Delivering the Value We Need

By PETE SANDBERG, Assistant Vice President for Facilities, St. Olaf College

St. Olaf College operates 2,000,000 square feet of space in Northfield, Minnesota. The college has 3,000 students (with about 2,800 students in campus residences) and 800 employees. St. Olaf is closely focused on sustainability and resilience, and aims to operate the campus as reliably and with as little carbon emission as practical.

COMMUNITY SOLAR GARDENS

In 2013, Minnesota legislation directed Minneapolis-based utility, Xcel Energy, to create a program for community solar gardens. A community solar garden is a centralized, shared solar project connected to the energy grid that has multiple subscribers. Each subscriber receives a credit on their Xcel Energy electric bill based upon the production of the solar facility and their subscription share of that facility.

Geronimo provides a complete set of services to guarantee a superior level of service and reliability for subscribers. Subscribers are ensured smooth implementation and operation of community solar garden projects, including subscription management, real-time solar production monitoring, and lifetime maintenance and facility upkeep.

GERONIMO® ENERGY

OUR HISTORY

In 2000, a 4.2 megawatt (MW) diesel standby power plant was installed as a life safety and resilience project. The lights need to stay on reliably with so many residents, and the college gets Xcel Energy's best load shedding rate, which more than paid for the project.

> We believe we have found a partner.

In 2006, a self-generating 1.65 MW wind turbine was installed in order to off-set the power requirements of the 190,000 square foot Regents Hall of Natural Sciences, and together, the projects are better than carbon neutral. A great deal of conservation work happened as well, and today, St. Olaf consumes fewer kilowatt hours (kWh) annually than when there were 265,000 square feet less.

THE FUTURE

With that background, as we looked towards our energy future, I hoped to find partners that were well funded, entrepreneurial, with solid and experienced professionals in place, who knew and worked well with the regional utility partners, and had strong leadership. We became aware of graduates who were with Geronimo Energy. Contacts were made, we explored the firm, and we have been working together on a number of things for several years now.

Today, Geronimo [and BHE Renewables] and St. Olaf are partnering on a 5 MW Community Solar Garden to be constructed on St. Olaf land in the spring of 2016, with St. Olaf as a 40% subscriber. St. Olaf is also subscribing to additional CSGs with a goal of reaching a total 10,000,000 kWh of production from photovoltaic generation annually.

St. Olaf Facilities focuses on value, defined as getting exactly what is needed at a fair cost, and we believe we have found a partner who focuses on delivering the value we need in Geronimo.