

## Solution Strategy Discussions- Energy

- What have you been working on re: energy and what's your vision for what we could be doing together around energy?
  - o Create economic opportunity by creating jobs in the solar installation energy to address social disparities
  - o Community-based energy interest
  - o Been involved in energy utility campaigns as well as local energy efficiency and solar installation work; want us to start using the clean energy economy as a resource base to grow the social change and organizing work going on
  - o Solar on housing developments
  - o Outreach for energy efficiency services, energy system education
  - o Solar gardens through church congregations
  - o Energy education and base building, Transition Towns and peak oil
  - o Helped with utility campaigns
  - o Fossil fuel divestment and community investment
  - o Solar energy business; wants to create jobs in solar energy
  - o Cooperatively-owned streetlights as a wealth-building and community governance-building effort; interested in how the structure of the energy system and how that controls how decisions are made in our society
  - o Working for more energy efficiency, conservation, and equity in energy decisions that are made
- History and context
  - o Arab Oil Embargo- MN passed legislation that MN has priority to do conservation and renewable energy 1972
  - o Prairie Island fight 20 years later(nuclear waste)- only 1% difference in the technologies that were providing energy, but fight put pressure on power structure and shifted the percentage more substantially; a motivated and activated consumer base can make a difference
  - o Solar energy is a disruptive technology to our current energy system/energy market because it can be done one panel at a time on a house or a giant installation, so many different scales offers opportunities for many different players to enter the energy production business; shifts the business models that define the utility paradigm; lowers barriers to entry
  - o Lobbying and social action has moved the solar industry forward, need to push that further and place the priority on expanding industry through local biz rather than outsiders
  - o Legal energy and utility monopolies are a problem
  - o Public utility commissions and state oversight of our energy decisions are a problem
  - o Public is vulnerable to being confused
  - o The supply side of the energy system is very inefficient, but

- MN is good at mandating efficiency, but not good at creating a way for efficiency to be considered an actual energy resource just like a wind farm or solar
- Systemic oppression- lack of awareness about these issues will inform how we build new institutions and could reproduce the same injustices that make the system the way they are
- Renewable energy development is based on tax financing which is based on wealth of the 1%, including rebate programs that require you to come up with the money up front
- Water concerns with fracking; current energy system is water inefficient and creates thermal pollution
- Energy is marketed as a commodity as opposed to a service
- Economic growth is a political norm, but growth requires us to produce more and more energy to keep up the pace of development
- Energy system is organized in many places as rural electric coops that are not necessarily very cooperative or democratic or progressive
- Financing legislation has a role to play because it allows the people who already have the most capital to grow their capital, so community control legislation is key to moving the needle
- Utilities defend the status quo even though they were started as entities for the public good
- Working Well in our process to change the energy system?
  - Local community owned energy models
  - Injecting competition into the decision making process
  - Visible, inspiring fights
  - Sunshine program for long term economic viability
  - “it’s not your fault but it is your fight” message to engage citizens in Detroit
  - “Building community power” frame
  - Community organizing
  - Telling the stories of success
- Not Working in our process to change the energy system?
  - Working with the utilities is too slow
  - Regulatory structure that keeps us stuck in our existing system
  - PUC/state oversight of our energy leaves cities out of energy decisions
  - Not a good enough message
  - Placing the blame on consumers
  - Incentive programs
  - Promoting subsidies for renewable energy without talking about subsidies for fossil fuel
  - Putting a lot of our energy into changing decision making processes that are dominated by cartel interests
- Major challenges/obstacles
  - Government subsidizing fossil fuels rather than investing in clean energy and the green economy

- Political solutions require a lot of energy at the grassroots that is hard to sustain; teaching people how to work the channels is hard
- People in power are not sympathetic, allied, or willing to drive it forward
- Lack of funding
- Xcel's lobbying to make laws in their favor (funded by money paid by rate payers)
- Defeatist thinking, internalized oppression, narrative of powerlessness
- Lack of critical mass of people who believe they can change
- Systemic oppression, history of colonialism
- People are too busy to be activists unless it's something that pays a living wage
- The sense of urgency isn't felt by general population
- Opportunities
  - Demonstrate how much money is being spent to resist and defeat clean energy financing
  - PUC accountability and electability
  - Media access