

June 26, 2013

IOWA UTILITIES BOARD

April 16, 2013

To: The Iowa Utilities Board

From: Kirk Johnson, 209 Leif Erikson Drive, Decorah IA 52101

For the past few months My wife and I have been looking into the possibility of adding solar panels to the roof of our home to produce as much as 60% of our current electrical usage. We have a small ranch style home, with only 800 square feet on the main floor, the rear of which conveniently faces south, making us a perfect candidate for a 5k system. We live pretty small, and have been in our home for nearly 30 years. Our plans also include the installation of a new standing seam steel roof.

Because my employer (and my alma mater) Luther College is so engaged in the production of energy for our physical plant, I got interested in the possibilities available to us as private homeowners and I started asking questions a few of my friends who have already navigated the rebate and tax credit offerings available... I think I am finally starting to figure it all out.

We have not yet made the final decision to "go solar," but we are very close. Our decision will hinge on our rebate and other financial factors. We have had one energy assessment from Black Hills (our natural gas provider for our gas forced air furnace and water heater) which was performed by Joel Zook of the Winneshiek Energy District. We paid the \$100 fee for the full assessment and in order to qualify for as much as \$200 in rebates when we make the suggested improvements in our home to become much more energy efficient. We have an appointment set up in early May with the Energy District to come in with a small team to install some of the improvements, including weather stripping, spot insulation, caulking/patching holes, and installation of more energy efficient light bulbs on a cost share basis... a pretty good deal in my book!

I was with Joel at my home when he came to do the audit. He was cordial and professional in everything he did. In addition to a complete walk through and inspection, including my attic, he did the blower test with the infrared image camera. The report he produced for me a few days later was very thorough and will be extremely helpful going forward. He confirmed for me some areas in my home that I suspected were deficient... and I learned of a number of energy deficiencies that I had never even thought of that I need to address.

In this whole process I learned early on that I also am required to pay Alliant energy (our electrical provider) a \$550 fee up front in order to have them do an audit as well. I sent the check to Alliant a week or two ago, and have not yet heard from them as to when they will schedule to come and do their assessment to determine my potential rebate. I was told that it could take them as much as three weeks or a month to get here for the inspection.

While I appreciate the thoroughness of all this inspecting... and assessing... I can't help but think about the wastefulness of having to do this a number of times by a number of organizations/companies and for a variety of fees. Forgive me for saying so, but the \$550 fee that I have already paid to Alliant Energy for an upcoming audit feels a little more like "ransom

money” in order to have the privilege to install a solar system on my home. It seems to me that a neutral provider like the Winneshiek Energy District should be capable of doing these energy audits ONCE for an energy consumer and far more efficiently than the corporate auditors can.

I will play the game and pay for the Alliant Energy audit because it is required for me to do what my wife and I consider “the right thing,” as far as sincerely trying to lessen our carbon footprint... but it seems like a highly inefficient way to do things. Just my two cents!

Thank You,

Kirk Johnson

Decorah, Iowa