

## Statement regarding 2015 Docket E-002/M-13-867

I am the chair of the Oak Grove Presbyterian Green Committee. We are a congregation of 560 members located in Bloomington, Minnesota, founded 160 years ago.

Our church is committed to subscribing to a community solar garden (GSG) as soon as it becomes available. We hope to subscribe for 100 kw to provide our approximate 130,000 kwh of electricity annually for 25 years. Our primary goal is to cut our carbon emissions to net zero. We estimate that, over 25 years, we will avoid emitting 675 metric tons (1,500,000 lbs) of CO<sub>2</sub>, with avoided social costs of carbon of approximately \$41,000.

Another primary goal is to offer the option of joining a CSG for all our members who live in Xcel territory. Of approximately 350 households in our church, we believe that, when available, 100 households will sign up with the solar developer to subscribe to the CSG. This will result in 800kw of clean, renewable solar energy being built. Over 25 years it will enable Oak Grove members to avoid emitting 5,400 tons (12,000,000 lbs) of CO<sub>2</sub> and to thereby avoid \$328,000 in social costs of carbon. Subscription to the CSG will enable Oak Grove and its members to undertake, by far, the greatest social justice, mission, and earth care project our church has ever done.

For our members who live outside Xcel territory or those members who cannot make a long term commitment, we will include them in a broad-based campaign using Windsource and other programs to dramatically reduce their individual carbon footprints. Our goal is to have our church and 80% its members signed up to get 100% clean, renewable energy for their electricity by the end of 2016.

Why are we doing this? Because we are scared to death about climate change, and we know that we are very quickly running out of time in our efforts to limit global warming to 2 degrees Celsius, and thus to be able to pass on a "survivable" world to our children and grandchildren. We see community solar gardens as a fantastic, grassroots way to attract investment to make clean, renewable energy a real option for all people.

### **And that's why we find Xcel's actions in slowing the implementation and now trying to undo the 2013 Minnesota Community Solar Act to be reprehensible:**

- When now Xcel complains that utility scale solar will be less costly for rate payers, we need to ask, *"Why have you been holding out on us? Where is our utility solar?"*
- When Xcel now complains that only the big corporations are signing up for CSGs, we need to ask, *"What did you expect?" Compared with communities,*

*corporations can make faster decisions on more solar MW and it's easier to find decisive, empowered decision makers.*

In the long run, we believe that faith communities and their members can be real leaders in a widespread, grassroots movement to 100% clean, renewable solar energy. We are depending on you commissioners at the Minnesota PUC to stand your ground and uphold to the law to prevent Xcel from strangling the community solar program before it is born. We feel that faith communities can spearhead this movement because:

- Most faith communities have ethical values supporting earth stewardship and climate change avoidance.
- They are natural communities where people know each other and it's safe to talk about difficult, even overwhelming issues, values, ethics and the issues such as the future livability of God's Creation.
- Community Solar Gardens are a perfect organizing project for a church green team. They save electricity costs with no or very little out-of-pocket investments and minimal financial risks.
- Solar Garden organizing projects start new conversations with people who have never heard about climate change, the importance of clean energy, or how they can influence clean energy policy. They help defeat the pessimism and despair that says, *"It's too late... There's nothing we can do about climate change!"*
- When a faith community launches its community solar garden, it celebrates: *"We did it. We are living our values. Our faith community is powerful, and stronger than before. Bring on the next challenge!"*

Accordingly, Oak Grove Presbyterian is also working in cooperation with 3 other Presbyterian and 4-5 Unitarian-Universalist congregations to help vet and refine solar developers' offerings and contracts. We are doing everything we can to spread the word about Community Solar Gardens and the importance of cutting our carbon emissions. And all this is in accordance with the spirit and the letter of the 2013 Community Solar Law. We strongly condemn all of Xcel's actions to try to defeat this law.

In conclusion, please direct Xcel to quit their stalling and to process the 400 MW + of applications they have already received for CSGs so they can get built in 2015 and so we can do even more in 2016. Overrule their complaints about co-location. If Xcel is so worried about co-location, why don't they build more utility scale solar to show us how inexpensive it can be? Finally, remind them that as a government-sponsored private monopoly they have a duty to something beyond their shareholders..... they

have a duty to the “public good” and to the future generations who are depending on us all for a world that is “livable.”

\*\* Calculations of carbon emissions and SCC are from the EPA websites:

[www.epa.gov/climatechange/EPAactivities/economics/scc.html](http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/EPAactivities/economics/scc.html)

[www.epa.gov/cleanenergy/energy-resources/calculator.html](http://www.epa.gov/cleanenergy/energy-resources/calculator.html)

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