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- BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF UTAH -

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Application of Dominion)
Energy Utah for Approval of)
the Horseshoe Bend)
Development as a Wexpro II)
Property)
) DOCKET NO. 24-057-03
)
_____)

Public Hearing
Taken on Thursday, March 21, 2024
At 9:00 a.m. MT

At Heber M. Wells Building
160 East 300 South
Room 403
Salt Lake City, Utah 84111

Reported by: Brooke Simms, RPR, CCR, CSR

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A P P E A R A N C E S

The Public Service Commission:
Presiding Officer John Delaney
Commissioner David R. Clark
Commissioner Dr. John Harvey

For The Division of Public Utilities:

Patricia Schmid
Patrick Grecu
UTAH ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE

For The Office of Consumer Services:

Robert Moore
UTAH ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE

For Dominion Energy Utah:

Jenniffer Clark
DOMINION ENERGY

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P R O C E E D I N G S

COMMISSIONER CLARK: Welcome, everyone. I'm Commissioner Clark. For those of you who are new to our processes since Chair LeVar left, our administrative law judge, John Delaney -- Judge Delaney's conducting the hearing for us. Commissioner Harvey is here and is well known to all of you, and we'll proceed that way today and for the indefinite future, apparently.

Judge Delaney.

PRESIDING OFFICER: Thank you very much.

Okay. Good morning, everybody. My name is John Delaney, and I'm the designated representative for this hearing. Commissioner Clark and Commissioner Harvey, as you heard, are with us today.

Today is March 21st, 2024. It's approximately 9:00 a.m., and this is the time and place noticed for the evidentiary hearing in Docket 24-057-03, which is the application of Dominion Energy for approval of the Horseshoe Bend Development as a Wexpro II property.

And I know there's some preliminary matters, and we'll get there in just a second.

Let's start with appearances, please.

MS. CLARK: Thank you so much. My name is Jenniffer Clark. I'm counsel for Dominion Energy. I have with me the witnesses who offered prefilled direct

1 testimony in this matter, Brady Rasmussen and Kelly B.
2 Mendenhall.

3 PRESIDING OFFICER: Great. Thank you very
4 much. Good morning, everyone.

5 And for the Division?

6 MS. SCHMID: Thank you. Patricia E. Schmid
7 with the Attorney General's Office on behalf of the
8 Division. With me is the Division's witness, Eric
9 Orton.

10 I can do this now. We have filed a copy of
11 the hydrocarbon monitor's report. We did that on
12 Tuesday, and we're going to ask that it be admitted.
13 The hydrocarbon monitor had a medical procedure today.
14 He's available by telephone, if needed.

15 PRESIDING OFFICER: Okay.

16 MS. SCHMID: And his name is Timothy D.
17 Wilcox, and he is the Wexpro hydrocarbon monitor.

18 Thank you.

19 Oh, also with me is Patrick Grecu.

20 PRESIDING OFFICER: Okay. Thank you. Anybody
21 else?

22 MS. SCHMID: No.

23 PRESIDING OFFICER: Okay. And for the Office?

24 MR. MOORE: Robert Moore of the Attorney
25 General's Office representing the Office of Consumer

1 Services. With me today is Bela Vastag of the Office.

2 PRESIDING OFFICER: Okay. Thank you. Good
3 morning.

4 Okay. So you took one preliminary matter out
5 of -- off my plate, but thank you for getting that in on
6 the 19th, and thank you for telling us in advance that
7 the testimony will reflect that filing.

8 Just to make sure we're not missing anything
9 else, we don't have a record of a reply from DEU. Is
10 that intentional?

11 MS. CLARK: That's correct, and that was
12 intentional.

13 PRESIDING OFFICER: Okay. Wonderful. Second
14 preliminary issue is confidential information. I did
15 note that there are numerous items that have been
16 submitted that are marked confidential. And as I see in
17 the handy notebook provided, there's lots of yellow
18 pages, which means it's confidential.

19 Are we going to have to disclose any
20 confidential information today in any of the testimony,
21 or is it going to be able to be -- this hearing going to
22 be able to proceed without disclosing that which is
23 deemed confidential?

24 MS. CLARK: So from the Company's perspective,
25 we will -- our preliminary matter is seeking admission

1 of prefiled documents. We intend only to offer Kelly B.
2 Mendenhall today as a witness on the stand to summarize,
3 and his summary does not contain confidential
4 information. We have both Mr. Mendenhall and
5 Mr. Rasmussen available for questions. It is possible
6 that those questions would call for the disclosure of
7 confidential information. So --

8 PRESIDING OFFICER: Okay. Well, let's --
9 let's -- Office or -- I mean, Office or Division, do you
10 have any response to that?

11 MR. MOORE: We have no confidential
12 information.

13 PRESIDING OFFICER: Okay.

14 MR. MOORE: We'll be proceeding on the record.

15 PRESIDING OFFICER: Okay.

16 MS. SCHMID: The Division does not anticipate
17 Mr. Orton having confidential testimony. If Mr. Wilcox
18 is called as a witness, he may have confidential
19 testimony. We would ascertain that before and then
20 request that the hearing be closed --

21 PRESIDING OFFICER: Okay. Wonderful.

22 MS. SCHMID: -- if he does.

23 PRESIDING OFFICER: So it sounds like the way
24 to do this is let's cross the bridge if we get there,
25 when we get there. But let's just make sure we're very

1 cognizant of getting close to that bridge because, as
2 you notice, this is a live proceeding, and we need to
3 take steps before the cat's out of the bag, so to speak.
4 Otherwise, the cat is out.

5 Okay. Great. Thank you very much.

6 MS. CLARK: I do have one more preliminary
7 matter.

8 PRESIDING OFFICER: Please, please.

9 MS. CLARK: If I may. I conferred with
10 counsel for the Office and the Division, and we have all
11 agreed that all of the prefiled testimony -- prefiled
12 sworn testimony and accompanying exhibits, the
13 application, and its exhibits and the hydrocarbon
14 monitor report that Ms. Schmid referred to earlier
15 should all be admitted as evidence in this matter, and
16 we would -- we would -- I hope I'm saying this
17 correctly -- we jointly move for that admission.

18 PRESIDING OFFICER: Okay. I got your motion.

19 Any opposition, Ms. Schmid?

20 Mr. Moore?

21 MR. MOORE: No objection.

22 PRESIDING OFFICER: Okay. Stipulated to. It
23 is granted and admitted.

24 MS. CLARK: Thank you.

25 PRESIDING OFFICER: Thank you. Well, why

1 don't we begin? And, Ms. Clark, if you'll call your
2 first witness please.

3 MS. CLARK: Thank you. The Company calls
4 Kelly B. Mendenhall.

5 PRESIDING OFFICER: Good morning,
6 Mr. Mendenhall.

7 THE WITNESS: Good morning.

8 PRESIDING OFFICER: Do you swear to tell the
9 truth?

10 THE WITNESS: Yes.

11 PRESIDING OFFICER: Wonderful. Thank you.

12 KELLY B. MENDENHALL

13 was sworn and testified as follows:

14 DIRECT EXAMINATION

15 BY MS. CLARK:

16 Q. Mr. Mendenhall, will you please state your
17 name and business address for the record.

18 A. Yeah. My name is Kelly B. Mendenhall, and my
19 business address is 333 South State street, Salt Lake
20 City, Utah.

21 Q. And are you the same Kelly Mendenhall who
22 submitted prefiled direct testimony in this matter?

23 A. I am.

24 Q. And what position do you hold in the company?

25 A. I'm the director of regulatory pricing for

1 Questar Gas.

2 Q. Can you please summarize the relief the
3 Company seeks in this docket?

4 A. Sure. I'd like to just summarize a few of the
5 highlights from the application and testimony.

6 So on October 16th, 2023, Wexpro signed a
7 farmout agreement on the Horseshoe Bend property, and
8 this is a little bit unique in the fact that, typically,
9 when we brought properties before the Commission, you
10 know, seeking Wexpro II inclusion, they already had
11 proven reserves. They already had wells. This farmout
12 agreement is basically an exchange where Wexpro receives
13 a portion of drilling rights on the property in exchange
14 for drilling and testing on the property.

15 So this is the fifth property the Company's
16 brought before the Commission for inclusion as a Wexpro
17 II property, and based on the Wexpro agreement, we're
18 required to bring a property to -- for inclusion if it
19 falls within the development drilling area of Wexpro I.
20 This property does not fall within the Wexpro I
21 development drilling -- or drilling area. So it's --
22 it's a -- we have the choice to bring it before the
23 Commission.

24 In this instance, we believe it's -- it's good
25 for customers, and so we have made the decision to -- to

1 propose its inclusion as a Wexpro II property. And the
2 reason why we think it's beneficial for customers --
3 there's a few reasons. Recent price volatility has
4 shown the importance or the value of having a long-term
5 gas supply with stable prices. So that would be the
6 first thing.

7 And then, second, if you look at the
8 analysis -- and I'm not going to get into the numbers
9 because it's confidential -- but this property is
10 expected to beat the five-year curve for prices, which
11 is good. And then, also, its inclusion, if you look at
12 the estimates, are -- it's -- it's forecasted that it
13 would bring the overall cost of service down.

14 So for those reasons, we believe that it's
15 beneficial for customers, and we believe that it's just,
16 reasonable, and in the public interest. And so we would
17 ask the Commission to -- to approve our application.

18 And that concludes my summary. I'm happy to
19 answer any questions you might have.

20 PRESIDING OFFICER: Thank you.

21 MS. CLARK: Mr. Mendenhall is available for
22 cross-examination and questions.

23 PRESIDING OFFICER: Thank you. Thank you,
24 Mr. Mendenhall.

25 For the Division?

1 MS. SCHMID: No questions.

2 PRESIDING OFFICER: Thank you.

3 For the Office?

4 MR. MOORE: No questions. Thank you.

5 PRESIDING OFFICER: Okay. Thank you very
6 much.

7 Commissioner Clark?

8 COMMISSIONER CLARK: I don't have any
9 questions either, but I appreciate how thorough the
10 application was in providing the background information.
11 Thank you.

12 PRESIDING OFFICER: Commissioner Harvey, any
13 questions?

14 EXAMINATION

15 BY COMMISSIONER HARVEY:

16 Q. Just one. And I probably should have asked
17 this at the technical conference; so I apologize in
18 advance.

19 But could you take just a minute and explain
20 how the Company, or Wexpro, whichever it happens to be,
21 chooses a particular five-year curve? Because obviously
22 the five-year curve is already dependent on what day
23 you're predicting from.

24 A. Right.

25 Q. I'm just curious how you go about doing that.

1 A. So I'm going to attempt to answer that, and
2 I'll let my counsel correct me or put Brady Rasmussen at
3 the fight if I do a poor job.

4 But I believe, as they -- taking this, for
5 example, I believe at the time of the agreement
6 that's -- that's the five-year curve that they use to --
7 to determine -- you know, as the benchmark to compare
8 against.

9 Q. The -- is that the farmout agreement you're
10 talking about or what --

11 A. I think -- I think it's -- I think it's any --
12 any property. That would be the methodology.

13 Q. Thank you.

14 PRESIDING OFFICER: Okay. I don't -- I don't
15 have any questions myself. So you may step down.

16 THE WITNESS: Great.

17 MS. CLARK: The Company has not intended to
18 call Mr. Rasmussen to testify, but he is available,
19 Commissioner Harvey, if you'd like further detail on the
20 question you asked.

21 Okay. Given that, the Company has nothing
22 further.

23 PRESIDING OFFICER: Thank you very much.

24 For the Division, would you like to call your
25 witness?

1 MS. SCHMID: Yes, please. The Division calls
2 Mr. Eric Orton.

3 PRESIDING OFFICER: Good morning, Mr. Orton.
4 Do you swear to tell the truth?

5 THE WITNESS: Yes, I do.

6 PRESIDING OFFICER: Thank you very much.
7 You're sworn.

8 THE WITNESS: Thanks.

9 ERIC ORTON

10 was sworn and testified as follows:

11 DIRECT EXAMINATION

12 BY MS. SCHMID:

13 Q. Could you please state and spell your name for
14 the record.

15 A. My name is Eric Orton. That's E-r-i-c
16 O-r-t-o-n.

17 Q. Could you please state by whom you are
18 employed and what is your title.

19 A. I'm employed by the Utah Division of Public
20 Utilities. I'm a utility technical consultant.

21 Q. Your business address, please.

22 A. 160 East 300 South, Salt Lake City.

23 Q. Have you participated on behalf of the
24 Division in this docket, including preparing and filing
25 your direct testimony, which has been admitted as an

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1 exhibit?

2 A. Yes, that's correct.

3 Q. Do you have a summary to give today?

4 A. I do.

5 Q. Please proceed.

6 A. Since the establishment of the Wexpro II
7 agreement in 2012, the Commission has approved several
8 properties for inclusion under the Wexpro II agreement,
9 namely: the Trail Unit in 2014, Canyon Creek in 2015,
10 the Vermillion Properties in 2017, and Alkali Gulch in
11 2022. The current application is a petition to include
12 a property known as Horseshoe Bend.

13 This application is based on a farmout
14 agreement executed between Wexpro and the owner of two
15 federal leases on land located in Uintah County, Utah.
16 In order to fulfill its part of the agreement, Wexpro
17 had to keep the working interest alive, which it did by
18 drilling two wells before the end of 2023. With the
19 establishment of these two wells, Wexpro now has the
20 right to drill additional wells in the leasehold. The
21 other party will share in the cost and potential benefit
22 of the production from these additional wells.

23 The Horseshoe Bend property comes with
24 different risks than previous Wexpro II acquisitions,
25 namely: One, there is no current production; two, it is

1 outside the development drilling area as defined in the
2 Wexpro agreement; and, three, the wells are expected to
3 cost a little more per well on a per-well basis. These
4 add up to the possibility of an increase risk of a
5 non-successful drilling program.

6 The Division has conducted its review of this
7 application and relied heavily on the expertise of the
8 hydrocarbon monitor. A copy of the confidential report
9 he provided to the Division was filed on Tuesday. The
10 Division's recommendation relied extensively on the
11 expertise of the hydrocarbon monitor. The hydrocarbon
12 monitor's final report wasn't ready at the time of
13 direct testimony in this case, and, therefore, the
14 report wasn't submitted at that time.

15 The Division's conclusion is that including
16 this acquisition in the Wexpro II portfolio will be of
17 greater benefit to customers than without it. The net
18 present value is positive. The comparison of the cost
19 of this gas to the expected market price is favorable.
20 The drilling costs appear to be reasonable, and the
21 potential recoverable gas is significant. The drilling
22 depths appear to be in line with past production and
23 expectations from other producers in the surrounding
24 areas.

25 Even with minor adjustments or forecasting

1 errors, the acquisition should lower the overall cost of
2 service gas for the utility's customers and increase the
3 amount of gas available while keeping the total
4 production below the allowed cap of 55 percent.
5 Additionally, the Horseshoe Bend costs of service itself
6 is projected to decrease over time as more wells are
7 drilled and produced, thus making it even more favorable
8 to ratepayers.

9 The economics for this project, as presented,
10 are adequate to show that, given the costs and the
11 reserve forecasts, developing this property will help
12 offset a declining supply of natural gas at a lower
13 overall price.

14 The Division recommends the Commission approve
15 the application as filed and include the Horseshoe Bend
16 Development as set forth in the application as a Wexpro
17 II property. Thank you.

18 MS. SCHMID: Mr. Orton is available for
19 cross-examination questions and questions from the
20 Commission.

21 PRESIDING OFFICER: Thank you very much.
22 Dominion, any questions?

23 MS. CLARK: No questions. Thanks.

24 PRESIDING OFFICER: Okay. Mr. Moore, any
25 questions for the Office?

1 MR. MOORE: No questions. Thank you.

2 PRESIDING OFFICER: Okay. Commissioner Clark,
3 any questions for this witness?

4 COMMISSIONER CLARK: No questions. Thank you
5 for your summary, Mr. Orton.

6 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

7 PRESIDING OFFICER: Commissioner Harvey, any
8 questions?

9 COMMISSIONER HARVEY: No questions. Thanks.

10 PRESIDING OFFICER: And I have no questions
11 either. Thank you very much, Mr. Orton. You may step
12 down.

13 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

14 MS. SCHMID: As noted earlier, the Division
15 was not planning on calling Mr. Wilcox, the hydrocarbon
16 monitor, as a witness; however, he is available if there
17 are questions for him. If there are questions for him,
18 I would ask that we take a short recess so we could get
19 him on the phone.

20 PRESIDING OFFICER: Okay. Let me inquire of
21 Dominion. Do you have any questions for Mr. Wilcox?

22 MS. CLARK: We do not. Thanks.

23 PRESIDING OFFICER: Mr. Moore, would you have
24 any questions for Mr. Wilcox?

25 MR. MOORE: No questions.

1 COMMISSIONER CLARK: I have none. This is
2 Commissioner Clark. Thank you.

3 COMMISSIONER HARVEY: I do -- I do not -- I
4 don't have any either. Sorry.

5 PRESIDING OFFICER: Okay. So the
6 commissioners have no questions for Mr. Wilcox. I have
7 no questions for Mr. Wilcox. The parties have indicated
8 no questions for Mr. Wilcox.

9 So, Mr. Wilcox, thanks for being available,
10 but we're not going to need to talk to you. Thank you.

11 MS. SCHMID: Thank you. The Division has
12 nothing further.

13 PRESIDING OFFICER: Okay. Thank you very
14 much.

15 Mr. Moore?

16 MR. MOORE: Yes. The Office of Consumer
17 Services calls Bela Vastag and ask that he be sworn.

18 PRESIDING OFFICER: Good morning, Mr. Vastag.
19 How are you?

20 THE WITNESS: Good. How are you?

21 PRESIDING OFFICER: Just fine. Thank you.

22 Do you swear to tell the truth?

23 THE WITNESS: Yes, I do.

24 PRESIDING OFFICER: Great. Please.

25 BELA VASTAG

1 was sworn and testified as follows:

2 DIRECT EXAMINATION

3 BY MR. MOORE:

4 Q. Could you please state and spell your name for
5 the record.

6 A. Yes. My name is Bela Vastag. That's B-e-l-a
7 V-a-s-t-a-g.

8 Q. What is your business address, and how are you
9 employed?

10 A. My business address is here at the Heber Wells
11 building at 160 East 300 South, Salt Lake City, and I'm
12 employed as a utility analyst for the Office of Consumer
13 Services.

14 Q. In your capacity as a utility analyst, have
15 you reviewed the filings in this case?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Did you prepare and cause to be filed redacted
18 and confidential testimony in this case on March 4th,
19 2024?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Do you have any changes you'd like to make to
22 this testimony at this time?

23 A. No, none.

24 Q. If I asked you the same questions that are in
25 your prefiled testimony, would your answers be the same?

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1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Have you prepared a summary of the Office's
3 position in this case?

4 A. Yes, I have a very brief summary.

5 Q. Please proceed.

6 A. The Office of Consumer Services, or OCS,
7 recommends that the Utah Public Service Commission, or
8 the PSC, approve Dominion Energy Utah's request in this
9 docket to include the Horseshoe Bend Development as a
10 Wexpro II property. The OCS makes this recommendation
11 after a careful review of the exhibits that Dominion
12 filed with its application, the additional information
13 that Dominion provided at the February 21st technical
14 conference on this matter, and a review of Dominion's
15 responses to data requests.

16 As I explained in more detail on my direct
17 testimony filed on March 4th, our review of this
18 information indicates that the addition of the
19 Horseshoe -- of the Horseshoe Bend natural gas resources
20 to the Wexpro II agreement will provide benefits to
21 DE -- to Dominion's ratepayers.

22 The primary benefit to ratepayers of Horseshoe
23 Bend is that it will provide additional supplies of cost
24 of service gas at reasonable prices, which will increase
25 Wexpro's ability to provide ratepayers a hedge against

1 volatile market prices and potential disruptions in gas
2 supplies during the gold winter heating season.

3 As we've seen recently in December of 2022 and
4 January of 2023, there have been constrained supplies in
5 the west, which have caused extreme spikes in gas
6 prices, western natural gas prices. Horseshoe Bend's
7 additional supply will keep Wexpro closer to its
8 55 percent target for DEU's annual gas supply and help
9 maintain its value as a hedge against future volatility
10 in the natural gas market.

11 Therefore, the OCS recommends that the PSC
12 approve Dominion's request to include Horseshoe Bend as
13 a Wexpro II property.

14 And that concludes my statement.

15 MR. MOORE: Mr. Vastag is now available for
16 cross and questions from the Commission and hearing
17 officer.

18 PRESIDING OFFICER: Thank you very much.

19 Dominion, any questions for this witness?

20 MS. CLARK: We have no questions. Thanks.

21 PRESIDING OFFICER: Okay. Ms. Schmid, any
22 questions?

23 MS. SCHMID: No questions.

24 PRESIDING OFFICER: Thank you very much.

25 Commissioner Clark?

1 COMMISSIONER CLARK: I have no questions.
2 Thank you, Mr. Vastag.

3 PRESIDING OFFICER: Commissioner Harvey, any
4 questions?

5 COMMISSIONER HARVEY: No questions. Thank
6 you.

7 PRESIDING OFFICER: And I have -- I have no
8 questions either. Thank you very much.

9 MR. MOORE: The Office has no more witnesses
10 for the Commission.

11 PRESIDING OFFICER: Okay. So no more
12 witnesses to be heard on this matter. Okay. Well,
13 thank you very much for your time and your preparation,
14 for being here today. Since I think we're finished, we
15 will be adjourned. Thank you very much.

16 (This hearing was concluded at
17 9:22 a.m. MT.)

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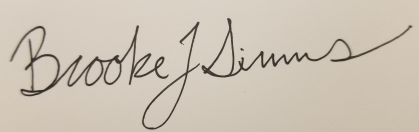
REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

STATE OF UTAH)
)
COUNTY OF UTAH)

I, BROOKE SIMMS, an Idaho Certified Shorthand Reporter, Utah State Certified Court Reporter, and Registered Professional Reporter, hereby certify:

THAT the foregoing proceedings were taken before me at the time and place set forth in the caption hereof; that the proceedings were taken down by me in shorthand and thereafter my notes were transcribed through computer-aided transcription; and the foregoing transcript constitutes a full, true, and accurate record of such oral proceedings had, and of the whole thereof.

I have subscribed my name on this 7th day of April, 2024.



Brooke Simms, RPR, CCR, CSR
Idaho CSR No. 1174
Utah CCR No. 12335391-780

[1174 - available]

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[professional - services]

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Utah Rules of Civil Procedure
Part V. Depositions and Discovery

Rule 30

(E) Submission to Witness; Changes; Signing.

Within 28 days after being notified by the officer that the transcript or recording is available, a witness may sign a statement of changes to the form or substance of the transcript or recording and the reasons for the changes. The officer shall append any changes timely made by the witness.

DISCLAIMER: THE FOREGOING CIVIL PROCEDURE RULES
ARE PROVIDED FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY.
THE ABOVE RULES ARE CURRENT AS OF APRIL 1,
2019. PLEASE REFER TO THE APPLICABLE STATE RULES
OF CIVIL PROCEDURE FOR UP-TO-DATE INFORMATION.

VERITEXT LEGAL SOLUTIONS

COMPANY CERTIFICATE AND DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Veritext Legal Solutions represents that the foregoing transcript is a true, correct and complete transcript of the colloquies, questions and answers as submitted by the court reporter. Veritext Legal Solutions further represents that the attached exhibits, if any, are true, correct and complete documents as submitted by the court reporter and/or attorneys in relation to this deposition and that the documents were processed in accordance with our litigation support and production standards.

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