

State of Minnesota
Public Utilities Commission
PUC Docket Number E-002/M-13-867

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

May 18, 2015

Dear PUC Commissioners,

Northfield Area Community Solar (NACS) is an LLC formed by Northfield area residents who are interested in renewable energy as an option for our community. We see solar as an opportunity to create a community wide response to climate change. We wrote to you in March expressing our interest in keeping the “community” in community solar gardens. We feel that there is room to do just that within the current interpretation of the legislation allowing for both single gardens and multiple gardens on one site. We are writing to ask that the PUC respond to Xcel’s letter regarding their energy plan for community solar gardens as expeditiously as possible.

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 16 months putting our efforts towards a community solar garden in the Northfield area. We started by following the developing legislation and PUC actions. We put together a plan and started interviewing solar developers. We are thrilled to be working with Minnesota Community Solar on a 750KW garden to be located on Eastgate Farms, near Northfield.

Minnesota’s community solar garden program is an exciting opportunity to add onto our renewable energy infrastructure. This opportunity involves many players, all of who will have an impact on Minnesota’s economy. These players include land owners, solar developers, community partners and subscribers. Many of these players have been working toward this goal of community solar for several years.

Northfield is located in a prime area for community solar garden development. Located in two counties, both Rice and Dakota, Northfield is surrounded by agricultural land. Many of our region’s farmers are looking into the viability of leasing land for solar. We support their efforts to augment their farm income while supporting renewable energy. At least one local lease has been signed and is ready to move forward with a project. As a community partner, NACS has a growing list of interested subscribers in the Northfield area, including both residential and commercial subscribers.

The window for developing these gardens is narrow and we urge you to act as efficiently and expeditiously as possible. Further delay to this program will surely have a negative impact on Minnesota's economy.

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

Sincerely,
Northfield Area Community Solar members

Mary Jo Cristofaro – Forrest township resident

Matt Rohn - Northfield resident

Linne Jensen - Northfield resident

Karl Vohs - Faribault resident

Marty Schwarz – Educational Associate in Energy at Carleton College

Alan Anderson – Northfield resident

Erica Zweifel - Northfield resident

“Keeping the Community in Community Solar Gardens”