

TOWN of BIG LAKE

“Sherburne County’s First 5-Member Township Board”

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March 31, 2015

Daniel P. Wolf
Executive Secretary
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
121 – 7th Place East, Suite 350
St. Paul, MN 55101

RE: Community Solar Gardens Program
Docket No. E002 / M-13-867

Dear Mr. Wolf;

The Town of Big Lake, Minnesota (“Township”), submits the following concerns and comments in regard to the Community Solar Gardens Program.

- 1) Big Lake Township believes that location of a solar farm should be in close proximity to the generating plants which would buy their solar energy. The Township also believes this is not an appropriate use for large open tracts of agricultural farm fields.
- 2) Big Lake Township recommends the permit process, allowing solar farms, be subject to local regulation. The attempt by companies to use state mandates as a method of circumventing local controls are a concern.
- 3) Big Lake Township has concern regarding the possibility of residential electrical rates increasing while giving specific entities and commercial groups an opportunity to buy power at a lower cost.
- 4) Big Lake Township refutes the concept of linking together 50 – 1 megawatt panels and presenting it as a single 50 megawatt structure. This is an unacceptable use of land.

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- 5) Big Lake Township requests confirmation be made regarding the life span of the panels and other infrastructure; the ongoing maintenance; and, removal of equipment when it has reached it's at end of use. These determinations should include input from the local government entities.

Solar energy production is in response to the state government requiring power companies to produce up to 30% of their power in the near future. This mandate doesn't take into consideration that it is extremely difficult for Minnesota to be able to use solar energy as a viable source of renewable energy. Minnesota ranks at 58% average annual sunshine, with total hours of 2711 annually; and only 95 clear days.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns.

Sincerely,

Laura Hayes, Clerk
Town of Big Lake