

FILE

12/28/2020

From the Desk of Matthew L. Smith, Esq.  
214 Court Street  
Marysville, Ohio 43040

Ohio Power Siting Board  
Public Utilities Commission of Ohio  
180 E Broad St  
Columbus, OH 43215

PUCO

2020 DEC 31 AM 10:51

Re: AEUG Union Solar, LLC Application for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility  
and Public Need for the Union Solar Project  
Case Number: 20-1405-EL-BGN

I am writing in support of Acciona's Union Solar Project that will be located in Union County, Ohio. I am a participating landowner in the proposed Project and have leased my 47 acres in York Township for this purpose. The land was primarily used for farming but provided my family with low returns on investment and the tenant farmer low yields due to inadequate drainage. In years past, I had explored developing home sites on the parcels. However, I found the sewage requirements too costly for development of the land into home sites. This Project provides much needed relief to me and my family because the Project, if approved, will provide a consistent stream of income by putting the land to its highest and best use.

As an attorney by trade, I took great care in negotiating the terms of the lease agreement to prohibit the use of chemical or materials that might damage the environment. Due consideration was also taken for restoration of the property after the Project has reached its useful life. I was also careful to consider and provide for mitigation of the limited externalities created by the Project and to protect the surrounding homeowners.

I hope the OPSB shares the vision to a greener America. I also hope that the OPSB will not be swayed by the misinformation that circulates on social media that is designed to stoke the fears of an unknown or unfamiliar project. I have witnessed otherwise rational people spouting false information about the effects of solar energy projects on the land while staying silent for years about the intensive chemical farming that takes place in our county. The Project will give the land much needed rest to restore its value to the farming community. The practice of rotating corn and soybeans for the years that I have owned the farm has left the land in need of time to recuperate and heal itself.

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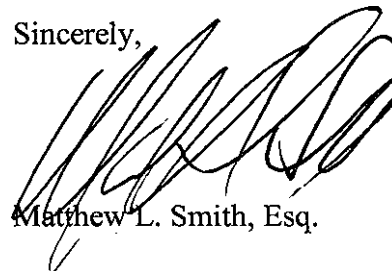
Furthermore, this Project will be a great opportunity that will provide benefits to Union County and its many residents for years to come. I firmly believe that this new industry will create opportunities for economic growth and the ability to diversify and strengthen our economy. The Project will bring a number of economic benefits to an area hit extremely hard this past year by the COVID-19 pandemic, including hundreds of construction jobs in the near term, permanent jobs to maintain the Project, significant additional tax revenue, lease payments for landowners like me, new opportunities for local merchants to provide goods and services, and an overall boost to the local economy. The fact that these benefits are realized without any increased burdens placed on our schools and other public services, such as police and fire protection, which often accompany other forms of development that is common for rural farm ground, such as new housing starts.

Solar development is also unique in that it should be viewed as a temporary land use change, because at the end of the Project's useful life, the land will be returned to the landowners and their families in the same condition as when it was originally leased. As stated before, careful attention was paid to these provisions in my lease agreement. I believe that I have been a good steward of my land and will continue to be during the term of the Project.

I would be greatly disappointed if the OPSB is swayed by the fear-based arguments born of a lack of understanding of the impacts of this Project. The economic benefits will be shared by all, including those "chicken littles" that have circulated and continue to espouse falsehoods about the Project. Opportunities like this do not come around too often, and for rural areas and small towns. Don't let the irrational voices of the many drown out the considered voices of progress. To me, Union Solar is a welcome business "neighbor" and will be held to their promises to this community.

I urge the Power Siting Board to issue the Certificate to move this project forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew L. Smith", written over a horizontal line.

Matthew L. Smith, Esq.