

March 26, 2026

Chair Ken Cornell
Alachua County Board of County Commissioners
12 SE 1st Street, 2nd Floor
Gainesville, FL 32601

RE: NW 122nd Street Extension Project, Alachua County Electric Transmission Facilities Separation

Dear Chair Cornell,

I am in receipt of your letter requesting GRU change its 50-foot clearance from electric transmission facilities requirement. While we are sympathetic to community members who are passionate about our urban forest, we are obligated to do what's best for the entire community to make sure we provide safe and reliable power. That obligation is reflected in regulations that were thoughtfully researched and developed to protect GRU employees and its over 100,000 customers. That's our mission. They are our values.

In keeping with that, GRU's standard setback for high-voltage transmission lines is 50 feet. It exists so our crews can safely work on these extremely dangerous power lines and so vehicles never come into contact with them. This is not a "crazy right-of-way requirement," as one commissioner suggested, it is putting safety first.

In the case of the Parker Road extension in the South Pointe neighborhood, we have been working with the county on the current iteration of the project for more than two years and the last thing we want is to see those efforts wasted.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that construction crews have cut down hundreds of trees along this easement and road construction crews will surely cut down many more. The five trees we are being asked to change our standards to save have, unfortunately, already been damaged by construction equipment and determined to be in a declining state by GRU's foresters.

All of that notwithstanding, the County Commission has had ample time to develop a plan to save these five trees over the last two years and has not. That inaction does not make it GRU's burden. However, I have a suggestion.

My staff has reviewed your plans and humbly suggests that there may be an opportunity for the county to remove one of the two 10-foot pedestrian pathways in the area of the trees or reduce them to a narrower size. Such a change could possibly allow the county to comply with GRU's safety requirements and satisfy community members who are passionate about their tree canopy.

I look forward to revised plans that allows the project to continue.

Sincerely,


Ed Bielarski
Chief Executive Officer

CC: GRU Authority Board Members
Michele L. Lieberman, County Manager
Alachua County Board of County Commissioners
Derek Perry, Utilities Attorney