in 2023, and the total charges for those  
23 ER visits were over \$6.8 million. 9.6 percent of  
24 people in this county live with chronic obstructive  
25 pulmonary disease. There were 1,080 ER visits for

1 COPD in Spartanburg County in 2023. The total  
2 charges for those ER visits were over \$27.4  
3 million. Spartanburg County is doing worse than  
4 the state value in asthma hospitalizations, COPD ER  
5 visits and hospitalizations, heart attack ER visits  
6 and hospitalizations, and ER visits for stroke.  
7 And their rates have decreased. South Carolina as  
8 a state is worse than 22 other states in prevalence  
9 of pediatric asthma. Air pollution exacerbates all  
10 these conditions, and these conditions cost us  
11 millions of dollars in medical bills, hundreds in  
12 lost work hours, hundreds in lost days of learning.

13 Mechanical engineer and former Department of  
14 Energy official Jigar Shah has called the idea to  
15 power data centers with gas turbines, "a fairytale  
16 concocted on the back of a napkin." Because of  
17 load volatility, turbine shafts expected to last  
18 seven years are degrading in only ten months. What  
19 do they emit and at what rate as they degrade? The  
20 average data center trying to run off grid, Shah  
21 explains, builds extra capacity so that some  
22 turbines can be broken and the facility can still  
23 run. Again, I ask: What do they emit and at what  
24 rate as they degrade?

25 Spartanburg County residents deserve better

1           than worsened air quality from a fairytale sketched  
2           on the back of a napkin. Our residents love where  
3           they live. You hear that tonight. And as our  
4           South Carolina state motto says, "While we breathe,  
5           we hope." Let us breathe clean air. Thank you.

6 (Applause)

7 MR. GRIFFIN: Hello, my name is Daniel Griffin.

8 D-a-n-i-e-l G-r-i-f-f-i-n. There's a few things I  
9 want to talk about. The first is that -- is that,  
10 according to state federal law, the Utility  
11 Facility Siting in Environmental Protection Act,  
12 this facility that we're building is a major  
13 facility because it produces more -- it is capable  
14 -- is designed for/capable -- operates a capacity  
15 of more than 75 megawatts. They have not gotten  
16 the permitting from the Public Service Commission  
17 that they are supposed to for this.

18           More importantly, I'm a person with asthma.  
19           And I can tell you it sucks. It is not fun. If  
20           this goes through, if this plan gives an increased  
21           capacity, the cost will be on everyone else. This,  
22           because of the tax breaks announced, does not  
23           benefit the county, does not benefit the city, does  
24           not benefit the state. The only person that this  
25           will benefit is those that own this corporation.

1           The only one in the end this will benefit is those  
2           people that thus have decided not to named. And  
3           this will hurt everyone here. This will hurt  
4           everyone in the city. This will hurt the people  
5           that live nearby. In the long term, this benefits  
6           nothing but that.

7                   As a state agency, the Department of  
8           Environmental Services is supposed to protect us,  
9           is supposed to protect the people of the city and  
10          most importantly, the people who live nearest where  
11          this type of pollution can happen. If they do not  
12          respond to what is essentially a legal act, then  
13          they leave their service of a protector and leave  
14          it up to us.

15                  The only reason why this meeting is probably  
16          happening at all is because there's been major  
17          public outrage. Outrage that the corporation tried  
18          to hide so this wouldn't happen. Thank you very  
19          much. Have a good day.

20                                   (Applause)

21   HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG:   Sir, would you go ahead?

22   MR. MCDONALD:   Hi. My name is Frank McDonald,  
23           F-r-a-n-k-l-i-n, Franklin, McDonald,  
24           M-c-D-o-n-a-l-d. And I'm a retired, disabled  
25           Marine and Gulf Wars veteran. And I had my

1 daughter who was born in California near the San  
2 Onofre nuclear power plant and power lines were  
3 running over our house on base. And she ended up  
4 getting petechiae all over her body. So we took  
5 her to the doctor. It turned out she had leukemia  
6 just from maybe two weeks of being under these  
7 power lines. And she died from leukemia.

8 And then I retired from the Marine Corps,  
9 moved out here back to South Carolina where I grew  
10 up. And my daughter -- second daughter we had was  
11 fine until, you know, a few years after being here,  
12 she developed asthma. And now I'm living in  
13 Pacolet. I finally talked to my daughter, who got  
14 married, into moving back to South Carolina with  
15 our grandchildren and her husband. And now I'm  
16 finding out that they're going to be exposed to all  
17 this stuff, and it's just not worth it in my  
18 opinion for anybody.

19 I understand that this county council or  
20 whoever decided to do this for whatever reason, I  
21 think it's time we start thinking about a recall of  
22 everybody in office.

23 (Applause)

24 MR. MCDONALD: Because this is -- it's sad to be doing  
25 stuff like this. And if it takes more than just

1        whatever legal terms they have to do this, we need  
2        to do it. But in the meantime, I ask that they do  
3        not approve any more increase on this site. And  
4        please, finally, do away with this site. Thank  
5        you.

6 (Applause)

7 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: (Inaudible.)

8 MS. MULLEN: Hey. My name is Natalie Mullen. And I'm  
9 lifelong resident from Spartanburg County, and it  
10 is about my bedtime, but this is important enough  
11 to me that I'll stay up past my bedtime and talk  
12 about it. And I'm here mainly as a concerned  
13 citizen, but also as a concerned parent. And I  
14 think, like Frank McDonald just said, mainly -- my  
15 main reason is about the health of my family and  
16 the health of citizens of Spartanburg. My husband  
17 Steven and I, we live in Pierce Acres, which is  
18 about three miles from the data center. But 2 1/2  
19 years ago, we bought property at [REDACTED],  
20 which is, Dr. Pack, you said about 400 feet from  
21 the entrance of -- of the data center. We were  
22 right across the street from Dr. and Janice Pack.

23 We bought that property for -- mainly to house  
24 my husband's construction business. And -- but  
25 then last month our son graduated from Wofford

1 College, and he has moved into our house on that  
2 property. So now I have to worry about my son  
3 living 400 feet from this data center. So I worry  
4 about his health and wellbeing.

5 I also am the school counselor at Pine Street  
6 Elementary School. Been there for 28 years, and I  
7 have 625 students there in my care. And so I worry  
8 about them and their health and like I know we had  
9 a teacher from the School for the Deaf and Blind  
10 and [REDACTED] talking about schools around  
11 this data center. So I'm very concerned about that  
12 in regards to this. So I ask that DES please do  
13 not allow the permit for more power at this data  
14 center.

15 I would also like to ask for DES to go back  
16 and void the permit that they already approved in  
17 September 2025.

18 (Applause)

19 MS. MULLEN: It is not too late to right a wrong. I  
20 love where I live, and I want to continue to love  
21 where I live. Thank you.

22 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Ma'am, can I get your last  
23 name again? I'm sorry.

24 MS. MULLEN: I don't think I spelled it.

25 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: I -- I missed it.

1 MS. MULLEN: Mullen, M-u-l-l-e-n.

2 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, Ms. Mullen.

3 MS. MULLEN: Natalie. I appreciate that.

4 MS. GILLESPIE: Okay. Hi. my name's Lynne Gillespie,  
5 L-y-n-n-e G-i-l-l-e-s-p-i-e. I'm a long-time  
6 resident of Spartanburg. And I want to ask y'all a  
7 very simple question. Who actually benefits from  
8 this project? When a typical power plant is built,  
9 it provides electricity to the public grid to keep  
10 the lights on in our hospitals, our schools, and  
11 our homes. But this 450-megawatt natural gas plant  
12 is entirely private. It is being built for one  
13 purpose: to feed 11 power hungry turbines that  
14 generate electricity solely for a high performance  
15 computer data center.

16 The community of Spartanburg gets all of the  
17 pollution, all of the environmental degradation,  
18 and absolutely none of the power. Data centers are  
19 notorious for creating almost no long-term local  
20 jobs once construction concludes, yet the  
21 environmental costs we are being forced to pay is  
22 permanent. The plant will inject 778 tons of net  
23 new pollutants into our immediate air corridor  
24 every year. It will compete -- it will compete  
25 with our residents for hundreds of thousands of

1 gallons of water a day.

2 The location on South Pine Street sits right  
3 next to the residential neighborhoods. It is -- if  
4 this is built, local property values are at risk.  
5 Noise pollution from continuous turbine hums will  
6 disrupt families. And our local air quality index  
7 will frequently spike the unhealthy zones during  
8 the summer. Just months ago, our neighbors  
9 successfully fought off a separate \$3 billion data  
10 center project on the -- in the Tyger River area  
11 because the community said enough is enough to  
12 resource exploitation. Our county council listened  
13 and paused the data center applications.

14 We do not want to be a fossil fuel sacrificial  
15 zone so an out-of-state tech company can run AI  
16 algorithms. We live here; we breathe here. I urge  
17 the DES to stand with the citizens of Spartanburg  
18 and deny the permit. We are tired of being lied  
19 to. We know what county -- that county council  
20 sells us out. We're through with that. Please  
21 don't do this.

22 (Applause)

23 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, Ms. Gillespie.

24 MR. WATTS: Hello, I am Frankland Watts. I'm a resident  
25 of Wellford, South Carolina, and I am also the

1 Democratic nominee for County Council District 6.  
2 And I thank you so much for being here today. I am  
3 here to express serious concern regarding the  
4 proposed permit from NorthMark Strategies for  
5 additional natural gas turbine development, a  
6 permit that will forever leave a stain on our  
7 community. This project combined with the previous  
8 approved permit, would operate dozens of gas-  
9 powered turbines and could exceed the scale of the  
10 largest power generation site in Upstate South  
11 Carolina.

12 Your own materials identify pollutants  
13 associated with these turbines, so let's go through  
14 those. Sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxide; both gases  
15 are recognized by you, the Environmental Protection  
16 Agency, the National Institute of Health, and the  
17 American Lung Association as a highly toxic gas.  
18 Even the small amounts can affect respiratory  
19 issues, disproportionately impacting our seniors  
20 and children the most. Environmentally, these  
21 chemicals destroy our vegetation and acidifies with  
22 contact -- with water contact, impacting our lakes,  
23 streams, and reservoirs. And formaldehyde, also, a  
24 highly toxic chemical where exposure can lead to  
25 burning of the eyes and the skin. The EPA and the

1 World Health Organization both identify these  
2 chemicals as a Class 1 carcinogen. These are only  
3 some of the pollutants that you have identified  
4 would be emitted.

5 Our community deserves better. This center  
6 will leave a legacy on our Spartanburg County and  
7 surrounding areas. A legacy of despair,  
8 hopelessness, and hardship. A legacy where our  
9 most vulnerable are impacted, and where the few  
10 elites at the top benefit from the so-called AI  
11 boom. As a public agency funded by us, the  
12 taxpayers, I hope you weigh these impacts and  
13 actually consider protecting the environment and  
14 decline NorthMark Strategies' exploitative permit.  
15 Thank you.

16 (Applause)

17 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Can I get you to repeat your  
18 name and spell it, please?

19 MR. WATTS: Frankland, F-r-a-n-k-l-a-n-d, Watts,  
20 W-a-t-t-s.

21 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you so much.

22 (Applause)

23 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Go ahead, please.

24 MR. KING: All right. Hi. My name is Colby King. I am  
25 a sociology professor at USC Upstate, although I'm

1 not here speaking on behalf of my employer at all.  
2 I live here in Spartanburg. I've got a wife and  
3 two kids who are both set to go to Pine Street  
4 Elementary just down the road from this illustrious  
5 data center that we're being told about. I am  
6 concerned, like so many others here, about the data  
7 center. I do want to say I am -- I want to speak  
8 on how I'm disappointed that I did not see any of  
9 the elected representatives who are purported to  
10 represent me here tonight. I didn't see my city  
11 counselor, my county counselor, my state  
12 representative, or my state senator here. And I am  
13 frustrated, disappointed about that. I think they  
14 should be embarrassed and ashamed. I think we  
15 should bring shame back to politics.

16 (Applause)

17 MR. KING: Thank you. I -- I want to say I'm a -- I'm  
18 also the son of a steel mill worker. My dad worked  
19 for 30 years maintaining the furnace in a steel  
20 mill in Butler, Pennsylvania. Shortly after he  
21 retired, he developed esophageal cancer. He had an  
22 esophagectomy on my birthday during COVID. An  
23 esophagectomy is a massively invasive surgery where  
24 you like lose a third of your stomach and a third  
25 of your esophagus, and they reattach it. So that's

1 fun. He survived, which is amazing.

2 But I just -- as we're talking about health  
3 issues and air quality, I think it's important to  
4 put personal stories on the health issues. The  
5 pollution is not just a little bit of extra dirt in  
6 the air. It's stories of people living with  
7 emphysema, living with COPD, living with cancer,  
8 dealing with cancer. My father-in-law currently is  
9 -- has Stage 4 lung cancer. He's miraculously  
10 found a drug that has held it at bay for a few  
11 years. His father died of emphysema. My -- and my  
12 grandfather also died of emphysema. I was talking  
13 with him just a couple weeks ago, my father-in-law,  
14 about his cancer. We -- we were at the beach down  
15 in Myrtle Beach, and he said his dad used to take  
16 him to the beach all the time when he was a kid  
17 because the -- the ocean air, he said, helped him  
18 deal with his emphysema. And I told my father-in-  
19 law about my grandfather having emphysema and how  
20 he, like, slowly died from suffocation -- basically  
21 self-suffocation.

22 And my father-in-law, who has been dealing  
23 with Stage 4 cancer for multiple years, said,  
24 "Yeah. Emphysema's really terrible. There are  
25 things worse than cancer." And it's just bad. So

1 I want to -- I want to say with this, as a resident  
2 of our community, but also as a sociologist who  
3 knows these things, every day we have the  
4 opportunity to recreate the community we live in.  
5 We choose every day what kind of community and city  
6 and region we want to live and work in. So let's  
7 make sure we all do it together. Thank you.

8 (Applause)

9 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, Mr. King. Go  
10 ahead, sir.

11 REVEREND BROWN: Good evening. I'm the Reverend Rob  
12 Brown. That's R-o-b B-r-o-w-n, and I did register  
13 out in the lobby. I live in Glen Forest, less than  
14 one-half mile from the data center. This is just a  
15 whole series of questions that I'll also send you  
16 on an e-mail.

17 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, sir.

18 REVEREND BROWN: The American Lung Association states  
19 there are approximately 50,000 people in  
20 Spartanburg County who suffer from asthma and COPD.  
21 According to studies done by the Harvard School of  
22 Public Health and University of California  
23 Riverside, air pollution that is released by data  
24 centers have a significant impact on folks dealing  
25 with these issues, particularly children with

1           asthma. And even using the data that Valara  
2           Holdings/NorthMark provided to the South Carolina  
3           Department of Environmental Services, the data  
4           center will be releasing significant amounts of  
5           particulates into the air. Since NorthMark will  
6           actually be policing itself, and even the charts  
7           they provided show particulate in some cases, one-  
8           third to two-thirds of the maximum allowed under  
9           normal operation, that means overages will place  
10          them in violation, presenting a public health  
11          hazard, if we ever hear about it.

12                 What does NorthMark, our South Carolina  
13          Department of Environmental Services, the Public  
14          Service Commission and our county council that  
15          signed off on this deal say to families living in  
16          the area around the plant, who have family members,  
17          particularly children with pulmonary issues? Also  
18          -- and this might be the first time this has been  
19          brought up -- data centers often negotiate lower  
20          rates with utility companies due to their high  
21          usage of, in this case, natural gas. The end  
22          result being residential users and businesses end  
23          up facing higher rates to offset the deals given to  
24          data centers. Has Valara Holdings, that is  
25          NorthMark, negotiated lower rates on natural gas

1 from the local provider? And has construction  
2 already started on the increased number of  
3 generators, despite permission having not yet been  
4 granted? If they have, is this a violation of the  
5 law?

6 Also, at present, recycled water is not  
7 permitted legislatively in South Carolina for  
8 cooling of data centers. So every day we'll be  
9 using water from our reservoirs, which is actually  
10 taking advantage of local runoff and aquifers, that  
11 otherwise be available to residential customers,  
12 institutional users such as hospitals and schools  
13 and small businesses. How can we be assured  
14 everyday water usage, particularly during periods  
15 of drought, will not be impacted?

16 As to noise level. They list 34 total  
17 generators at 70 decibels each, 34 operating at 70  
18 will produce a cumulative noise level of  
19 approximately, not 70 decibels, but at 85.3, which  
20 is above the Spartanburg County allowed levels.  
21 Will the county monitor this and enforce  
22 regulations? The actual ordinance is this:  
23 "Disturbing the peace threshold: Noise exceed the  
24 ambient background noise by 10 decibels or more can  
25 be legally cited." Law enforcement uses a sound

1 meter to take a reading of the complainant's  
2 property line and compares it to a reading after  
3 the noise stops. And so this is for our county  
4 council who, again, none of them are here. They're  
5 going to be the ones that are going to have to  
6 enforce this if they choose to. Thank you.

7 (Applause)

8 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, Reverend Brown.

9 MR. GRIFFIN: I'm Shawn Griffin, a resident of  
10 Spartanburg County, a student of SCC. I attended  
11 the teleconference yesterday and was not able to  
12 get my questions answered. I -- a lot of people  
13 here have -- experienced people that have talked  
14 about the environmental and health impacts of the  
15 data center. On NorthMark's website, it says that  
16 the FIOT -- FILOT clearance, you know, fees in lieu  
17 of tax, continue until 2045. Let's say  
18 conservatively that they'll keep running the plant  
19 until their tax breaks run down. How are we  
20 supposed to live in a sustainable future when  
21 greenhouse gas-producing 450-megawatt power plants  
22 running 24/7 like Valara South Pine contribute to  
23 anthropogenic climate change and global warming?  
24 Thank you.

25 (Applause)

1 DR. NEWBERRY: I got to --

2 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: I would have to adjust that  
3 mic, too. Yes, ma'am.

4 DR. NEWBERRY: I'm Dr. Gillian Newberry, G-i-l-l-i-a-n,  
5 Newberry like the county -- the -- the county/the  
6 college. I have received a PhD from the University  
7 of Wisconsin. My master's thesis was on the effect  
8 of a sulfate processed paper plant on the -- the  
9 environment surrounding that plant. And what we're  
10 missing here is that this SO2 is not being  
11 distributed equally. We're all not getting our bag  
12 of SO2. The -- the -- the -- my data showed that  
13 it took 20 miles downwind from the sulfate process  
14 paper plant before the vegetation returned to a  
15 semblance of normal. Those that lived on the other  
16 side that didn't get the wind-driven pollutants  
17 were marginally successful two to five miles away.  
18 So that means that you need to look at where this  
19 SO2 is going. It's not going distributed equally.  
20 There's some people who are going to be fumigated  
21 literally out of their homes.

22 (Shouts of "Wow" from the audience)

23 DR. NEWBERRY: That's all I've got to say.

24 (Applause)

25 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, Dr. Newberry.

1 MS. NEAL: My name is Carmen, C-a-r-m-e-n, Neal,  
2 N-e-a-l. I'm a resident here. I've been here 14  
3 months. I'm excited to get here. And about a  
4 month after I got here, we passed by this gigantic  
5 beast being built. And they started clearing the  
6 trees and said -- I was shocked. Anyway, I got a  
7 question. If you're -- we just voted, everybody,  
8 so -- and we might not have got all the government  
9 and congressional people we wanted and the folks we  
10 need in there. But don't worry, we all got eyes on  
11 -- eyes. Everybody get out your binoculars. Start  
12 watching county council, government, everybody.

13 I -- I got a question about the agriculture.  
14 What about the cows and the chickens? Some of the  
15 farmers say they can't get new calves and new --  
16 all that. What about food? Meat? Chickens? eggs?  
17 What about these kids coming up? What about all  
18 these animals and things that are getting destroyed  
19 and stuff going on? Just asking. What about the  
20 kids playing soccer down the road? It ain't far  
21 from here, that park. There's a lot of deaf kids  
22 that play that, too. But think about their ears.  
23 They got one deficit. You don't. You're hearing  
24 me. They got it.

25 Guess what? All this noise, 24/7 keeps going,

1           guess what happens to the next set of kids and the  
2           next and the next? What about the aquifers? If  
3           y'all going to mess with them or not? Valara, if  
4           you're listening, where are you getting refills for  
5           it? I want to know when you're putting it back or  
6           where you're getting it. Because when our water  
7           runs out, what do we do? Our electric and water  
8           bills, if they go up, how much they going to go up?  
9           Because I know you're passing it on to us. You've  
10          got a discount from the Duke Energy or whoever. I  
11          want to know how much you're passing it on to us.  
12          Medical bills. Think about the hospital even after  
13          us. What about all the -- the awful things that's  
14          going to happen to everybody coming in there to get  
15          -- that's sick or things and diseases and stuff.  
16          Lots of bills. What about the community when they  
17          move away? What about the money? Where does it  
18          go? You pay -- your paychecks. People sitting  
19          here, all these representatives, where does it go?  
20          Because when people move away, city's population  
21          goes down, city's things close, doors closed. Come  
22          on.

23                I got a granddaughter, she's seven months old.  
24                I told her my daughter, "Don't move her here  
25                because we have sneaky county council that does

1 things behind the resident's back like this massive  
2 beast." I got another question. Who's -- who -- I  
3 ain't going to say that one. The road's being  
4 fixed -- got -- well -- road's being fixed? You  
5 put money to that. Okay. Good. They just did it  
6 right before we voted. Was it to help get all  
7 these trucks in here? Because when they start  
8 bringing supplies to this massive beast, they're  
9 going to tear them up again. So last but not  
10 least, who -- how -- county council and everybody,  
11 how -- how do you put your head down on pillow at  
12 night knowing the harm you're bringing to us? One  
13 more thing . . .

14 (Time expire)

15 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, Ms. Neal.

16 MR. GIBSON: Hello. My name is Garrett Gibson. And I  
17 have nothing prepared, so don't expect this to be  
18 eloquent. That's two Rs and two Ts, by the way.

19 I want to say first thank you for being here.  
20 I'm not upset at NorthMark at all. I've never  
21 known, nor do I expect a corporation to put people  
22 over profit. The people I do expect that from are  
23 our elected officials, because all this should have  
24 been done a year ago. That's one reason I've  
25 decided to run for County Council District 5.

1           Now, I want to point out some people that are  
2           noticeably absent tonight. I'm not talking about  
3           the people who left earlier, the people who  
4           couldn't make it. I'm talking about children. I'm  
5           talking about people with severe disabilities,  
6           talking about the elderly people in nursing homes,  
7           people who couldn't be here to speak for  
8           themselves, but who this decision is going to  
9           affect nevertheless.

10           A long time ago, not so long ago, really, a  
11           lot of people were asked to take a certain vaccine  
12           that they felt they didn't know enough about. Now,  
13           whether you took it or not, none of us here wanted  
14           to put something in our body that we knew nothing  
15           about. Why would we want to put a hyperscale data  
16           center in the heart of our community when we know  
17           nothing about it and when it has been shoehorned in  
18           without transparency? And again, I'm not just  
19           blaming NorthMark for that. I'm blaming our county  
20           council because we should have known this a year  
21           ago so that we could have made the right decisions.

22           Now, I don't know if y'all have seen where the  
23           data center is, but it is within just a few miles  
24           of schools. I don't know if y'all know -- we're in  
25           Spartanburg County. There's a lot of churches.

1           There are a lot of churches around this data  
2           center. There are a lot of people who can't speak  
3           for themselves who this is going to affect. So all  
4           I want to leave y'all with is this: For every  
5           person who is here tonight, for every person who's  
6           spoken, there are many, many people who can't speak  
7           for themselves that we are representing the way  
8           that our elected officials should be representing  
9           us. Thank you.

10       HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, Mr. Gibson.

11       MS. BURROW: My name is Ashley, A-s-h-l-e-y, Burrow,  
12           B-u-r-r-o-w. I'm going to continue on with some of  
13           what my daughter was saying earlier. We do have to  
14           put more sustainable options and pressure on  
15           billion-dollar companies such as this. The budget  
16           for this mystery data center is \$2.8 billion. To  
17           put that into perspective, 2.8 million seconds is  
18           about 33 days. 2.8 billion is about 88 years and  
19           266 days.

20           We constantly experience heat spikes and  
21           droughts that affect the daily lives of every  
22           resident, particularly our farmers who produce our  
23           city's food, and natural disasters turn to climate  
24           catastrophes, drowning entire towns. And it is  
25           inexcusable to permit any project of this size that

1 does not even try to incorporate some attempt at  
2 renewable energy. The proposed over 400-megawatts  
3 of energy could power up to a half million homes.  
4 This is not a small amount of resources being used.  
5 With a one-megawatt premium solar farm running  
6 about \$1.5 million, a 400-megawatt solar farm would  
7 cost approximately \$600 million, less than a  
8 quarter of the budget that there suggesting. While  
9 I understand this would require a large amount of  
10 land, there is no excuse for not even covering the  
11 rooftops in high quality solar panels, not asking  
12 for perfection, asking for progress. If 100  
13 percent renewable energy is too much, even as  
14 little as 20 percent is far better than zero.

15 With as -- sorry -- with as severe and  
16 widespread as the health effects around each data  
17 center are, we cannot rely on the goodwill of  
18 corporations to fulfill fake promises.

19 And one thing I would like to add is I feel  
20 like a lot of these billion-dollar corporations  
21 around our country see South Carolina as just full  
22 of a bunch of backwoods illiterate rednecks. And  
23 we have to stand up and show them that is not who  
24 we are.

25 FEMALE: That's why they're comfortable treating us like

1           this.

2                               (Applause)

3       HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG:   Thank you, Ms. Burrow.

4       MS. HANE:   Hi, my name is Emily Hane.   That's E-m-i-l-y  
5           H-a-n-e.   Plenty of my fellow -- I've lived in  
6           Spartanburg -- or I've lived in South Carolina my  
7           whole life, and I've lived in Spartanburg my entire  
8           adult life.   Plenty of citizens have already  
9           emphasized the risk to our health this air  
10          pollution will cause.   So I'm not going to add to  
11          that, but I would like to say that I work at a  
12          local pulmonary clinic, which means the respiratory  
13          system.   I don't speak for my employer, and I'm not  
14          a doctor.   We serve a massive area spreading even  
15          into Western North Carolina.

16                 The reason we serve such a large area is  
17          because there are not enough lung doctors in  
18          Upstate South Carolina.   We have been struggling to  
19          recruit lung doctors for years.   We struggle to  
20          keep up with the patient base we have, as is.  
21          There are only two pulmonary clinics in  
22          Spartanburg.   I am concerned that, when this data  
23          center inevitably negatively impacts our citizens,  
24          we will not have enough providers to treat them.   I  
25          would like to ask the employees of DES to consider

1           what the value of your lungs are and if they are  
2           worth less than whatever money the power plant will  
3           bring in.

4                 Also, I'm sick of my beloved South Carolina  
5           being the dumping ground for the rest of the  
6           country just because we have less money. If this  
7           data center is so great to live near, let NorthMark  
8           build it in Dallas in their backyards where they're  
9           headquartered. In fact, a lot of people who have  
10          been promising this data center is great do not  
11          live in Spartanburg.

12                DES promised to supervise this, but how can we  
13          trust you to do that when you didn't even tell us  
14          this was being built until ground was already  
15          broken? It is clear all you care about is money.  
16          All my faith in you has been lost, and it'll be a  
17          very long time for it to be rebuilt. A nice way to  
18          start would be denying this permit. Thank you.

19   KRIS J.: Hi, my name is Kris J., that's K-r-i-s. Just  
20          the initial J for the last name. Our family  
21          frequents Camp Croft State Park. That state park  
22          is less than nine -- nine miles away from this  
23          proposed facility. And if I go to  
24          Southcarolinaparks.com, which I did because I'm a  
25          responsible citizen, and I look at what I'm allowed

1 to do at the South Carolina state park that I'm  
2 enjoying, I am told that it's an unlawful act in  
3 the State of South Carolina to go to a South  
4 Carolina state park and dump any waste, including  
5 gray water. Gray water is what comes out of my  
6 washing machine, my shower, and my kitchen sink.  
7 That's perspective.

8 Now I'm an educator. We all know what the  
9 water cycle is if we went to school. The water  
10 cycle starts with water droplets condensing on  
11 particles in the air, which form the clouds that  
12 our rain comes from. So if we have not proven  
13 beyond reasonable doubt that all of these  
14 contaminants that have been cited by very  
15 professional people -- if we have not concluded  
16 that they are not going to become part of the water  
17 cycle and dump on Camp Croft State Park, then DES  
18 is breaking South Carolina state law. It's an  
19 unlawful act. And so I need to inform you as a  
20 citizen of the State of South Carolina that voted  
21 for these laws that you are now violating Title 51,  
22 Chapter 3, Section 145 of the 1976 Code of Laws of  
23 South Carolina violations, and you are guilty of a  
24 misdemeanor, and upon conviction, you can be  
25 subject to fine and imprisonment. And that's my

1           responsibility as somebody who voted for the laws  
2           in the State of South Carolina.

3                               (Applause)

4   MR. GILLESPIE:   Max Gillespie, not related to the other  
5           Gillespies, but M-a-x G-i-l-l-e-s-p-i-e.   I do have  
6           one small business that is a air quality assurance.  
7           And one thing I -- I don't know y'all's processes,  
8           but do you have a baseline?   Every time I do  
9           testing, I do a baseline test and a follow-up test.  
10          Also, a lot of the measurements -- what I do not  
11          know:   Are the measurements by individual turbine  
12          or is it a cumulative amount of output?   Also on  
13          the -- on these outputs, is there a measurement  
14          based upon density of population?   You would think,  
15          as a more dense population, the output would have a  
16          bigger or more significant impact.

17                 Also, are y'all regulating -- if I'm not  
18          mistaken, you have to have diesel backup generators  
19          that have to be fired up at least twice a month, if  
20          not four times a month, to make sure they're  
21          regulated.   Are those also regulated?

22                 And I know you're not responsible for sound,  
23          but the one thing that really hit me that I didn't  
24          even think of is about the sound.   We have one  
25          school in this state for the deaf and blind, and

1        those deaf students are not very far at all from  
2        that facility.  And not being able to hear with  
3        that constant noise will drastically affect their  
4        quality of life.  And that is the one school we  
5        have in South Carolina for the deaf.

6 (Applause)

7 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, sir.

8 MS. BREITENBACH: Hey. I did pre-register. My name is  
9 Stephanie Breitenbach, B-r-e-i-t-e-n-b-a-c-h.  
10 Thank you-all for allowing us to speak tonight.  
11 The purpose of the South Carolina Department of  
12 Environmental Services is to safeguard the state's  
13 air, land, water, and coast ensuring a resilient,  
14 sustainable, and thriving environment for all South  
15 Carolinians. I am begging you to fulfill your  
16 agency's purpose and protect Spartanburg County and  
17 our beautiful state. Please deny this permit. It  
18 is never too late to do the right thing. Thank  
19 you.

20 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, Ms. Breitenbach.

21 MS. NEAL: If I have a question for Valara, can I ask it  
22 or no?

23 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Was that for a question?

24 MS. NEAL: Yes, ma'am.

25 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: I think we're -- we want to

1 make sure -- hang on one second. Can we just check  
2 in with the group to see is there anyone else who  
3 wanted to make a comment tonight that has not  
4 already done so?

5 MALE: Let her ask the question.

6 MALE: Yeah.

7 MR DUNLOP: This is going for the record. This is going  
8 to us, not Valara.

9 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: I was going to say again,  
10 we're -- we're here to -- to listen tonight,  
11 but . . .

12 MS. NEAL: I'm Carmen -- again, Carmen Neal. I got a  
13 question to Valara or whatever the company. How  
14 come they don't talk -- this might seem stupid, but  
15 I'm going to ask it. The teacher once told me it's  
16 never a stupid question. How come they don't --  
17 like him or hate him, it's not a party affiliation  
18 thing. How come they don't call Elon Musk on this?  
19 Because in space, isn't it cold so they could cool  
20 it? So that would help with the water. The wi-fi,  
21 they already had satellites up there, so you can  
22 Google and do your AI. I mean, they found water up  
23 there and stuff, too, so why not talk it over with  
24 him and see: Can't you put data center up there?  
25 Thanks.

1 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, ma'am.

2 (Applause)

3 MR. CRAWFORD: My name is William Crawford,

4 W-i-l-l-i-a-m C-r-a-w-f-o-r-d. I would like to

5 just stand here in front of the -- the audience and

6 recognize that I understand that some members of

7 this audience have concerns about me. I'm the

8 Republican nominee for Chairman of County Council,

9 and I wanted to hear -- and I appreciate DES

10 putting on this hearing or -- or the feedback

11 session. And I wanted to come and listen because I

12 wanted to learn. I wanted to understand and -- and

13 really listen. And my heart goes out to those

14 individuals that are faced with uncertainties of

15 being up against this project.

16 So I appreciate everybody coming out tonight.

17 I appreciate DES putting it on. A lot of concerns,

18 and I hope we can do better with our government as

19 far as transparency, and I hope that you give

20 feedback and clarity to whatever the decision is

21 that you've made here tonight. Thank you.

22 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, Mr. Crawford. Is

23 there anyone else who would like to make a formal

24 comment for the record?

25 MR. WHITENER: Yeah. I'd like to make one.

1 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Yes, sir.

2 MR. WHITENER: My name is David Whitener, D-a-v-i-d  
3 W-h-i-t-e-n-e-r. I appreciate the opportunity to  
4 speak tonight. I wasn't going to speak, but I do  
5 want to let these folks know that I know about  
6 poison. I was in the Vietnam War. I was poisoned  
7 by Agent Orange. I have ischemic heart disease,  
8 and I had a triple bypass in 2021. And so I know  
9 the effects of poison.

10 What we've been talking about tonight is  
11 poison, and that's what's going to happen to you  
12 folks that have problems already. And when you get  
13 to be my age, I've been in Spartanburg County for  
14 73 years. I'm in pretty good shape now for the  
15 shape I'm in. But the -- the -- the point is, if  
16 we don't have to have it, why do we have it? So  
17 how did we get here?

18 All right. So I'm going to ask you some  
19 questions that I know she can't ask. I'm going to  
20 ask her. I'm just going to say it because I don't  
21 want to get sued. So I'm going to put it in a  
22 question form. So did One Spartanburg know that  
23 these data centers were coming here? Both of them.  
24 And did the county council know beforehand? Why  
25 did they not tell us that they were coming before

1 the permit applications were put in?

2 So that upsets me. I was a -- a candidate for  
3 Chairman of Spartanburg County Council.

4 Mr. Crawford happened to have won that nomination.  
5 He'll be facing somebody in November. He may be  
6 facing more than he knows, but the fact of the  
7 matter is there's a lot of affairs, in my opinions  
8 -- activities that have been going on and there  
9 need to be addressed. And I have two postgraduate  
10 degrees. I have a doctorate. I have a child  
11 that's a family physician, and we have discussions  
12 about these particulates and other aspects of this  
13 particular unit that's going in over here on Pine  
14 Street. And we have great, great, deep concerns.  
15 We think it is a -- a monstrosity. We think it's  
16 diabolical.

17 We know that you're not going to profit from  
18 it. We know the investors are. And that's all the  
19 ones that's going to profit from it. It's going to  
20 be damaging to the rest of us. And we've heard  
21 people here that have a whole lot better education  
22 I have tonight who have PhDs in chemistry and so  
23 forth, and they've made their case, I believe, and  
24 I appreciate that you vote no or vote it down or  
25 not permit these permits to be allocated to this

1 particular data center. So we can live in peace  
2 and have a good quality of life in Spartanburg.  
3 Thank you.

4 (Applause)

5 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Do we have any others that  
6 would like to speak for record tonight? I'm seeing  
7 some people on the move. If you're coming this  
8 way, maybe just raise your hand and let me know.  
9 Thank you. I believe we have a gentleman here.

10 MR. DAVIDSON: I'm Carlos Edward Davidson. Don't I look  
11 like a Carlos? I'm a resident of South Carolina,  
12 born and raised. Went to high school here at  
13 Byrnes High School. I wish that DHEC could have  
14 ridden down the -- the -- the alleyway into -- down  
15 the alleyway into -- into Startex when I was in  
16 high school. If you went down that -- by the  
17 river, some days it'd be red, some days it'd be  
18 green. Occasionally, it'd be blue, not water blue,  
19 but dye blue. Because the textile industry was  
20 dumping all of their dyes into the -- into the  
21 water.

22 I would ask that you deny this dumping into  
23 our atmosphere. We don't know what it's going to  
24 cause, and you have the ability to do it. Grow a  
25 set of testicles and do something, DHEC.

1 (Applause)

2 HEARING OFFICER ELLENBERG: Thank you, Mr. Davidson.

3 I'm going to see what we can -- you know, I've --  
4 I've been really successful with the tech all  
5 evening. So we're going to see what I can do with  
6 this timer right here since one my colleagues went  
7 to the rear of the room for a moment.

8 Are there any others who would like to provide  
9 a comment tonight? Hold on one moment.

10 But before we do the official closing, I just  
11 -- I just want to reiterate again, I'm -- I'm from  
12 our community engagement team, and -- and I told  
13 you at the start of the night that we came here to  
14 listen, and that's what we have been doing. So I  
15 appreciate everybody being here, staying here for  
16 the duration of this, being able to share these  
17 comments for with us for the record. It's going to  
18 be part of our process going forward to keep  
19 reviewing these, put that into consideration, and  
20 it's something that's going to be very meaningful  
21 for us. So thank you so much for being here and  
22 allowing us to listen.

23 So seeing no additional requests for someone  
24 to speak, our oral comment portion of tonight's  
25 public hearing will now be concluded.

1           Again, on behalf of the South Carolina  
2           Department of Environmental Services. I want to  
3           thank everyone for attending and participating in  
4           tonight's hearing. I'd also like to reiterate the  
5           following: Any comments that have been shared  
6           tonight or comments previously submitted are  
7           already part of our official administrative record,  
8           and we appreciate everybody who has done that.

9           There's that buzzer. Look at that. I thought  
10          I turned it off, Derrick.

11          The written comments that are provided  
12          tonight, please make sure you're leaving them with  
13          one of our DHEC -- or now DES staff, forgive me,  
14          that are here tonight. And then additional  
15          comments may still be submitted online through our  
16          SCDES e-permitting public notice webpage, by e-mail  
17          to [airpncomments@dessc.gov](mailto:airpncomments@dessc.gov) or by mail to the SCDES  
18          Bureau of Air Quality at 2600 Bull Street Columbia,  
19          South Carolina 29201.

20          I want remind everyone and you can share this  
21          with others who aren't here tonight as well, but  
22          that extended public comment period will remain  
23          open through July 31st, 2026. So all timely oral  
24          and written comments are reviewed and considered by  
25          our Department as it makes its decision and

1 continues moving forward regarding the draft  
2 permit.

3 The time is now 10:06 p.m. and our public  
4 hearing is now adjourned. Thank you and please  
5 travel safely.

6 (Whereupon, the hearing was  
7 concluded at 10:06 p.m.)

8 (\*This transcript may contain quoted material.  
9 Such material is reproduced as read or quoted  
10 by the speaker.)  
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STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA    )  
                                          )  
COUNTY    OF    RICHLAND    )                    CERTIFICATE

Be it known that Julie Taradash took the foregoing proceeding and hereby attests:

that I was then and there a notary public in and for the State of South Carolina-at-large and that by virtue thereof I was duly authorized to administer an oath;

that the deponent/witness, if any, was first duly sworn to testify to the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, concerning the matter in the controversy aforesaid;

that the foregoing transcript represents a true, accurate, and complete transcription of the testimony so given at the time and place aforesaid to the best of my skill and ability;

that I am neither a relative nor an employee of any of the parties hereto, nor of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor interested in the outcome of this action;

that, if a recording of an event was supplied by another party for purposes of transcription and I was not present during that event, the foregoing pages were transcribed to the best of my skill and ability; additionally, any identifications of speakers were provided to me by the party supplying the recording;

that, in the event of a nonappearance by the witness, the foregoing details for the nonappearance are accurate.

In witness thereof, I have hereunto affixed my signature and title.

  
Julie Taradash

Date: 7/9/2026

Notary public for South Carolina

My commission expires March 27, 2035

\*Unless otherwise noted, this notary public administered the oath. Please refer to the transcript for any exceptions.

\*\*For details on reading and signing, please refer to the transcript.