



**It's Better
in Becker**

Phone: 763.200.4239 12060 Sherburne Ave.
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www.ci.becker.mn.us Becker, MN 55308

April 7, 2026



Administration

Rep. Swedzinski and Rep. Acomb
Energy Finance and Policy Committee
MN House of Representatives
St. Paul, MN 55155



Community
Center



Community
Development

Co-Chairs Rep. Swedzinski and Rep. Acomb, and Committee members,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of HF 4770. I thank Representative Mekeland for drafting this important bill for both Liberty Paper and the City of Becker, and for his ongoing support for our community.



Finance

Liberty Diversified operates in six locations in Minnesota, employing over 700 people. The Liberty Paper division has been a cornerstone in the Becker industrial park since 1995, employing 150 people in its Becker facility. They take 1,000 tons of recycled paper products per day and produce 700-800 tons of paper which is used as the raw material in their other facilities producing corrugated cardboard.



Parks and
Recreation

One of the advantages for Liberty Paper locating in Becker is the availability of excess steam generated from the Sherco power plant that Liberty Paper can use in their processes at the mill. In turn, Liberty Paper condenses the steam in a usable form and returns it to Sherco for use in the power plant. This arrangement has benefited both parties.



Pebble Creek
Golf Club

I have appeared before this committee before to talk about the direct impacts of the closure of the Sherco power plant on Becker. This is one of the unintended consequences of the power plant's retirement. Once the plant fully retires, it will no longer produce steam that Liberty Paper needs, which is one of their most valuable assets at the Becker location and critical to their operations in Minnesota.



Police
Department



Public Works

HF 4770 is a solution to this issue. It will take funds from the renewable development account and assist Liberty paper to study constructing a biomass energy facility that will generate the necessary energy to continue their operations independent of the power plant – ensuring that their continued operation is not contingent on the status of the Sherco power plant.

There could not be a more appropriate use of these funds. Renewable development funds used for the purposes of assisting a paper recycling facility to continue its operations by using the funds to study the sustainability of bio-mass energy facility to provide the necessary energy for Liberty Paper. On behalf of the Becker City Council, I urge the Committee to pass HF 4770.

Regards,

Greg Lerud
Becker City Administrator



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Development

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of HF 4770, a bill of great importance to the citizens of Becker and to all residents of Minnesota. I greatly appreciate Rep. Mekeland once again coming through for our residents in our quest to stabilize our local economy with the impending closing of the SHERCO plants. The potential loss of LPI represents a clear and present danger to the City of Becker and I strongly encourage the committee to consider the gravity of this situation.



Finance



Parks and
Recreation

For the past 31 years, Liberty Paper, Inc. (LPI) has been an exemplary business partner with the City of Becker. LPI plays an absolutely integral role in our community's economy, as they believe in employing local people and pay excellent wages - on average nearly \$90,000 a year. We simply cannot afford to have this key business discontinue operations.



Pebble Creek
Golf Club

LPI not only is a key to Becker's business fabric, but they keep a thousand tons of cardboard out of landfills daily. LPI is absolutely doing a service to the residents of Minnesota with their important recycling efforts. To do this, LPI utilizes steam from the SHERCO plants to liquefy the cardboard before it is recycled. When SHERCO closes, so ends the source of steam that is necessary to keep LPI operating.



Police
Department

LPI is once again stepping up to the plate, this time to study a biomass plant that could potentially help create the steam needed to continue operations. This environmentally friendly solution to steam generation checks every box that should make it a slam-dunk for bipartisan support. HF 4770 taps into renewable development funds to support a study which will assess the feasibility of several sustainable options to produce steam and possibly power to operate LPI's paper mill past 12/31/30. According to statute, the RDA aims to "foster innovation and clean energy development" and this study does exactly that, while also bringing the added bonus of paving a path to keep an important recycler in our state. Time is of the essence, as it will take four to six years to study, permit, and build any of these renewable options.



Public Works

The City of Becker faces a difficult future as we work to keep a viable local economy in the face of an unprecedented loss of tax base tied to the SHERCO plants. We literally cannot afford to lose the jobs and tax base associated with LPI; nor can Minnesota afford to put a thousand tons of cardboard into landfills each day or pay to truck this material out of state. I strongly urge the committee to support this important legislation.

Sincerely,

Mayor Mark Kolbinger
City of Becker