



Frozen River Film Festival: Community Energy Discussion

BACKGROUND

In early February 2019, the “Power of Minnesota” documentary was screened at the annual Frozen River Film Festival in Winona. There to introduce the film, Briana Baker of Minnesota Interfaith Power & Light (and documentary narrator) outlined how individuals and communities can get involved in clean energy. After the film screening, attendees heard from the City of Winona’s first-ever Natural Resource Sustainability Coordinator, John Howard, about exciting local energy projects.

Following these presentations, event partners from Clean Energy Resource Teams (CERTs), the Institute for Agriculture & Trade Policy (IATP), and the Jefferson Center facilitated a group dialogue to explore how individuals could join the local energy movement. Throughout the dialogue, participants identified key information about local energy their neighbors should know, ideas for local energy action, and energy questions and ideas they wanted to learn more about, which you’ll find below:

Key Information for Neighbors

First, the group identified key information that their neighbors should know about energy:

- Renewable energy is a rational, local, and key part of Minnesota’s economy.
- Locally grown renewable energy offers the following economic benefits:
 - Local tax revenue for townships and counties
 - Construction and maintenance jobs
- Renewable energy offers environmental benefits in comparison with other types of energy.
- Efficiency improvements like energy audits and other conservation measures play a large role in energy future.

Actions for the Community

Next up, they discussed actions the community could take to accomplish clean energy goals, including:

- Increase adoption of solar (on-home and community gardens)
- Nonprofit community solar garden project with trustworthy developer
- Focus on low-income/rental households by offering incentives
- Establish local incentives for solar, wind, and energy efficiency
- Incentivize energy audits for all buildings in the county

Questions and Ideas

Finally, they created a list of questions and ideas for local event partners and the City of Winona's Partners in Energy team to explore, such as:

- Can utilities provide on-bill financing for rooftop solar panels?
- How to get businesses involved in energy efficiency and renewable energy?
- What are some inclusive opportunities for clean energy that address the intersection of class & race?



What's Next?

The Winona community members who braved the Minnesota cold on a Saturday night were representative of the area's residents overall: engaged, passionate, and ready to take action. The ideas and prompts generated at the event will help to guide the activities and outreach for the Winona Energy Action Team and Sustain Winona in 2019.

The Frozen River Film Festival discussion is part of the Rural Energy Dialogues, a project of the Jefferson Center and the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. The dialogues use community discussions and deliberation to build a strong, vibrant, and resilient future for rural communities. They are bringing community members together across Greater Minnesota to learn, deliberate and act around their local energy goals.

Learn more at ruraldialogues.org

“ There are easy things people can do in their own homes, businesses, and schools to save energy and tap into renewable energy. We’re excited to help folks take those actions and to make connections to what’s happening in Winona, our region, and across Minnesota.

-Chris Meyer,
Clean Energy Resource Teams

Interested in learning more?

Contact Clean Energy Resource Teams: (612) 625-8759 or info@cleanenergyresourceteams.org



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