

## Public Hearing – NOPEC

March 17<sup>th</sup>, 2026

@ 6:15pm

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**MIKE MIRANDA:** Yes, I'm ready to move to that. Yes, I would like to open the conversations on the NOPEC. I believe we have the folks here from NOPEC to cover. Approving the plan of operations and governance of the NOPEC electricity. Aggregation program for the purposes of joining establishment and implementing an electricity aggregation program and declaring an emergency.

**JESSICA MARTIN:** Good evening council. So, as we heard last council meeting, NOPEC did do a short presentation. So today they're here for their public hearing. Just a reminder about our residential aggregation expires in July. So, we are meeting the administration. We're looking at different brokers and we wanted one that would be more informative. We wanna raise our aggregation program. So that's why we've been, we looked at many different brokers and NOPEC did draw our attention. Today we have Aaron McCovey and Ross McDonald to give a little bit more. They're gonna present on the TV a little bit more in depth.

**ROSS MCDONALD:** Well, thank you council. I am expeditiously trying to connect to the TVs right now. So, give me one moment while we get locked in. Okay. Okay. Thank you everybody for your patience. So again, Ross McDonald, director of community expansion serves for NOPEC. We're the Northeast Ohio Public Energy Council. Our presence here is a culmination of over a year of careful planning, thoughtful questions coming from the mayor's administration and the mayor herself. You may recall that I was here two weeks ago. Two weeks ago, I had more hair at that time. I proudly, today, I proudly stand in solidarity with children who are battling childhood cancer. So, I signed up with a team at work. It's through St. Baldrick's to raise funds for childhood cancer research. You know, my thought is that I have a choice in my hairdo and those children do not, sadly. So, I think all of us stand in solidarity with anybody experiencing things like that. So, you have met me. I do look a bit different than last time. So, we're here today after several months, over a year at this point of discussion with the city of Mansfield. So, what could Mansfield, let me back up a little bit. Electric aggregation program. You've had a program here in the city that was approved by your voters some time ago. You have utilized up until this point, a broker-led model whereby every so often there's an analysis done of different bids that are received. NOPEC is a council of governments. We are over 250 communities throughout the state of Ohio, across 20 counties in Ohio. Here in Richland County, we currently have the village of Lexington and Madison Township as members. Obviously, we are seeking the council's support for the city of Mansfield to become our newest member. Bulk purchasing power. So, with all of those communities, we have nearly 1 million customers across our footprint. And what that allows us to do is to purchase in bulk and provide those savings back to your program participants. In this case, the electric program participants. There would be no change to the utility service or billing process. Everybody is still gonna get the same bill from First Energy. And what we have are various electric options for residents to choose from, but

everybody would be enrolled in what we call our standard program. The standard program is truly designed to manage market volatility. Right now, Mansfield, we're targeting a July 1 start. And right now, the energy market is extremely volatile right now. But the beauty of a NOPEC program is that we can absorb some of that volatility across all of those customers. As I said, on the electric side, we have close to half a million electric customers and close to half a million gas customers. In a case where we see volatility like is seen right now, that is absorbed a lot better than say a program that only has 10 or 15,000 program participants, such as say the city of Mansfield itself. So, moving right along, when you become a NOPEC member community, you have exclusive members only pricing. And that's compared to say like an apples-to-apples website where anybody can shop that. When you're a member of, when you reside in a member community, a NOPEC member community, only those residents are eligible for that listing or those prices. So, we have our standard program and then we have our optional 12 and 24 month fixed along with a monthly variable product, which is guaranteed savings of 6% below the price to compare. I will say that right now, our most competitive and best options are really the standard program or perhaps one of those fixed rates. Bulk purchasing power. So, with all of those communities, we have nearly 1 million customers across our footprint. And what that allows us to do is to purchase in bulk and provide those savings back to your program participants. In this case, the electric program participants. There would be no change to the utility service or billing process. Everybody is still gonna get the same bill from First Energy. And what we have are various electric options for residents to choose from, but everybody would be enrolled in what we call our standard program. The standard program is truly designed to manage market volatility. Right now, Mansfield, we're targeting a July 1 start. And right now, the energy market is extremely volatile right now. But the beauty of a NOPEC program is that we can absorb some of that volatility across all of those customers. As I said, on the electric side, we have close to half a million electric customers and close to half a million gas customers. In a case where we see volatility like is seen right now, that is absorbed a lot better than say a program that only has 10 or 15,000 program participants, such as say the city of Mansfield itself. So, moving right along, when you become a NOPEC member community, you have exclusive members only pricing. And that's compared to say like an apples-to-apples website where anybody can shop that. When you're a member of, when you reside in a member community, a NOPEC member community, only those residents are eligible for that listing or those prices. So, we have our standard program and then we have our optional 12 and 24 month fixed along with a monthly variable product, which is guaranteed savings of 6% below the price to compare. I will say that right now, our most competitive and best options are really the standard program or perhaps one of those fixed rates. Transparent notification before the enrollment period. So NOPEC prides itself on community education and outreach, being here to help your residents understand what they're about to get into, what their rights are. Of course, an aggregation program only adds choice. It doesn't force anybody into the program. Folks are still free to leave. What's interesting with NOPEC and what we are really proud of is that residents can come and go from the electric aggregation program at no cost. We don't charge things like early termination that you might find on the apples-to-apples website, nor do we charge a monthly fee. NOPEC membership comes at no cost to the residents or the city itself. This is a supplier paid program. We're a public nonprofit council of governments. As I mentioned, Lexington and

Madison Township are local examples of member communities. We provide grants, financing, event sponsorship and energy services for our member communities. Those services are provided to the city itself and small businesses. And my colleague, Aaron Markovy, is gonna get into some of the financing details that we offer as a company. But that is some of those things that set us apart from other programs. Why do residents choose NOPEC? So, savings, we've been around for 25 years. We've saved our customers hundreds of millions of dollars on their energy bills. We don't have the tricky contracts, like I mentioned, that are sometimes found on the apples-to-apples website or [energychoiceohio.gov](http://energychoiceohio.gov). Oftentimes you'll see short term contracts that roll into a monthly variable rate that is essentially requiring the resident to run a contract analysis to understand what does this do to me after that initial three-month period. With NOPEC, what you see is what you get. Everything is upfront and easy for the residents to understand what they're getting into. Auto enrollment makes it easy for the city itself. We've tied up a lot of Jessica's time, who's been wonderful to work with. But once we get your membership started, we take it from there. We do all the onboarding. We'll conduct a nice kickoff meeting with city leadership. We will cater to the residents in terms of providing a meeting at the senior centers throughout the city or wherever else that would be a public venue. NOPEC will be there to help with resident concerns and answer questions. The peace of mind, as I mentioned, our market competitive rates are good for those families that don't have the time to play the apples-to-apples game. You can save a few dollars playing that, but you can't make a mistake because if you make one mistake or if you roll into that monthly variable after month three, for example, you may lose all of that perceived or expected savings. So, we're really big on savings over time and being upfront about how our pricing works. We have that product choice and flexibility. So, as I mentioned, we have our standard program and those fixed rate products that I mentioned earlier. And really something that should be important for everybody is our best in class call center. You call our 1-800 number; your phone call is being picked up in less than 10 seconds. You're on the phone with an agent to sort out whatever it is the resident or whomever's calling about. We analyze our call center on a quarterly, if not more basis to really understand the type of calls that are coming in and be able to locate them. Say there's a lot of calls coming from Mansfield, for example, we would be able to send resources or answer what might be going on in the area for the uptick in calls. Over pictured to my stage left is our relationship manager, Andrea. And I'll have Andrea say your last name for me, please. Yes, exactly. Well, Lawson. So, Andrea would be the city's assigned relationship manager upon membership to use for your needs in helping get different messages out or answer concerns that maybe have come up through the council members themselves from the ward residents or the at-large residents. At this point, I am gonna turn it over to my colleague, Aaron, and pass the mic over to him. There you go sir.

**AARON MCCOVEY:** Thank you. Good evening, council. It's a pleasure to be here in front of you all again. I'll be brief in my remarks, but I can tell you that NOPEC has taken the time to develop a really fantastic suite of extra advantages and benefits that your citizens, particularly your small businesses, would be able to take advantage of. We have a number of things that you see up on the screen. First and foremost is arguably our most popular program, which is the Energize Community Grant. The city would be entitled to a grant that's directly related to the number of enrollees in the program. So that would be a fairly sizable grant for the city, and that can be used for energy-related things, but that's a very broad definition. So, things like lighting,

insulation, roof on a city building, and we've had people use it for various creative purposes, things like tree planting or even vehicles, it can be used for in other programs. You may find if you Google us, just today in the news, the city of Elyria, Ohio and Lorain County started a program where they used NOPEC Energize Community Grant funds to start a fund for less fortunate citizens of theirs to be able to do emergency replacement of hot water heaters. So, there's a lot of versatility in that program, and we'd really hope that the city would make best use of it. We do have grants for small businesses. Those are for-profit businesses. A grant for a small business is a very rare thing when it doesn't come on the heels of another larger particular program. So, we have those for energy audits. We also can-do economic development site readiness. We were actually just selected as a contributor to a very large economic development team, and we would love to be able to highlight some of Mansfield's properties for more economic development on an international stage and be able to help with that, things like solar, carbon, et cetera. And we have below-market financing, either through a PACE program, which you're probably familiar with, as well as a program of our own design, which is fantastic for kind of spot usage, replacement of the water heater, a large HVAC unit that went down in a manufacturing facility. We do have here a program timeline and next steps. The council authorization and legislative process is up to you all. A lot of councils do prefer to do the full three reads, some two or one, depending on where the council's thoughts are. This does constitute the second public meeting held. So, at this point, it's entirely at the council's discretion as to how quickly or differently they wanna move. We will handle all the joint program filing with the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio. And then we just educate, educate, educate your citizens and all of you to be able to make sure that everyone's very comfortable, they understand what the city is looking towards. And based on our projections for the rest of the energy market, we're very excited actually to be able to bring very competitive pricing to the city as well. And also, I will say this is in addition to, and we might have mentioned it the last time we were here, the city already is working with NOPAC. We do have a commercial and industrial division that we were able to find some really fantastic pricing for the city's municipal load. And it's already paying dividends. It's saving the city an awful lot of money there. And then the council action, Ross is really familiar with these. So, I'll turn it back to him. I can wrap up.

**ROSS MCDONALD:** Thank you, Aaron. And I am mindful of council's time. So, there is a bit redundancy in this slide, but I would point out the opt-out period, May 14th through June 3rd. That's when letters would be mailed May 13th, the opt-out period May 14th through June 3rd. That's when residents could say, no, I don't wanna be in the program and send in the form to exclude themselves. But I would caution that unless you have a contract through the apples of apples, then you're resting on that standard supply from the utility, which tends to be the highest rate. So, no one knows what the price to compare will be for the summer months, but our metrics and our forecasts are showing near 11 cent kilowatt hour pricing coming up for summer, which that's the worst possible time. That's the highest use months. You look at June, July, August, and September as traditionally being very high use months. So, you have before you the schedule of

how things, how we see things proceeding toward the July 1. implementation. And we leave you really with just gratitude for hearing us tonight, for having us, and very open to any questions or discussion that council has, or really this is a public hearing. There could be, depending on council rules, questions from your residents here tonight as well. Thank you.

**MIKE MIRANDA:** Do have one question. I believe we covered this in the last meeting. The letter that goes to the public is gonna be generated from NOPEC with notification of, and then they've got the easy call center that they can reach to, and they'll be talking to somebody rather quickly in the US, not by us.

**AARON MCCOVEY:** That's right. That is correct. Council Member Miranda. We would also add your logo though to our letterhead just so that there's familiarity coming from this company called NOPEC. Who are they? We'll work with your administration to get your nice, we love your new logo branding, and we would utilize that on our letterhead with you. Excuse me. And again, as Andrea points out, our call center, 365, 24 seven, based in the Midwest. They can cover all sorts of different languages as well. So, if you have anybody that, English is not their first language, I guarantee you we'll be able to help translate and communicate with them

**MIKE MIRANDA:** And that's acceptable to use our logo on their, okay. Excellent. Any other questions?

**ANTOINETTE DALEY:** So, my question is, on the bill, if you accept, your logo will be on bill too?

**AARON MCCOVEY:** That's a really... So, on the bill, yeah, so, yeah, yeah. So, on an electric bill, there's the transmission and distribution section, and then there's the supply portion. We would be listed as NOPEC Nextera. Our supplier is Nextera Energy Services, Ohio. They're a subsidiary of Nextera Energy, who is quite a large regulated utility. They're the largest regulated utility in the United States, and I believe the world as well, but that is exactly correct. It would be identified on the supply portion.

**ANTOINETTE DALEY:** Because I saw it on a NOWAP bill that I was looking at.

**AARON MCCOVEY:** Oh yes, yeah, sure.

**CHERYL MEIER:** So, we have the opt-out program. What do we, how do we talk with our citizens if they have, if they're already out, they're already in an apples-to-apples program, and they want to get into this? What happens then?

**AARON MCCOVEY:** So that's part of our community outreach and education. What we really focus on letting consumers know is that they need to understand the elements of their current contract. Some let resident, or let the contract go away with no penalties. Some are gonna require people to pay an early termination fee. So, they really, they need to, unfortunately, run a contract analysis of whatever it is that they're in right now to see what the timing looks like on that, you know, the end of that contract. Then we'll work with them to bring them into the aggregation. So, when we pull the list for the city of Mansfield, anybody that's in a contract will show up on the list as what's called shopping. Meaning we can't send them the opt-out letter. We can't get

between them and their contract. But let's say that the contract ends in, oh, I don't know, September. We start you in July. We would coach them on how to call NOPEC and work their way into the program after having, you know, finished up that contract.

**ROSS MCDONALD:** And I would like to add that we really do pride ourselves on trying to encourage people to become educated about this process. We do mailings upwards of 50,000 every month and we take intervals of electric gas, electric gas, to be able to inform people that maybe they're eligible for it because we do that. Most other aggregations you see, you know, we've seen statistics as much as six or 7% slippage from the re-op, the anniversary mailing, which the law requires is done. NOPEC is under 1% for most of our mailings. And it's because, first of all, people are very happy with it. Instead of just one price from a broker, we have seven different options that somebody can choose from without ever leaving the aggregation. So that's thing number one. But thing number two is that we're constantly sending them to folks who maybe they were in another contract and they dropped back to the standard service offer with the utility, or perhaps they, you know, just moved into town, you know, for instance, or moved out of their parents' place into an apartment or something. So, we do a really, really good job of trying to keep folks into the aggregation insofar as, you know, we're allowed to given their existing contract.

**MIKE MIRANDA:** Any other questions from the council? This being a public hearing, is there any questions from the public? Come on down so we can hear you. Okay. And sir, real quick, for the record, I just need to get your name and address.

**JIM HUFFMAN:** My name's Jim Huffman, I live at 1587 Lucas Road in Mansfield. Do you make electricity?

**ROSS MCDONALD:** We are not in the generation business.

**JIM HUFFMAN:** And you don't deliver electricity, you just broker it, is that correct?

C Yes, we're what is on your bill as the supplier.

**JIM HUFFMAN:** Okay.

**ROSS MCDONALD:** There's three components in the electrical economy of Ohio.

**JIM HUFFMAN:** If I buy electricity or if I switch to NOPEC, maybe it's not even an option for me, but if I switch to NOPEC, can I expect a slight discount or a slight reduction in my electric bill? Is that what? What we're all about?

**ROSS MCDONALD:** It's entirely possible, and that's what we strive for. It really depends on who you're purchasing electricity from right now.

**JIM HUFFMAN:** Ohio Edison and whoever makes it for them, they deliver it.

**ROSS MCDONALD:** Yeah, and there's- AEP. There's going to be a supplier that's involved in your bill, whether you know or not.

**JIM HUFFMAN:** Yeah.

**ROSS MCDONALD:** And it depends on what that price is at the moment. We are very competitive, but I can't tell you that we're the absolute all the time rock bottom price, but virtually all the time, we're in the very lowest handful of prices that are available

**JIM HUFFMAN:** Okay. I hear you offering deals for the city if they accept your services, but for us guys paying the bills, what do we get out of this?

**ROSS MCDONALD:** This would include citizens. So, the whole idea here is that it's not only residents, but it's also small businesses. In addition to this conversation, we've also done some work for the city for lights at City Hall and streetlights and stuff like that. But that's a separate conversation that is outside of the aggregation.

**JIM HUFFMAN:** But that's a good, sounds like a good thing. How big is Open NOPEC? How many people?

**ROSS MCDONALD:** 250 communities, nearly a million customers, and each customer represents one household. So that's, you know, depending on the average, a couple million Ohioans.

**JIM HUFFMAN:** You're not three guys in a truck.

**ROSS MCDONALD/AARON MCCOVEY:** *(laughter)* We are not. I wish, he has the truck. I wish I had the truck. I mean, if you need help one day, I can come down

**ROSS MCDONALD:** But I'm very glad that you asked that, sir, because our call center, as Ross was saying, is about 42 people. So we have that, you know, you call with a question and we'll pick up. And then in addition to that, we have just coming on 40 staff members, including our commercial and industrial side, which is six or seven people. So we do have a robust team, but we're not, you know, an enormous conglomerate that, you know, doesn't reach people.

**JIM HUFFMAN:** Just being out of power for the last few days. And we live very close to the new, I'm sure the topic's coming up tonight about the Buc-ee's gas station coming to the area. Is there? It's in Madison Township.

**ROSS MCDONALD:** Yes, yes.

**JIM HUFFMAN:** Yeah, you might've heard about that. Heard about it. So, are you rubbing your hands? Anyway, in that very area, we were out of power for like three or four days. Do you have any influence over the service and making sure we get power?

**ROSS MCDONALD:** Again, fabulous question. This is an indirect answer. The direct answer is no, we are not the guys that come out with the trucks to be able to fix the lines. That being said, one of our tenants is advocacy. One of the things that NOPEC does on behalf of all of our communities, and we're getting to a size now where we can actually do some real work, here is we go to the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio, we go to Columbus, and we make sure that Ohioans are getting a fair shake, whether it's about pricing, whether it's about holding the utilities accountable for the service they said that they would provide. We put pressure on them through

legal means, and we put pressure on them from a regulatory standpoint to make sure that they live up to their commitments. So that's what we can tell you.

**JIM HUFFMAN:** I didn't mean to interrupt your proceedings, but thank you very much for the answers. I appreciate it. Thank you.

**MIKE MIRANDA:** Not at all. Thank you, Mr. Hoffman. Any other comments or questions? With that being said, we conclude today's hearing from NOPEC. Thank you.

**AARON MCCOVEY:** Thank you Council.

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**Delaine Weiner**  
**Council Clerk**

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**Phil Scott**  
**President of Council**