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Statement about Lutsen Mountains Expansion DEIS

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I do not believe the Expansion of Lutsen Mountains to be a benefit to, not only the city and township of Lutsen, but the entirety of the North Shore.

If we could put financial interests aside, and identify the patterns in how communities have historically grown into something other than what that very community was recognized for, we could see that what was being built was an attempt to allow more people to have a specific experience, and in doing so, grew into something that no longer provided that specific experience. Yes...a conundrum, and a devastating one at that.

I believe that the Expansion of Lutsen Mountains, as they wish to do it, could be the ball that initiates this very process on the North Shore; creating something that extinguishes the appeal of our community.

The North Shore is appreciated, and recognized, for its natural state. If we are to maintain "what is appreciated and recognized", we cannot interfere with any one area to any great degree. The Lutsen Mountains Expansion, as currently proposed, would do just that. There is significant chance for unfavorable environmental impacts, including an increase in the volume of water drained from Lake Superior required to make snow for an additional 144 acres of ski terrain. This, during an unprecedented drought since the Dust Bowl Era, is simply irresponsible. The proposed Expansion would bring forth 1,200 new parking spots and 7 new chairlifts. I will not elaborate on the environmental impact of the resources needed to build and maintain this. Rather, I will focus on the broader impact that this proposed Expansion would have on the community at large because ultimately, to concede to Lutsen Mountains perceived "need" is to jeopardize this community.

The entirety of Cook County is short on affordable housing for locals. The current rate of increased tourism has resulted in local housing being lost to vacation housing. The general cost of living is higher in areas where there is a higher rate of tourism. There seems to be an increase in landlords who reserve tenancy for transient workers.

While increasing tourism may be financially favorable to business, it is often dis-favorable to locals. One direct, and very possible impact to locals is an increase in their utility bills. The infrastructure required to fulfill the electrical need for this proposed Expansion may ONLY be affordable for Lutsen Mountains Resort IF the community financially assists. If this is to occur, then - supportive of or not supportive of the proposed Expansion - locals will be forced to do so via an increase in their electric bills without an increase in the services they have received.

I am a Cook County resident. My observations have had me realize that, generally speaking, the majority of those who treat the land of the North Shore poorly are visitors; their respect for the land often is indicative of someone who does not regard the land they are visiting with due respect. For this reason, it is imperative that we do not create further imbalance in the ratio of tourists to residents.

I believe that IF a business is granted the right to expand on protected land that belongs to the Native Peoples, these Native communities MUST be fully at the table - before further discussions occur and before any decisions

are made.

Furthermore, if a business is granted the right to expand on natural land, that business needs to demonstrate that they are willing and capable of taking every measure to fully protect the environment during the construction and maintenance of their business. One way to assess if a business has this capacity is to observe how they are currently running their business.

Being employed on the Mountains has given me great opportunity to assess some of the business operations. I do not believe that those who are currently managing Lutsen Mountains are capable of taking every measure to fully protect the environment. They do not implement recycling efficiently, IF at all. There are recurring complaints about the foul odor emitting from the septic system - to the degree some of the visitors leave the mountain. The bricking in front of the main chalet is in great disrepair, causing visitors to fall and injure themselves. Copious amounts of artificially colored ice/snow treatment are used throughout the snowy season. Certain areas of the mountains are littered with debris and remnants from previous projects.

Another concern regarding this proposed Expansion is the number of workers that the Expansion would require. Cook County is experiencing highly impactful shortages of workers. Lutsen Mountains itself is experiencing a shortage of workers, as is reflected by poor maintenance of the bathrooms and lockers, along with short staffing at the ticket office and lift operators. Whether it is due to staffing shortage or other reasons, a number of the runs have been closed for several years, to the (verbal) dismay of visitors who had hoped to have full access the 95 advertised ski-runs.

Given that Lutsen Mountains has too few workers to properly operate their current business model, and Cook County continues to experience worker shortages, it is likely that the new model would quickly follow suit. Furthermore, with even a minimal increase in workers, Cook County would be faced with further housing insecurity.

But let us bring it back to for what the North Shore is appreciated: its natural state.

Lutsen Mountains claims they need to expand in order to survive the standards being set by "Western Ski Conglomerates". Yet...this very proposed Expansion could be the gate to becoming just another Ski Conglomerate. It could be the gate that leads this quaint and unique Ski Resort into becoming another highly commercialized business lacking character.

Let us never allow a vision of economic-success to destroy the very thing we hope to use for this economic success. Nature is not something that can easily be restored once destroyed or otherwise significantly altered.

We are at a precipice:

Do we allow ourselves to connect deeply to the natural world, doing the least amount of harm?

Or do we allow ourselves to find financial worth to be of greater importance?

My hope is the former.

Thank You for your consideration.

May Compassion Prevail for All Beings

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