



Commerce Commissioner Jessica Looman (right) toured Red Wing's 5 MW community solar garden with James Wagoner of Innovative Power Systems, whose company built and manages the solar array adjacent to Red Wing High School.

Commissioner Looman tours clean energy initiatives in Red Wing, Mankato

Minnesota Commerce Commissioner Jessica Looman got a first-hand look at some clean energy initiatives in Red Wing and Mankato in early June when she met on-site with local officials. Both communities received [Clean Energy Community Awards](#) from the Minnesota Department of Commerce in March.

On June 4, Looman visited Red Wing to learn more about its clean energy projects. Local leaders, including Mayor Sean Dowse and representatives from the Red Wing City Council, Goodhue County Board, and Red Wing School District, described the process for advancing a local clean energy agenda in a rural setting. Looman was particularly interested in suggestions for how other communities around the state might implement similar goals, and she heard that a good community education plan—including efforts in the schools—was critical to community acceptance. Once public awareness has been raised, clean energy investment opportunities with positive returns become significantly easier.

Red Wing representatives also touted the importance of active partnerships with local businesses, the school district, and utility companies. The combined efforts of the “Green Wing Energy Action Plan” saved residents and businesses an estimated 1,761,788 kWh of electricity and 146,197 therms of natural gas (by mid-2017). Savings are ongoing, and new efforts promise to add to the energy savings and renewable energy opportunities. In addition, the city will soon receive recognition as a Step Five City by the Minnesota GreenStep Cities Program.

Following the discussion, Looman toured several downtown project locations and ended the visit with a viewing of the city’s 5 MW community solar garden, located adjacent to Red Wing High School.



Commissioner Looman (left) got a first-hand look at several mechanical system upgrades at Minnesota State University-Mankato, with (left to right) MSU’s Steve Ardolf and Greg Borchert, Commerce’s Pete Berger, and MSU’s Paul Corcoran describing the successful energy-savings project.

On June 6, the clean energy initiatives of Mankato and Minnesota State University-Mankato (MSU) were showcased. Looman witnessed some of the energy-saving improvements of an \$8.1 million Energy Savings Performance Contract performed by Ameresco for Minnesota State Mankato, including upgrades to the systems that manage heating and cooling for the campus, as well as lighting retrofits in several buildings. The contract financed retrofits that are providing energy and operational savings at no net cost to the University. The project, guided by the Commerce-led Guaranteed Energy Savings Program (GESP), will help MSU save over \$404,000 annually in energy and avoided operational & maintenance costs over the 18-year contract period. The project provides major progress towards the MSU Sustainability Plan by saving 4,161 metric tons of CO₂ per year.

Looman also visited with staff from Minnesota Valley Action Council to learn of their good work in administering the Weatherization Assistance and Energy Assistance Programs for low-income residents in several southern Minnesota counties.

“The efforts of Mankato and Red Wing reinforce the great work that Minnesota communities are doing to help meet our state’s clean energy goals,” said Looman. “Our state is a national leader in clean energy initiatives, and the work of our local communities is vital to continuing that momentum.”