

STATE OF MINNESOTA
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

Beverly Jones Heydinger
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Commissioner
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Commissioner

In the Matter of the Petition of Northern
States Power Company, d/b/a Xcel
Energy, for approval of its proposed
Community Solar Gardens Program

Docket No. E-002/M-13-867

INITIAL COMMENTS OF CLEAN ENERGY COLLECTIVE

Clean Energy Collective (CEC) submits these comments in response to the State of Minnesota Public Utilities Commission Notice Seeking Comments issued on February 13, 2015.

As the nation's largest developer of community solar projects, we recognize the importance of community solar expansion to allow anyone to own and control their own renewable energy generation regardless of whether or not they can put solar panels on their roof or property.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to the PUC's request for comments.

CEC would like to comment specifically on the first point raised in the PUC's request for comments, wherein it specifically requested comments relating to "*[i]ssues raised by Xcel Energy (Xcel) in its February 10, 2015 letter regarding its Community Solar Garden (CSG) program, including operational considerations, legislative intent and rate pressure.*"

In its February 10, 2015 comments, Xcel raises a number of concerns based upon anecdotal evidence from solar garden applications it has received thus far. One of the Company's stated concerns is whether large CSG projects would preclude residential and small

business customers from participation, contrary to legislative intent. On page 4 of Xcel's comments, they write,

[b]ased on recent media coverage and anecdotal knowledge, we anticipate that the majority of subscribed production capacity will go to large commercial and industrial customers. We are concerned that there is potential for entire service classes to be largely excluded from participation if few gardens are poised to serve residential or small business customers.

CEC supports the original legislative intent of this program, which is to allow both small and large subscribers to benefit from community solar. One of the appealing qualities of community solar gardens is that they enable all citizens to own and benefit from renewable energy, whether or not they can put solar panels on their roof or property. While it is important for all customers to be eligible to participate, the best balance is achieved when community solar gardens have subscribers from all sectors and sizes. While developers may not intend to serve solely large customers, because these customers do have lower transaction costs, there is a risk that large customers could crowd out individuals and small businesses. Thus there may be a need for program rules to ensure all customer segments have an opportunity to participate in community solar gardens.

CEC does not have data to confirm Xcel's claim that small subscribers are being or will be excluded from participation in Xcel's community solar gardens program. The PUC should therefore direct Xcel to provide data on the type of subscribers participating in the program once solar gardens begin interconnecting. If the Commission finds that Xcel is correct in its assessment based on the information Xcel provides, we believe the PUC should notify the legislature that the language in statute 216B.1641, requiring "not less than five subscribers in each community solar garden facility of which no single subscriber has more than a 40 percent interest" is likely not strong enough to ensure significant participation from small subscribers. If

the current program structure is discouraging smaller potential subscribers, CEC believes the PUC would also be justified in suggesting language modifications to include a broader range of subscribers, or to craft rules to further narrow subscriber's maximum participation

If the PUC is interested in exploring a modification of the existing statutory language, or an additional rulemaking, to broaden solar garden participation either now or in the future, CEC recommends that the PUC look at the successful example of Massachusetts. Massachusetts' Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard – Class I, 225 CMR 14.00, includes language requiring each community solar garden to have no more than two customers consuming over 25 kW of capacity, with those two customers making up no more than 50% of overall project capacity. By adding details similar to this, the Minnesota PUC could alleviate any concern regarding the ability for all customer classes to participate as subscribers.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit comments.

Respectfully submitted this 24th day of February, 2015,

/s/ Tom Hunt

Tom Hunt
VP of Corporate Development
Clean Energy Collective

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I, Kimberly Kooles, hereby certify that I have this day served copies of the foregoing document on the attached list of persons by electronic filing, e-mail, or by depositing a true and correct copy thereof properly enveloped with postage paid in the United States Mail at Cary, North Carolina.

DOCKET NO. E002/M-13-867

Dated this 24th day of February 2015.

/s/ Kimberly Kooles

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