



Phone: 701-377-2626  
Toll Free: 800-377-2610  
E-mail: [tribune@nccray.net](mailto:tribune@nccray.net)  
Internet: [online.burkecountytribune.com](http://online.burkecountytribune.com)  
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# Tax Drop Off Box



**Burke County Treasurer, Sheila Burns invites the public to use the tax payment receptacle inside the newest addition of the courthouse to alleviate having to use the steps to their office. The door is open 24-7.**

# The Tree of Remembrance

by LISA THOMAS

On the corner of Main Street in Powers Lake, inside the lobby of the Historic Hygge Hotel, stands a 10-foot Christmas tree, filled with names, now many, of locals who have passed away.

It started in 2021, when Covid was claiming lives and isolation was enforced, disallowing funeral services and elderly were dying alone, without their families by their side.

After losing my dad in 2008, one thing that gave me any peace was the comfort he hopefully had knowing that Mom and all his kids were standing around him, holding his hands as he left his world. During the height of the pandemic, people weren't granted that opportunity.

My dad has been gone for almost 18 years now, and something that really has helped me heal is when people stop and share a story, usually comical. We share a laugh and it lightens the heart and softens the sadness that sometimes becomes heavier during the holiday season.

The first year it's an empty chair at the table and the awkward scramble for family to try to fill the traditions and tasks that person did in the

past. The following years may be a bit easier, but for many people, Christmas just isn't the same, or life in general for that matter.

In a small community like ours, every loss is felt, and the absence of a proper goodbye only deepened the grief. There needed to be a way to show those families that their dad, mom, sibling or child is missed and remembered. And so, the memorial tree was created.

In the beginning, it held the names of those who had passed that year, with a simple white ornament with the departed's name on it.

The first year it was placed outside on the sidewalk, which allowed passersby to observe, but the North Dakota winds gave it a run for its money. A few ornaments weren't found until spring, blocks away.

The families loved the gesture.

Then requests started coming in for ornaments for those who had passed before and family members around the country.

Trista Enget, then a barista at the hotel, got busy making more ornaments as the requests came in and each year since, more have been added.

There is a very comforting feeling to remember people who have been a part of our lives and community, and it

comes to surface with each name that is hung.

When seeing that person's name, a memory flashes to the forefront, a remarkable moment in their life, a story they told, an accomplishment they achieved, the family they created, a legacy they built, and so much more. Seeing their name on the tree, surrounded by sparkly lights, it is admired lovingly for who they were.

Customers stop in and look over the names and it's nice to watch the smile come across their face as they read the names. They can't help but think of a time they shared with Judy and Roger, or a quilt that Alice made, or close their eyes and picture Johnny riding around on his four-wheeler with a grandkid and his dog in tow. Or Mr. Hovland, who taught hundreds how to play an instrument, playing a hand of cards with Tommy, or playing a round of golf with Roy and Vernie.

Those memories that come up provide a feelings of "Hygge," or a calm, comfortable time with loved ones, and that fits perfectly into what the businesses and people in small towns like those in Burke County have to offer that can't always be found in bigger places.

The tree is now full and a sec-



The remembrance tree at Historic Hygge Hotel in Powers Lake holds ornaments of dear loved ones' names.

ond tree is being filled as the names accumulate.

The good news is, the hotel can accommodate many trees and there happens to be dozens

of them in storage, so as long as people go before we do, they will be honored and remembered each Christmas.

## PSC Holds Public Hearing on Battery Energy Storage System in Burke County

At a recent Public Service Commission hearing, no one spoke against a battery energy storage system (BESS) which is planned for construction next year. The hearing for Case No. PU-24-37 was held last Friday, Dec. 19 in Bowbells.

Northern Divide Energy Storage, LLC, is requesting a siting permit for a 100-megawatt battery energy storage system with a four-hour duration to store excess energy available on the grid. The system would be capable of storing excess power from the grid when production exceeds demand. The estimated cost of the project is \$130 million.

The project is proposed to be located adjacent to the existing Northern Divide Wind Energy Center and would connect to the existing substation.

The project area would encompass approximately 20 acres in Burke County.

The hearing began with three witnesses for NextEra Energy, the project manager, fire safety engineer and the environmental project manager.

The PSC board members inquired about decommissioning, fire concerns with the "let it burn itself out," gases released during a container fire, and noise levels.

After nearly three hours of testimony from NextEra per-

sonnel the public was asked for comments.

Darrell Dihle, who has a farmstead approximately three miles from the proposed site of BESS, would like information if a soil survey will be completed by NextEra at the time of decommissioning for metals and chemicals, and "does the security fence go around the entire 20 acres." He also addressed truck traffic on Highway 40 and the need of additional signs. He stated he also had concerns with noxious weeds and sound but those were addressed by the information given by the witnesses.

Jill Kringstad, PSC board member, advised him to visit NextEra with his questions.

Bradley Kibble stated he supported the project, to have a way to store energy.

Hank Frandsen said he and his wife, who farm and operate a business, are in favor of the project, "When we heard about this project, we got pretty excited. It will gives to us a boost and the little towns around here. NextEra has been really good to us. They have been very respectful of the community."

Sandy Raines provided an overview of the process the county planning and zoning board took to complete their BESS ordinance. She explained

how NextEra was very collaborative, transparent and open to their input. Raines also stated how proud she is of the ordinance, "I feel the work we did as a team for zoning and planning board has produced a very amazing document. And I would recommend it could be a standard for the rest of North Dakota. It took a lot of work."

"We wanted to ensure this was something healthy, protected our people and that it also was a good investment for our county," stated Raines.

Raines continued that she has done a lot of research on the advantages/disadvantages of a BESS, including using YouTube videos. The videos show the demand of energy is on the increase, increasing the storage will help limit how much rolling brown/black outs we have in the future. BESS crosses fossil fuels and wind.

Raines ended her testimony, "I think this is a good thing for North Dakota."

Mark Enget was the last public member to speak. He stated that NextEra has been extremely forthcoming, provided information when needed, offered guidance, responded to the planning and zoning board inquiries and took part in discussions. He ended with, "I am very supportive of approval."

**Hark!**  
**The Herald Angels Sing**

*May the joy and hope of the season resonate in your soul and fill your heart with faith, love and contentment to last all year.*

"And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."  
— Luke 2:9-11

**Burke County Tribune**  
Lyann, Michelle, Kristi and Lisa