

**State of Minnesota
Public Utilities Commission**

Beverly Jones Heydinger	Chair
Nancy Lange	Commissioner
Dan Lipschultz	Commissioner
John Tuma	Commissioner
Betsy Wergin	Commissioner

March 2, 2015

In the Matter of the Petition of Northern States
Power Company, d/b/a Xcel Energy, for Approval of
Its Proposed Community Solar Garden Program Docket No. E-002/M-13-867

**Reply Comments of Northfield Area Community Solar in Response to the
Commission's Notice Seeking Comments issued on February 13, 2015**

Comments

Northfield Area Community Solar (NACS) is an LLC formed by Northfield area residents who are interested in renewable energy as an option for their community.

We see solar as an opportunity to create a community wide response to climate change. We are interested in keeping the community in community solar gardens. Our group formed as a result of a break out session during the successful Northfield Area Climate Summit in January 2014. We have spent the last 14 months putting our efforts towards a community solar garden in the Northfield area. We started by following the developing legislation and Public Utilities Commission actions. We put together a plan and started interviewing solar developers. We are thrilled to be working with Minnesota Community Solar (MNCS) on a 750KW garden to be located on Eastgate Farms, near Northfield.

As we started to work with MNCS on site selection, we requested that they select from local sites that would have some visibility in the community and not remove prime agricultural land from production. MNCS was willing to accommodate our local values. We chose MNCS as our developer over others we interviewed because of their dedication to local values. We are concerned about the multiple-array approach you are reviewing because it is increasing the percentage of subscriber solicitation being sought more distant from the site. In addition, it is more dedicated to corporate values rather than the level of community buy-in the regulations were written to promote and grass roots projects such as ours facilitate. We are anxious as the process unfolds that larger, utility-scale arrays do not elbow out the grassroots projects by gaining priority over others in the Xcel approval process or through other means.

We are happy to report that MNCS is developing both a pay-up-front and a pay-as-you-go model for our garden subscribers. The subscribers to our garden are our friends and neighbors and we have taken great care to offer them maximum flexibility while protecting their interests through the careful vetting of our solar developer.

Another important local value for NACS is the ability to have subscriptions available to all members of our community including renters, homeowners, small business owners, houses of worship and non-profits. NACS is currently working with a group of Carleton College students to raise money for solar subscriptions for low-income families. Developing a local project allows us the flexibility to have unique offerings, such as solar for our low-income community members.

We would like to thank Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTS) for their work in quickly getting information out for both community partners and subscribers of community solar gardens. They have been an incredible resource for us throughout this process and they continue to help us navigate the changing dynamics of solar development.

We wanted you to be aware that there are community groups working to put together community solar projects. In addition to our group, we have been contacted for advice by groups in Red Wing, Winona, Edina and Mankato. We hope that you will consider the community intent of community solar gardens as you make your decisions.

Thank you tremendously for your time and effort serving on our Public Utilities Commission.

Sincerely,

Northfield Area Community Solar members

Mary Jo Cristofaro	Forrest township resident
Matt Rohn	Northfield resident
Paula Manor	Forrest Township resident
George Kinney	Northfield resident
Linne Jensen	Northfield resident
Karl Vohs	Faribault resident
Marty Schwarz	Northfield resident
Kathleen Doran-Norton	Bridgewater township resident
Erica Zweifel	Northfield resident

“Keeping the Community in Community Solar Gardens”