

February 15th 2019



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



PUC Docket No: E002/M-19-39



RE: Petition by Northern States Power Company, d.b.a. Xcel Energy, for Approval of Contracts and Ratemaking Treatment for Provision of Electric Service to Google's Data Center Project



Dear Mr. Wolf:



The City of Becker appreciates the opportunity to comment on the proposed agreement to provide electric service to Google's data center project proposed for our community. This letter is offered to reiterate our general support for the project.



This is an exceptionally important and exciting project, not just for Xcel and Google, but also for what it means to the economic vitality of Sherburne County and the City of Becker. We provide this comment, in partnership with Sherburne County, to share with you some of the cooperative efforts that have gone into creating this opportunity and why we believe the petition and the proposed project will have a critical impact and a lasting benefit to both our local community, region, and the State.



As you know, Xcel Energy intends to close two of the three coal units at the Sherco Generating Station by 2023 and 2026. This will result in a substantial number of job cuts and an extraordinary loss of tax base for the City, County and the Becker School District. For the community, the closing will mean the loss of 150 direct and 250 indirect and induced jobs in our area. Those 400 jobs have an annual impact of over \$200,000,000 on the regional economy. The loss of that economic impact is not something the City and the County can easily sustain.

To prepare for the eventual closing, the City and County have been working closely with Xcel to create a state-of-the-art business park that will draw new businesses and capital investment into the area. While we won't be able to replace economic impact of the Sherco jobs and tax base immediately, our collective goal has been to develop sites that will help facilitate our transition away from a coal-based economy (relying on Sherco as

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our major employer and tax base), to a more diversified economy utilizing alternative energy sources. The key components of this planning effort have been to take advantage of the power sources immediately available, to bring necessary infrastructure to the area to encourage future growth, and to recruit an industry leader that is willing to develop a facility in the area that could serve as a catalyst for future growth. The proposed Google project, and the resulting petition before the Commission, ticks all of these boxes.

Xcel has already identified the major economic impact a Google data center can have. We highlight some of those impacts here to emphasize the importance of the project. As noted in the petition, if the project moves forward, Google intends to invest \$300,000,000 in construction costs alone, with an additional \$300,000,000 invested in equipment. The project will create 2,300 construction jobs during a two-year construction phase and will employ 50 people full time when completed, with annual salaries totaling \$4,000,000. We estimate that the project will have an over \$7,000,000 annual impact on the County's economy after completion.

In addition, as described in more detail in the petition, a Google data center often attracts other major technology-based companies to invest in the same area. Securing one of the few Google data centers in the country would not only provide an immediate boost the local economy, it would showcase our community and the State of Minnesota as a growing technology and data center market.

Moreover, the project's commitment to developing and utilizing renewable energy fits nicely with Sherburne County's commitment to supporting clean energy projects. The County's commitment to supporting the development of clean, renewable energy is both policy-based and has a practical, economic benefit. We strongly believe that supporting the development of alternative forms of power will help attract companies like Google to the area. We therefore support Google and Xcel's cooperative efforts to support this project with renewable energy.

It would be difficult to overstate the importance of this project to our local community as we try to prepare for the eventual closing of Sherco coal units 1 and 2. At the same time, we recognize that Google's site selection process is highly competitive and can be dependent on local support and a reliable, affordable electric supply. On our end, there is strong support for this project. The proposed Google data center represents the culmination of our collective efforts to obtain a major capital investment in the new Becker business center. It can also serve as a catalyst to attract future growth, helping the County and the City as we transition away from a coal-based economy.

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We support the petition and echo Xcel's statement that time is of the essence in considering this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tracy Bertram". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tracy" and last name "Bertram" clearly distinguishable.

Tracy Bertram
Mayor

cc: Steve Taylor, Sherburne County Administrator