

AGENDA  
PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION  
July 1, 2020  
3:00 P.M.

A. Call to Order

B. Roll Call

C. Approve Consent Agenda

1. Approve Agenda
2. Approve Meeting Minutes
3. Payments Report

D. Solar Interconnection

1. SolSmart Designation
2. Star Energy Services - Distributed Energy Resources Interconnection Coordinator

E. MMUA Delegate Appointment

F. Emergency Update

G. Adjourn

***Public Utilities Commission***  
***Minutes***  
***May 6, 2020***

Meeting was called to order by Tim Kennedy at 3:02 p.m.

Members present: Tim Kennedy and Annie Possis

Absent: George Wilkes

Staff Present: Mike Roth, Patrick Knight, and Haden Hinchman

**Motion by Possis, seconded by Kennedy to approve the Agenda; April 15th, 2020 Minutes; and Payment of Bills. Approved unanimously.**

The Commission discussed the ranking of essays received for the MMUA scholarship. They decided to award 1<sup>st</sup> place to Ellen Calendar, 2<sup>nd</sup> place to Peter Sutton, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place to Chloe Blackthorn.

Mike Roth presented an update on public utility financials.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:13 p.m.

# SolSmart Designation

## Background Information

SolSmart is a nationally recognized designation for cities that have made it easier, faster, and more affordable to install solar. By streamlining the process and taking steps to encourage solar development, communities become “open for solar business.”

SolSmart offers three levels of designation: Gold, Silver, and Bronze depending on the level of actions taken by the city. Criteria for achieving the designation fit into categories: Permitting, Planning Zoning & Development, Inspection, Construction Codes, Solar Rights, Utility Engagement, and Market Development & Finance.

## Objective

Gaining a SolSmart designation will achieve two actions from the Grand Marais Climate Action Plan. Using the technical assistance resources offered by SolSmart, the city can take a measured approach to updating renewable energy policies (Tactic 7.5). The city can market to residents, businesses, and solar development companies that Grand Marais is ‘Solar Ready’ (Tactic 7.4). Additionally, a SolSmart designation aligns with goals of the solar workforce training program the city is pursuing in partnership with CCLEP and Arrowhead Electric.

## Actions Required for SolSmart Designations:

\*All designations require a SolSmart Statement\*

### Bronze:

#### *Prerequisite*

Online Checklist

No Restrictions to PV Development

*Permitting-20pts*

*Planning and Zoning- 20pts*

*Elective- 20pts*

### Silver:

#### *Prerequisites*

Allow Solar in All Major Zones

Train Staff on BPs for Solar

+100pts from all other categories

### Gold:

#### *Prerequisites*

3-day Turnaround on Applications

+200pts from all other categories

## Suggested SolSmart Actions for bronze designation:

### *Permitting*

P-1. Post an online checklist detailing the required permits, submittals, and steps of the permitting process for small rooftop solar PV (prerequisite for designation).

P-7. Adopt a standard solar PV permit application form. (10pts)

P-5b. Demonstrate that residential permit fees for solar PV are \$400 or less. (5pts)

P-5c. Demonstrate that commercial permit fees for solar PV are based on cost-recovery and not a revenue source. (5pts)

### *Planning and Zoning*

PZD-1. Review zoning requirements and remove restrictions that may prohibit solar PV development. Compile findings in a memo. (prerequisite for designation). And, involve planning commission in the process. (10pts)

PZD 5a. Include quantifiable metrics and/or specific actions for solar PV development in relevant local plans (CAP). (10pts)

### *Utility Engagement*

UE-1. Inform staff of best practices for integrating interconnection with electrical inspections. (5pts)

UE-3a. Discuss community goals for solar PV, net metering, and/or interconnection process with local utility. Compile findings in memo. (10pts)

### *Community Engagement*

CE-1. Active energy task force or working group that meets at least three times per year. (10pts)

CE-2. Post a solar landing page on the city website with information on the community’s local resources for solar development. (10pts)

CE-5a. Distribute solar job training and/or workforce development opportunities. (20pts)

# Recognition and Technical Assistance for Growing Local Solar Markets

## WHAT is SolSmart?

**S**olSmart is a national designation program designed to recognize cities, counties, and small towns for encouraging solar energy growth. Communities pursuing SolSmart designation, regardless of their level of solar energy experience, receive no-cost technical assistance from a team of national solar experts.

SolSmart designation at the Bronze, Silver, or Gold level provides high-profile, national recognition for communities that have made it faster, easier, and more affordable for residents and businesses to go solar. Achieving designation signals that a community is “open for solar business,” helping



SolSmart communities attract economic development and create new jobs.

All municipalities and counties nationwide are eligible to join the SolSmart program. Regional organizations can also achieve designation through the SolSmart Regional Designation Pathway.

SolSmart is led by the International City/County Management Association and The Solar Foundation. It is funded by the U.S. Department of Energy Solar Energy Technologies Office.

## How SolSmart Helps Communities

### Unique Benefits

- Earn a nationally recognized designation from the premier solar program for local governments.
- Access no-cost technical assistance via national solar experts.
- Showcase your community's achievements via the SolSmart website, media opportunities, and public events and announcements.
- Receive special awards for exceeding basic requirements and further distinguish your community from its peers.

### Jobs and Growth

- Send a signal to solar installers and project developers that your community is solar-ready.
- Foster local solar market growth that can support American businesses and create American jobs.
- Grow and develop your community alongside the local solar market. One MW of installed solar — equivalent to about 200 typical residential systems — creates 28 jobs and \$3.2 million in economic output on average.

### Efficient Government

- Make local processes more efficient, thereby better managing limited taxpayer resources.
- Harness solar energy on public lands or facilities to meet municipal electricity needs while reducing energy costs.
- Support your community's goals for sustainability, renewable energy use, and/or climate change action.

## Make Going Solar Simple & More Affordable



Goshen, IN (SolSmart Gold)

The cities of **Goshen** and **South Bend, Indiana** launched Solarize campaigns that allow residents to come together to install solar on their homes at a discounted cost.

The city of **Louisville, Kentucky** created a solar landing page on their website, including a new solar permit checklist, resources for people interested in installing solar, and guidelines for solar-ready construction.

**Orlando, Florida** provides PACE financing to residents, and informs its residents about other forms of solar financing.

## Spur Local Solar Growth & Economic Development



Orlando, FL (SolSmart Gold)

**Pima County, Arizona** developed a "remote inspections" process that provides same-day approval on solar projects.

The city of **Brownsville, Texas** adopted a zoning ordinance to help facilitate the growth of new solar projects.

**Beaverton, Oregon** provides development incentives that integrate solar PV into building plans.

## In Their Own Words



Metropolitan Mayors Caucus Illinois Cohort

"Solar permits issued by the county in 2018 were up nearly 20% since receiving the SolSmart Gold designation in 2017."

— **Jabez Meulemans**, Sustainability Coordinator, Jefferson County, Colorado

"We are always looking for ways to enhance our services for the residents of Franklin County. The outside expertise from SolSmart helped us improve what we do and to make it easier for our residents and businesses to go solar."

— **Marilyn Brown**, Commissioner, Franklin County, Ohio

"This is all part of the city's long-term initiative to become more sustainable through advancing opportunities for job growth and healthy living in the local economy."

— **Sven Peterson**, City Administrator, Perry, Iowa

"I'm proud that Evanston is being recognized for its commitment to supporting solar. Evanston has a long history of leading in climate action by reducing carbon emissions through the purchase of renewables, installing solar, and increasing energy efficiency."

— **Stephen Hagerty**, Mayor, Evanston, Illinois



Jordan, MN (SolSmart Bronze)

Get Started at [SolSmart.org](https://solsmart.org)

 @GoSolSmart

 /sunshotsolmart

**ICMA**

The **SOLAR** FOUNDATION™  
for a bright future

# SOLAR STATEMENT



Wednesday, June 24, 2020

Scott Annis  
International City/County Management Association  
777 North Capitol St. NE, Ste. 500  
Washington, DC 20002

Theresa Perry  
The Solar Foundation  
1110 Vermont Avenue NW, Suite 930  
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Scott Annis and Theresa Perry:

The **City of Grand Marais Public Utility Commission**, is proud to announce our commitment to become a SolSmart-designated community. In partnership with the SolSmart team, **Grand Marais'** dedicated staff members will work to improve solar market conditions, making it faster, easier, and more affordable for our residents and businesses to install solar energy systems. These efforts will also increase the efficiency of local processes related to solar development, which may save our local government time and money.

The **City of Grand Marais** will leverage SolSmart to achieve the following goals:

- **Develop a streamlined process for solar permitting and inspections.**
- **Explore the integration of solar development into the planning and zoning process.**
- **Working with our utility staff and community partners to provide solar workforce training opportunities.**

These efforts demonstrate that our community is committed to driving continual improvement in our solar market, and in the process of doing so, all the related areas identified as community priorities in the **Grand Marais Climate Action Plan**.

In order to measure progress along the way, **The City of Grand Marais** will track key metrics related to solar energy deployment, such as installed solar capacity the and number of installations across sectors.

In these efforts, we call on our residents, businesses, non-profits, and others to get involved, and we invite everyone to stay tuned by visiting [ci.grand-marais.mn.us/solar](http://ci.grand-marais.mn.us/solar) landing page.

Inquiries related to **The City of Grand Marais'** SolSmart participation can be directed to Shane Steele at [sustainability@grandmarais.city](mailto:sustainability@grandmarais.city) or (218) 387-1848.

Sincerely,

*Signature*

Signature  
Position Title

# City of Grand Marais

## MEMO

TO: Grand Marais Public Utilities Commission  
FROM: Shane Steele, Sustainability Coordinator  
DATE: June 25, 2020  
SUBJECT: Interconnection

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In April 2019 the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission established generic, statewide standards for interconnection. These standards apply to the application and inspections process for new solar PV installations, as well as statewide technical requirements for interconnection. The MN PUC states that local utilities “must maintain a level of engineering judgement in order to interconnect the wide range of technologies available while maintaining industry standards”. The best way for the Grand Marais PUC to comply with the new standards is to partner with a 3rd party to coordinate interconnection.

Attached for your consideration is a proposal from Star Energy Services to act as the Grand Marais Public Utilities Distributed Energy Resource Interconnection Coordinator, and the use of the NOVA Power Portal, which provides an online platform for solar PV permit applications. As of January, 2020, the NOVA Power Portal is required for all Star Energy Services clients.



June 16, 2020

Mr. Shane Steele  
Grand Marais Public Utilities Commission  
PO Box 600  
Grand Marais, MN 55604

RE: STAR ENERGY SERVICES LLC PROPOSAL FOR PROJECT #GRANDMARA-20-01

Dear Mr. Steele:

Thank you for the opportunity to present the following Proposal for General Engineering Services (DER Interconnection Coordinator). This Proposal is based on the following specifications and may be changed upon request.

#### **PROJECT DETAILS & PRICING**

A. STAR Energy Services LLC will act as Grand Marais Public Utilities Cooperative DER Interconnection Coordinator. Included in this role STAR will:

- Assist the electric utility with maintaining appropriate interconnection process and technical requirement documentation regarding distribution energy resources.
- Interact with customers of the electric utility with their questions regarding distribution energy resources.
- Review distribution energy resource interconnection application.
- Provide guidance to the electric utility with the physical interconnection and technical requirements.
- Commission distribution energy resources to the City's distribution grid in accordance with IEEE 1547 and accepted technical specification.
- Assist with annual compliance filings to the appropriate regulatory bodies.
- Other Engineering Services as request.





June 16, 2020

Mr. Shane Steele  
Grand Marais Public Utilities Commission  
PO Box 600  
Grand Marais, MN 55604

RE: STAR ENERGY SERVICES LLC PROPOSAL FOR PROJECT#GRANDMARA-20-02

Dear Mr. Steele:

Thank you for the opportunity to present the following Proposal for NOVA Power Portal™. This Proposal is based on the following specifications and may be changed upon request.

#### PROJECT DETAILS & PRICING

##### NOVA Power Portal™

	<i>Price</i>
NOVA Power Portal™ Up to 25 applications yearly	\$2,000/Annually*
Customization of NOVA Power Portal™ and base Utility data setup	\$800/One-time
Customer Support – STAR assistance with software functionality	\$137/Hour

\*The NOVA Power Portal™ allows for up to 25 applications yearly. An additional fee of \$800 will be charged when the Customer exceeds 25 applications in the contract year. All NOVA Power Portal™ software contracts will have a contract year that runs from June 17<sup>th</sup> through June 16<sup>th</sup>. For new contracts initiated during the contract year, the cost of the annual subscription will be prorated. After the initial contract year, all renewals will have a June 17<sup>th</sup> date.



STAR Energy Services has partnered with a secure third-party payment gateway to collect application fees. All subscribers for NOVA Power Portal™ will be required to have an online payment account (connected to STAR's authorized account with the payment gateway) for the collection of application fees on behalf of the Utility customer. The setup of the online payment account is included in the Customization of NOVA Power Portal™ and the base Utility data setup. Transaction and processing fees associated with the online payment account are automatically deducted from the application fee. The fee is 2.9% plus \$0.30 for each transaction.

Please note any hours/costs shown above are estimated and actual hours/costs will be invoiced. If you choose to move forward with the project(s) as outlined, please sign below indicating your approval, and return a signed copy to STAR. A formal contract will also be forwarded to your office for signature.

**STAR Energy Services LLC**

Signature:  \_\_\_\_\_ Date: June 16, 2020  
Alan W. Haman, CEO

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**Client Approval**

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Its Authorized Representative

MINNESOTA MUNICIPAL UTILITIES ASSOCIATION

DELEGATE APPOINTMENT

The Grand Marais PUC hereby designates  
(Governing body of utility/city)

Mike Roth as its duly authorized delegated

representative to cast its vote on all matters to come before the membership of the Minnesota Municipal Utilities Association. This appointment shall be valid until such time as it may be, from time to time, amended by this body.

The following is/are designated as alternates to the designated representative:

1. Kim Dunsmoor
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

The above appointment(s) were duly made before me this 1st day of July, 2020.

Attested to: \_\_\_\_\_  
(clerk, secretary, etc.)

Please return completed form to Rita Kelly at [rkelly@mmua.org](mailto:rkelly@mmua.org)  
Or fax to 763.551.0459 or mail to  
MMUA, 3131 Fernbrook Lane North, Suite 200  
Plymouth, MN 55447-5337