

BEFORE THE OHIO SITING BOARD

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In the Matter of the Application:
of Union Ridge Solar, LLC, for a:
Certificate of Environmental : Case No.
Compatibility and Public Need : 20-1757-EL-BGN
to Construct a Solar Electric :
Generation Facility in :
Licking County, Ohio :

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PROCEEDINGS

Before Greta See and Jesse Davis,
Administrative Law Judges
Jennifer French, Chair of the Ohio Power Siting Board

- - -

Tuesday, August 31, 2021
6:10 p.m.
6750 Outville Road
Pataskala, Ohio 43062

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MARILYN K. MARTIN, RPR

REGISTERED PROFESSIONAL REPORTER

- - -

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10 On behalf of Union Ridge Solar, LLC.

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P R O C E E D I N G S

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ALJ SEE: Let's go on the record.

The Ohio Power Siting Board has scheduled for public hearing at this time and place Case No. 20-1757-EL-BGN, which is captioned: In the Matter of the Application of Union Ridge Solar, LLC, for a Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need to Construct a Solar Powered Electric Generation Facility in Licking County, Ohio.

My name is Greta See. And with me this evening is Jesse Davis. We are the administrative law judges assigned to this case by the Ohio Power Siting Board. Joining us this evening is the chair of the Ohio Power Siting Board, Ms. Jennifer French.

I would also like you to know there are several members of the board staff assisting us with the hearing. They are the individuals at the back. Most are wearing a commission badge or a polo T-shirt at the very back door by the exit. If you -- They're not allowed to leave.

They are available if you have any questions about the board's process, if you need assistance in how to access any of the documents

1 submitted in this case or if you just have general
2 questions about the hearing process tonight.

3 At this time, I'd like to take appearances
4 of counsel on behalf of the parties that have
5 intervened. Counsel for Union Ridge Solar, LLC.

6 MR. BORCHERS: Thank you, Your Honor. On
7 behalf of the applicant, Dylan Borchers and Sommer
8 Sheely, with the law firm of Bricker & Eckler, 100
9 South Third Street, Columbus, Ohio, 43215.

10 Also just for reference, we have John
11 Wieland and Kelly Pacifico with the project. Thank
12 you.

13 ALJ SEE: Is counsel for the Ohio Farm
14 Bureau Federation present?

15 (No response.)

16 ALJ SEE: Is counsel for the Licking
17 County Soil and Water Conservation District?

18 (No response.)

19 ALJ SEE: Counsel for Jared Knerr in his
20 capacity as the Licking County Engineer?

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Knerr.

22 ALJ SEE: I'm sorry. Repeat that for me.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's pronounced
24 Knerr. The K is silent.

1 ALJ SEE: I'll apologize now for
2 butchering anybody's name. Please speak up.

3 Counsel for Harris Township Board of
4 Trustees?

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

6 ALJ SEE: Counsel for Licking Planning
7 Commission?

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

9 ALJ SEE: Counsel for Board of County
10 Commissioners of Licking County?

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Counsel is not here
12 for the commissioners. The prosecutor is not here.

13 ALJ SEE: Okay. Thank you.

14 The subject of tonight's hearing is an
15 application filed by Union Ridge Solar, LLC, which is
16 a subsidiary of Leeward Renewable Energy, LLC. The
17 application is for the purpose of constructing a
18 solar powered electric generation facility of
19 approximately 108 megawatts in Harrison Township, in
20 Licking County. The application was filed on March
21 26, 2021, and supplemented on May 6, 2021.

22 I would also note that the board -- the
23 board staff filed its report of investigation on
24 August 16, 2021. This report is a recommendation by

1 the staff and does not necessarily reflect what the
2 board's final determination in this case will be.

3 The purpose of this evening's hearing is
4 to receive testimony regarding the application from
5 persons in the local community who are not parties to
6 this case. Tonight's public hearing will not be
7 treated as a question-and-answer session, but rather
8 an opportunity for you to let the board know what you
9 think about the proposed project.

10 Tonight's public hearing is only one
11 aspect of the process in this case. An evidentiary
12 hearing has been scheduled to begin on September 14,
13 2021, at 10:00 a.m. at the board's offices in
14 Columbus. The purpose of the evidentiary hearing is
15 for the parties and board staff to provide testimony
16 and other evidence regarding the project.

17 Tonight's hearing is being transcribed by
18 a court reporter. If you signed up to testify,
19 please speak clearly so the court reporter can
20 accurately reflect your comments on the record.
21 Also, if you have a prepared written statement, it
22 would be helpful if you provide a copy to the court
23 reporter for reference to ensure the transcript is
24 accurate.

1 After I finish with the introduction,
2 we'll begin by inviting individuals on the sign-up
3 sheet to speak about the proposed project. Each
4 person who signed up to testify will be permitted to
5 speak once about the proposed project. Before you
6 present your testimony, we'll ask you to take an oath
7 or affirmation that what you are about to say is the
8 truth. We'll ask you to state your name and your
9 address for the record and to indicate if you work or
10 reside in the project area. You can then present
11 your thoughts on the proposed project.

12 Counsel for the parties to the case, Chair
13 French, Judge Davis or I will be permitted to ask you
14 questions about your statement. The testimony that
15 you provide tonight will be a part of the official
16 record in the case, and it will be reviewed by the
17 board before a final decision is made on the
18 application.

19 A couple other notes. If you decide that
20 you no longer want to testify when your name is
21 called, you can just indicate that you pass, and
22 we'll move on to the next witness. If you decide
23 that you prefer to file written comments in the case,
24 approach one of the board staff members that are at

1 the back near the exit still; and they can guide you
2 in how to do that.

3 Also, once you finish testifying or if you
4 are just here to observe, you can leave the hearing
5 at any time you wish. We just ask that you do so
6 quietly so as to not interrupt the witness. The
7 board appreciates your participation in tonight's
8 hearing. And we want everyone who has signed up to
9 testify to have an opportunity to do so. For that
10 reason, please keep your statement to a reasonable
11 length of no more than five minutes.

12 At this time, let's begin with the
13 testimony. And let me apologize again if I butcher
14 your name. Please forgive me now.

15 The first witness note is Matt Lamp.

16 Mr. Lamp, if you could raise your right
17 hand.

18 (Witness sworn.)

19 ALJ SEE: Please state and spell your
20 name.

21 MR. LAMP: Matthew Lamp, M-A-T-T-H-E-W,
22 L-A-M-P.

23 ALJ SEE: And your address, please?

24 MR. LAMP: 6825 Clearport Road, Lancaster,

1 Ohio, 43130.

2 ALJ SEE: And do you live or work in the
3 project area?

4 MR. LAMP: Work.

5 ALJ SEE: Okay. Go ahead with your
6 testimony, sir.

7 MR. LAMP: Thank you for the opportunity
8 to testify in support of Union Ridge Solar. My name
9 is Matt Lamp. My father, Jerry Lamp, has over 500
10 acres in the project, which we have farmed with our
11 family for over 30 years. I'm here to testify for
12 the family tonight, as my father is managing some
13 health issues.

14 I'm a fourth generation --

15 ALJ SEE: Sir, excuse me. Could you pick
16 up the mic? The people in the back say they can't
17 hear you.

18 MR. LAMP: I'm a fourth generation grain
19 farmer and lucky to farm with my family. I've been a
20 full-time farmer since 2003. We farm in four
21 counties. And the truth is: It's 37 miles we're
22 moving equipment up here to the Harrison Township
23 project. And it's getting more and more difficult to
24 move equipment up and down the road. Putting the

1 land into the solar project would be a great
2 opportunity for our family to diversify some of our
3 other ground and keep the farm going for generations.
4 Thank you.

5 ALJ SEE: Just a minute. Any
6 cross-examination for this witness?

7 MR. BORCHERS: No, Your Honor.

8 ALJ SEE: Any from the bench?

9 (No response.)

10 ALJ SEE: Thank you, sir.

11 Alex Fitzsimmons?

12 MS. FITZSIMMONS: Alexis.

13 (Witness sworn.)

14 ALJ SEE: Please state and spell your name
15 and give us your address.

16 MS. FITZSIMMONS: Alexis Fitzsimmons.
17 That's A-L-E-X-I-S, F, as in frank,
18 I-T-Z-S-I-M-M-O-N-S. My address is 1453 Palay Drive,
19 Grove City, Ohio, 43123.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Still can't hear
21 you.

22 ALJ SEE: If you could -- Maybe if you
23 turn it to the side.

24 (Discussion held off the record.)

1 MS. FITZSIMMONS: Good evening. My name
2 is Alexis Fitzsimmons. I'm the executive director of
3 Grow Licking County. Grow Licking County is a
4 501(c)(3) public/private partnership in Licking
5 County, Ohio, and it serves as the front door of our
6 community for economic development, business
7 attraction and retention projects.

8 On behalf of Grow Licking County, I'm here
9 today in support of the Union Ridge Solar project.
10 Our community welcomes the opportunity to host a
11 collaborative community partner like Leeward Energy.
12 Economic development organizations are at the
13 forefront of advocating for growth in our
14 communities. And in today's climate, we recognize
15 that the energy issues are an increasingly important
16 issue for business attraction and retention.

17 In recent years, portions of Ohio have
18 experienced substantial investment and growth in the
19 renewable energy sector, most notably in northwest
20 Ohio. This activity has fueled economic growth in
21 the communities and others. And many corporations in
22 the logistics, data and manufacturing sector are
23 looking towards including robust energy resources to
24 offset their energy costs as well as a means to

1 promote their community culture.

2 In recent years, renewable energy
3 opportunities have assisted Licking County and many
4 of its contemporaries to attract substantial
5 investments and job creation centers, including
6 Amazon, Google and Facebook to central Ohio.

7 Leeward Energy has proven to be a good
8 corporate citizen and has been actively engaging in
9 the community. As an owner/operator of the project,
10 they look forward to continuing that partnership with
11 the community in the years to come.

12 Union Ridge will also serve as a
13 transformative opportunity for the townships, schools
14 and other taxing authorities that will reap the
15 benefits of this project.

16 Thank you for your time and consideration.

17 ALJ SEE: Thank you.

18 Any cross-examination for this witness?

19 MR. BORCHERS: No, Your Honor.

20 ALJ SEE: By the bench?

21 ALJ DAVIS: No.

22 ALJ SEE: Thank you, Ms. Fitzsimmons.

23 The next witness is Sid --

24 MR. SMYERS: That's me.

1 ALJ SEE: Pronounce your last name for me,
2 sir.

3 MR. SMYERS: Smyers, S-M-Y-E-R-S.

4 Raise your hand.

5 (Witness sworn.)

6 ALJ SEE: Please state and spell your name
7 for the record.

8 MR. SMYERS: My name is Sid, S-I-D,
9 Smyers, S-M-Y-E-R-S. My address is 152 Jones Avenue
10 Southwest, Pataskala, Ohio, 43062-9510.

11 ALJ SEE: And do you live or work in the
12 project area?

13 MR. SMYERS: I reside.

14 ALJ SEE: Okay. Please go ahead with your
15 testimony.

16 MR. SMYERS: Okay. One of my main
17 concerns is for the farmers. Me being related to
18 former farmers, it just kind of hurts me to see that,
19 you know, this property is being used for solar when,
20 you know, there's more farming seasons coming up.
21 I'm worried about whoever farms that field, that they
22 may not get money back from the investment that they
23 put down for this project. And I just feel like I'm
24 worried about the farmers right now. That's it.

1 ALJ SEE: All right. Any
2 cross-examination for this witness?

3 MR. BORCHERS: No, Your Honor.

4 ALJ DAVIS: No.

5 ALJ SEE: Thank you, Mr. Smyers.

6 Brad Williams.

7 (Witness sworn.)

8 ALJ SEE: Please state and spell your name
9 for the record. And I'm sure the people in the back
10 need to you pick up the mic.

11 MR. WILLIAMS: My name is Brad Williams.

12 ALJ SEE: Your address?

13 MR. WILLIAMS: I live at 4671 Beaver Run
14 Road, Pataskala, Ohio, 43062.

15 ALJ SEE: And do you live or reside in the
16 project area?

17 MR. WILLIAMS: I reside within the
18 township.

19 ALJ SEE: Okay.

20 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

21 ALJ SEE: Go ahead with your testimony.

22 MR. WILLIAMS: I'm here tonight to stand
23 in opposition of the solar farm. I'm not opposed to
24 solar energy. But such a large project in the middle

1 of what I consider a residential area, I have huge
2 concerns about. We know that solar panels do contain
3 hazardous material. Being an ex-fireman, dealing
4 with hazardous materials can be very expensive, very
5 costly, and health hazards.

6 My concern right now is my two
7 grandchildren back there. Thirty years from now, I
8 don't want to be the people that were, "Asbestos was
9 a great thing. Well, now it's a problem." I don't
10 want to be that person that -- years ago, they talked
11 about water running through lead pipes, "What a great
12 idea." Well, not so much anymore. There are so many
13 unknowns, in my opinion, about solar and the panels
14 to that large a degree that I'm not just not willing
15 to chance that in my community.

16 I think that -- We talk about Amazon and
17 Google and these large businesses that want this
18 energy. They have large rooftops in those buildings
19 that they built. They could put those solar panels
20 on their rooftops. They have large parking lots
21 where they park their employees. They could elevate
22 those panels over top those parking lots in some way.

23 I realize it's about the money. It's
24 cheaper to pay a farmer to go use his field. But I

1 just think there's so many unknowns, and that's my
2 concern. Thank you.

3 ALJ SEE: Any cross for this witness?

4 MR. BORCHERS: No, Your Honor.

5 ALJ SEE: Thank you, sir.

6 James Mathews.

7 (Witness sworn.)

8 ALJ SEE: State and spell your name.

9 MR. MATHEWS: James Mathews,
10 M-A-T-H-E-W-S.

11 ALJ SEE: Provide us your address.

12 MR. MATHEWS: 7133 Watkins Road.

13 ALJ SEE: And, sir, do you live or work in
14 the project area?

15 MR. MATHEWS: I live within 100 feet of
16 the project.

17 ALJ SEE: Go ahead with your testimony.

18 MR. MATHEWS: I'd like to go along with
19 the gentleman who was just here and spoke. I'm in
20 opposition of this project going in, and, again, I
21 would agree, a residential area. The solar panels in
22 and of themselves at the end of their useful life
23 must be disposed of in a hazardous waste site.
24 What's to say that during their useful life of 30

1 years they're not leaching something into the soil?
2 And I think that is of great concern and would think
3 that --

4 Again, I think there's also an issue of
5 the direct community versus the bigger community, the
6 bigger community being Licking County. The immediate
7 community is the people on Watkins Road and the
8 people that are going to be looking at this. I live,
9 like I say, within 100 feet on a hill; and I will
10 look directly at these solar panels.

11 Now, I know they're going to put as much
12 trees and shrubbery and decorate it very beautifully.
13 But sitting on top of a hill, I think I'm going to be
14 waiting a while for those trees to block my view
15 because I'm going to be looking down. And there's
16 about five people in my direct community, as I would
17 refer to it, that will be surrounded on at least
18 three sides by this solar farm.

19 So, you know, I just think that, again, it
20 is a community. It's a direct community. And I
21 think we ought to be taking that into consideration a
22 little bit more than the larger community of Licking
23 County.

24 You know, you talk about the number of

1 jobs and growth and so forth. You know, we're using
2 600 acres to employ two people. When this whole
3 thing is done, it's two people. There will be 225
4 people come to work it and build it. Licking County
5 is not going to get anything from that 225 people.

6 Harrison Township doesn't have tax, so
7 there's no local tax going to be paid. They're going
8 to come from Columbus. They're going to come from
9 Reynoldsburg, Pickerington. Those people will get
10 their local taxes. We get the traffic.

11 So I just think there are more issues that
12 need to be raised and, you know, for people to think
13 about a little bit. I've asked the questions from
14 Leeward, and they don't have an answer yet; and that
15 has to do with where the panels are actually going to
16 come from. And as far as I know, initially they were
17 coming from China.

18 Well, the Biden administration has now
19 stopped importation of solar panels from China
20 because they're coming from what I believe to be
21 Xinjiang Province -- or pronounced that way -- which
22 uses slave labor. So they have been seized at the
23 west coast airport -- or west coast ports of entry.

24 And so now we're looking for alternatives,

1 possibly partnering with the solar manufacturing here
2 in Ohio. That would be nice, I mean, to have it
3 produced in Ohio, if it's going to be in Ohio, you
4 know. So, again, I think there are other things that
5 just need to be taken into consideration.

6 Hopefully I haven't sounded too much like
7 a jerk and people will just give it some thought.
8 Again, like I say, I'm not in favor of this
9 particular project going where it's at. I certainly
10 wouldn't want somebody telling whether or not I can
11 plant trees or cut trees on my property. And I'm
12 certainly not trying to do that to the farmers that
13 own the property. I don't -- They ought to be
14 allowed to do what they want.

15 But on the other hand, I think there needs
16 to be either maybe more setbacks or, you know, a
17 fewer amount of these panels to keep them away from
18 and out of the view of people more so than just
19 shrubbery. So that's all I have to say.

20 ALJ SEE: Any cross for this witness?

21 MR. BORCHERS: No, Your Honor.

22 ALJ SEE: Thank you, sir.

23 Jeffrey Drake.

24 (Witness sworn.)

1 ALJ SEE: Please state and spell your name
2 for the record and give us your address.

3 MR. DRAKE: Jeffrey A. Drake,
4 J-E-F-F-R-E-Y, D-R-A-K-E. 1128 York Gate Drive,
5 Pataskala, 43062.

6 ALJ SEE: And, sir, do you live or work in
7 the project area or the township?

8 MR. DRAKE: Very, very close. I live in a
9 housing development that is adjacent to this project.

10 ALJ SEE: Go ahead with your testimony.

11 MR. DRAKE: Okay. I was told that I
12 was -- that anything that we have to say tonight, by
13 a local government official, was not going to be
14 considered in the Siting Board's decision. Actually,
15 I was told this decision had already been made, that
16 we can't stop it.

17 When I heard that, I was very frustrated
18 because I had some things that bothered me a lot.
19 Number one was I -- we actually had a county
20 commissioner that said that this was a sweet spot for
21 the company that's going to put it there. Did they
22 ask any of you? Any county commissioners come to any
23 of you and say what will it do to affect your -- the
24 price of your home? What will it do when they bury

1 that hundreds and thousands of yards of cable that,
2 by the way, after 35 years will not dig it up and
3 dispose of it. It will remain in the ground. And
4 I'm told that I'm supposed to recycle a plastic jug,
5 but this company is going to be allowed to bury
6 thousands of yards of cable and leave it. And I
7 guarantee you that cable is probably surrounded by
8 plastic or rubber.

9 Now, I understand. I grew up on a farm.
10 And I had another public official, I believe from the
11 school system, that had the audacity to say -- now,
12 mind you, from the school system -- "At least we
13 won't have housing development there."

14 Think about that. She's with the school
15 system. Their customers are students, and she's okay
16 with them not building housing in that area.

17 Now, the other county commissioner made a
18 statement about, "At least the farmers won't have to
19 water the fields." I grew up on a farm, folks. My
20 grandpa and I, we never watered our crops. God did
21 it. See how He's doing it?

22 So I came here -- I wasn't -- I wasn't
23 prepared to make a presentation, although, like I
24 said, I'm very frustrated with our public officials

1 who took the side of big business, Jeff Bezos,
2 Amazon, Google. Will we get a tax break from this?
3 No. I was told, "Well, the schools are going to get
4 a lot of money from this, and so is the fire
5 department and so is the library." And I was taught
6 in school that that's not how we fund our government
7 entities. We do it through taxes.

8 I looked at that and said, "Boy, did they
9 buy us off." Our county commissioners, they got some
10 money for schools and for the fire department. If
11 the schools and fire department need money, pass a
12 levy. That's what I was always taught. Will we get
13 a tax break from this? Anybody?

14 MULTIPLE UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKERS: No.

15 MR. DRAKE: That has never been discussed.

16 We get nothing for it. Jeff Bezos and
17 Amazon get a tax break. They're going to get their
18 green energy credits on our back.

19 It's going to reduce the property value of
20 my home by between 5 and 7 percent. I've done my
21 research on that. And the research shows
22 it's -- it's -- it can -- it can affect it or it
23 cannot. Well, who do you believe?

24 Take the pictures that some people have of

1 this development and where they're going to put those
2 solar panels. I don't want to buy that house. If
3 it's within 100 feet or a 120 feet of my house. Do
4 you think I'm going to say to the person that's
5 coming to buy my house, "This is what you get to see
6 every morning and every night"?

7 The panels I believe are between 14 and 15
8 feet high when they put them up when they're at a
9 certain angle. The trees that they're going to plant
10 are four feet for God's sakes. Which one is higher?

11 The Siting Board, I would say to you,
12 consider what the people have to say that live there.
13 I appreciate the farmer that has to go all that way
14 up to -- to farm that land, and it's probably
15 financially beneficial for him to get rid of it.
16 Okay. I appreciate that.

17 I met with Kelly. I appreciate everything
18 that she had to say, representing the company. But I
19 look at this and go, "This project started wrong."
20 It went through the legal process that our state has
21 which is -- Folks, I spent -- I retired from the
22 highway patrol. And I can tell you that government
23 agencies follow the law. It doesn't mean it's good
24 for us.

1 Christ, half of the time I ask a
2 government official, "Where do you stop at a stop
3 sign?" They don't know. They'll say, "That clearly
4 marked white line."

5 "What if there isn't one? What if I'm the
6 second car back?"

7 You can follow the legal process. It
8 doesn't make it right for us.

9 If we have to get up every morning and
10 look out that window and see that -- that -- that
11 field and know that it's reducing the price and value
12 of my property, not theirs -- they don't live here.
13 Our government officials, our county commissioners
14 did not represent us. They represented themselves.

15 I would love to talk with one of them and
16 ask them why didn't they come to my house. I'm the
17 one that's going to look out back and see that field.
18 You're going to have to look out back, your children.
19 And all that -- I'm trying to think of the correct
20 terminology for it. Electromagnetic field, you know
21 what that is?

22 MR. MUNCY: Garbage.

23 MR. DRAKE: No. It's the wire and the
24 electricity that runs through the ground. Have we

1 done a lot of research on that to find out if that
2 has any affect on anybody yet? Will that cause your
3 children to get tumors?

4 There was a woman that brought this up
5 lately -- I think her name was Erin Brockovich --
6 what big corporations will do to you if you sit there
7 and do nothing about it. I would like to say I vote
8 no on this.

9 ALJ SEE: Thank you.

10 MR. DRAKE: But I have to tell you: I
11 think I'm barking up a dead dog's -- because I think
12 it's already decided. I think the legal process
13 has -- They've got their uniform here. Who defends
14 us? County commissioners?

15 Because it's the sweet spot, folks. It's
16 good for Jeff Bezos. It's not good for us. We're
17 the ones that have to live in it. So, again, I just
18 say I vote no.

19 ALJ SEE: Thank you.

20 Any cross-examination?

21 MR. BORCHERS: No, Your Honor.

22 ALJ SEE: Kathy Drake.

23 (Witness sworn.)

24 MS. DRAKE: If you thought he was bad.

1 (Witness sworn.)

2 ALJ SEE: State and spell your name for
3 the record.

4 MS. DRAKE: Kathryne, K-A-T-H-R-Y-N-E,
5 middle initial A, Drake, D-R-A-K-E.

6 ALJ SEE: Your address?

7 MS. DRAKE: 112 York Gate Drive,
8 Pataskala.

9 ALJ SEE: And do you live or work in the
10 project area?

11 MS. DRAKE: Yes. We're in their backyard.
12 So hi, everybody. How are you?

13 MR. MUNCY: Hello.

14 MS. DRAKE: My husband and I have talked a
15 lot. We had two meetings at our house. Our concerns
16 are the fact that we were not asked, we were not
17 represented, we were not, you know, "hey," knock on
18 your door. Everything was pretty much -- the process
19 was in the works before we were even told about it.

20 If Josh hadn't told us about it, you know,
21 come over and said, "You hear about that solar field
22 that's going in our backyard?" We were clueless.

23 We don't get the newspapers. I don't
24 Facebook. I mean, I'm old fashioned. I use my phone

1 for pictures and calling my grandkids and my
2 children. So, you know, I can just tell you that we
3 say no. And the reason we say no is because we don't
4 get a cut on our electricity bill. Our taxes will
5 not go down for our school, for our fire department.
6 God bless them for our library. We don't get a
7 break.

8 Our daughter-in-law works for AEP. I
9 asked her, "What will happen?"

10 "Well, it will be transferred to the
11 substation, and then they will distribute it as they
12 see." We won't get a damn break. Pardon the
13 expression, but we won't.

14 You know, so it's like, we don't get green
15 energy credit. We don't -- Like I said, we don't get
16 anything from this other than 15 feet panels with
17 four feet -- I'm five feet. So they're going to put
18 trees around a 15 foot panel. That's going to be a
19 little taller -- or a little shorter than me.

20 So, you know, like I say, Kelly, we
21 appreciated your comment, but we don't want your
22 project in our backyard.

23 ALJ SEE: Any cross?

24 MR. BORCHERS: No, Your Honor.

1 ALJ SEE: Thank you.

2 Kasey Perkins.

3 (Witness sworn.)

4 ALJ SEE: Please state and spell your name
5 for the record.

6 MS. PERKINS: Kasey Perkins, K-A-S-E-Y,
7 P-E-R-K-I-N-S. And my address --

8 ALJ SEE: Go ahead.

9 MS. PERKINS: 676 Lancaster, Avenue,
10 Reynoldsburg.

11 ALJ SEE: And do you live or work in the
12 project area?

13 MS. PERKINS: I work.

14 ALJ SEE: Okay.

15 MS. PERKINS: Good evening. I'm Kasey
16 Perkins, superintendent of Southwest Licking Schools.
17 The Southwest Licking School District began
18 operations on September 19, 1953, after a
19 consolidation of the Etna, Kirkersville and Pataskala
20 school districts, approved by voters in all three
21 districts. It was fully operational by 1954 and is
22 the first district of its type in Licking County.

23 Our current focus in the growing district
24 is centered around the improvement of curricula and

1 teacher education in all buildings while the planning
2 for additional educational space, as our older
3 buildings exceed capacity. It is difficult to plan
4 for additional programs and space as school districts
5 are reliant on local property taxes, which fluctuate
6 year after year. Our district is also a capped
7 district with our funding, meaning we do not see
8 additional funds from the State with our growth.

9 We were pleased when Licking County
10 commissioners approved a \$9,000 per megawatt PILOT
11 agreement for the project. If the project goes
12 forward, the approximate annual revenues to the
13 Southwest Licking Schools would be \$445,000 every
14 year for the life of the project. These revenues
15 would help with the facility improvements
16 tremendously.

17 With the PILOT revenue, we will have the
18 opportunity to plan for improvements and to meet the
19 needs over time. This sustained revenue will
20 improve -- will provide important resources to our
21 district and allow us to feel confident as we budget
22 year after year. We look forward to seeing this
23 project move forward. And thank you for your
24 consideration.

1 ALJ SEE: Any cross-examination for this
2 witness?

3 MR. BORCHERS: No, Your Honor.

4 ALJ SEE: Thank you.

5 William Mooney.

6 MR. MUNCY: Muncy.

7 (Witness sworn.)

8 ALJ SEE: Please state and spell your name
9 for the record.

10 MR. MUNCY: William M. Muncy, M-U-N-C-Y.
11 6487 Watkins Road, Pataskala, Ohio, 43062.

12 ALJ SEE: And, Mr. Muncy, do you live or
13 work in the project area?

14 MR. MUNCY: I'm five football fields down
15 from it, so I don't know if I am or not.

16 ALJ SEE: Do you reside in Harrison
17 Township?

18 MR. MUNCY: Yes, ma'am, I do.

19 ALJ SEE: Go ahead with your testimony.

20 MR. MUNCY: I'm pissed.

21 When I moved out here as a child, my dog
22 could go out on the road and fall asleep. Right?
23 It's a gravel road. Now it takes five minutes to get
24 out of my driveway sometimes.

1 I'm not all big on this growth stuff, let
2 alone driving home from, you know, doing construction
3 jobs, what have you. I'm almost home. There's
4 cornfields on the left. There's cornfields on the
5 right. And then seeing, "What the hell is this, and
6 what the hell is that? I'm almost home?" That's
7 disgusting.

8 On top of that, growing up, my free time
9 was spent in the woods, in the creeks, you know, all
10 around my little area there. You think I can go out
11 and just go shoot squirrel or deer or what have you?
12 And you got people building stuff or something might
13 break or whatever.

14 I mean, so are you going to cut off all
15 hunting in that area now? Is all hunting cut off in
16 that area because a bullet might come over and
17 ricochet some very valuable equipment? That's a very
18 real thing, because that's how we grow up out here.
19 We're not about being Columbus. We're about being
20 country. And that's what gets my goat.

21 Everybody wants to make us the new
22 Columbus, the new Whitehall, the whatever. No. I
23 want to keep us the old Pataskala. No. A lot this
24 new stuff, whatever.

1 And as far as these schools and all that,
2 they don't teach FFA no more. You get a boy out of
3 school, he can't read the tape measure. I'm just a
4 laborer. I'm not --

5 No. I don't see no benefit at all since I
6 got out of the military and fought two different
7 countries. And our whole system is going downhill,
8 and I think we're going the wrong direction. And
9 that's all I got to say about that.

10 ALJ SEE: Any cross for this witness?

11 MR. BORCHERS: No, Your Honor.

12 ALJ SEE: Thank you, Mr. Muncy.

13 The next witness is Steve Holloway.

14 (Witness sworn.)

15 ALJ SEE: Please state and spell your name
16 for the record.

17 MR. HOLLOWAY: Steve Holloway,
18 H-O-L-L-O-W-A-Y.

19 ALJ SEE: And your address, sir?

20 MR. HOLLOWAY: 11047 York Road.

21 ALJ SEE: And do you live or work in the
22 project area or live in Harrison Township?

23 MR. HOLLOWAY: I live within four miles
24 away from the site.

1 ALJ SEE: So you reside in Harrison
2 Township?

3 MR. HOLLOWAY: Etna Township just -- Yeah.

4 ALJ SEE: Etna.

5 MR. HOLLOWAY: Yes.

6 ALJ SEE: Thank you. Go ahead with your
7 testimony.

8 MR. HOLLOWAY: Thank you. And just to be
9 transparent, I'm a member of your Licking County
10 Planning Commission; but I'm here as resident. I
11 don't speak for Licking County. But some of you guys
12 might recognize me. I didn't want to -- I wanted to
13 make sure that's out there.

14 The other thing I have is the largest
15 solar system -- residential solar system in Licking
16 County. I installed it about eight years ago, so I
17 know a little bit about solar, more than some and
18 probably just enough to be dangerous to these guys.

19 And solar is good. But it's also
20 about -- it's also about finances. That's what I
21 did. It's a ten year investment before I'll even see
22 my first dollar. But I'm planning on saving money,
23 so in that the sense it's a good thing. But at some
24 point, finances will come into it because -- I

1 appreciate what the other gentleman said, is that
2 there is a life to these solar panels structurally,
3 but also technologically, because 30 years from now
4 these solar panels might be obsolete.

5 And the other thing is that these guys
6 might go out of business. So what we're left with is
7 these solar fields. I've done all the research
8 because of what I wanted to do. There's a lot of
9 money to do this, so I did a lot of research. And
10 there are some solar fields out there. There's some
11 good ones, and then there's some bad ones. Some bad
12 things have happened.

13 And California is kind of where all this
14 started. Daggett, California, and Ivanpah,
15 California, if you go and research those, there's two
16 solar fields out there that are no longer solar
17 fields. They're gone.

18 And you ought to see the pictures. One is
19 almost like a desert. There's strewn parts all over.
20 The other one is solar panels broken, falling apart.
21 Everything is just abandoned. It actually ruined --
22 the one in Daggett ruined the town because they said
23 it was going to bring jobs and whatnot.

24 So there is a concern environmentally, and

1 that's what you were talking about. We're talking
2 about environmental. I'm not talking about the
3 environment today. I'm talking about 30 years from
4 now, not in our lifetime. But as that gentleman said
5 over there, his grandkids, that's what I'm concerned
6 about.

7 So I don't want to bring up the problem
8 without offering a solution. And this is what I
9 would like you to consider. I would like you to
10 consider the cleanup costs of this field, looking 30
11 years down the road. I don't know what that is going
12 to be. It could be \$10 million.

13 Whatever it is, find out what that is and
14 assess that to this project over the next 25, 30
15 years, whether they're paying that to us in
16 increments or it's in a bond or something like that
17 so that when these panels are no longer generating
18 electricity, technology has made them obsolete or
19 these guys go out of business that we, as a county
20 and as a community, have a way of cleaning this up,
21 because certainly we're not going to have the money
22 to do it on our own. They should be making enough
23 money that they could put something -- just like a
24 mortgage, put together payments, put together money

1 over a 30 year period to cover the cleanup.

2 I would really like for you to consider
3 doing that on this project to protect pretty much
4 what you've heard here. I think most everybody is
5 talking about is the future. Let's protect this
6 community, protect these people and their families.
7 Give us a way to clean this up if we need to do it.
8 Thank you.

9 ALJ SEE: Any cross for this witness?

10 MR. BORCHERS: No.

11 ALJ SEE: Thank you.

12 Ashley Campbell.

13 (Witness sworn.)

14 ALJ SEE: Please state and spell your name
15 for the record. Provide us your address and state
16 whether or not you live or work in Harrison Township
17 or the project area.

18 MS. CAMPBELL: My name is Ashley Campbell.
19 I live at 954 Hillgail Circle, Pataskala, Ohio. I
20 reside in Harrison Township, but I'm also the
21 president of a nonprofit that is also in Harrison
22 Township, so both in the project.

23 ALJ SEE: Okay.

24 MS. CAMPBELL: I'm here tonight to offer

1 my support for the Union Ridge Solar project in
2 Licking County. One of the many reasons I support
3 this project is because I have already seen the
4 positive impact that Union Ridge has on our local
5 community. I'm the president of the board of
6 directors for Beechwood Trails Park & Pool, a local
7 pool that plays an important social and community
8 role in Pataskala and Harrison Township.

9 I have personally worked with the Union
10 Ridge project team, which partnered with us earlier
11 this spring. Union Ridge made a contribution to make
12 pool improvements. Just this year the pool expended
13 11,000 in repairs and 20,000 in equipment, like
14 installing steps into the pool, which allows safer
15 access for elderly and children.

16 We also purchased new mechanical equipment
17 that are imperative for operations and for the Health
18 Department. The children of Harrison Township have
19 had the best summer they've had in years at the pool.

20 The solar company has been a fantastic
21 partner through the spring and summer. They seem
22 pleased to know that their donation would be used to
23 benefit the community and its residents. When I met
24 with them in person this spring for a tour of our

1 facility, they seemed eager to engage the community,
2 and we've actually had a banner at our facility all
3 summer to support them.

4 I truly believe the community partnership
5 works like this. It's collaborative and supportive
6 and takes several groups to be successful,
7 volunteers, township trustees and companies all
8 working together. I am eager for Beechwood Trails
9 and Union Ridge to continue their partnership for
10 years to come. Thank you.

11 ALJ SEE: Any cross-examination for this
12 witness?

13 MR. BORCHERS: No, Your Honor.

14 ALJ SEE: Thank you, Ms. Campbell.

15 Michael Nicholas.

16 (Witness sworn.)

17 ALJ SEE: Please state and spell your name
18 for the record and give us your address.

19 MR. NICHOLAS: It's Michael Nicholas,
20 N-I-C-H-O-L-A-S.

21 ALJ SEE: Sir, I'm going to need to you
22 grab the mic so the people in the back can hear you.

23 MR. NICHOLAS: I live at 68 Lawrin Court
24 in Pataskala, Ohio, 43062. And I am a resident of

1 Harrison Township.

2 ALJ SEE: Go ahead with your testimony.

3 MR. NICHOLAS: Okay. Well, my name is
4 Mike Nicholas, and I'm a volunteer for the Beechwood
5 Trails Park & Pool. And I'm here to offer my support
6 for the Union Ridge Solar project. For me, community
7 and partnership is about behaviors and actions. Last
8 year we communicated with over 50 companies to share
9 our story at Beechwood Trails Park & Pool. Many of
10 the companies never even responded, even after
11 several additional requests for open dialogue for
12 information.

13 Union Ridge was the only company to
14 respond within 48 hours and were interested in
15 learning more about our project, about us and our
16 future. They immediately scheduled a Zoom meeting to
17 learn more about our status and our strategic
18 planning. They reviewed all of our social media web
19 pages and the information we provided.

20 The impressive part was they were prepared
21 to have partnering conversations. They asked great
22 questions. They offered personal experiences and
23 ideas to help us.

24 After listening to our plans, they

1 scheduled a face-to-face visit in our facility. We
2 toured the pool, the event room and the park. We
3 shared our progress and our aspirations. Their
4 actions made us feel valued and appreciated. Kelly,
5 Jen and the Union Ridge team have kept every promise.
6 They've answered every email, and they've shared
7 insights whenever we've asked.

8 This year we had many great sponsors,
9 staff and volunteers; and our community was very
10 appreciative. Early this spring Union Ridge became a
11 2021 platinum sponsor at a critical time for us to
12 help us make the right investments in our facility to
13 have a successful year. Our community directly
14 benefited from this new relationship with Union Ridge
15 Solar. And in my opinion, this is how partnerships
16 work. Through these actions and behaviors, Solar
17 Ridge has earned our trust and respect at the park.
18 Thank you.

19 ALJ SEE: Any cross, Mr. Borchers?

20 MR. BORCHERS: No, Your Honor.

21 ALJ SEE: Thank you.

22 Don Hammond.

23 MR. HAMMOND: It's Dan.

24 ALJ SEE: Dan. Sorry. And these are your

1 exhibits?

2 MR. HAMMOND: Yes.

3 (Witness sworn.)

4 ALJ SEE: Please state and spell your name
5 for the record.

6 MR. HAMMOND: My name is Dan Hammond,
7 D-A-N, H-A-M-M-O-N-D.

8 ALJ SEE: Your address?

9 MR. HAMMOND: I live at 129 Covington
10 Lane, Pataskala, Ohio, 43062.

11 ALJ SEE: Do you live or work in the
12 project area?

13 MR. HAMMOND: I live there.

14 ALJ SEE: You live in Harrison Township?

15 MR. HAMMOND: Yes.

16 ALJ SEE: Okay. And these are your
17 exhibits?

18 MR. HAMMOND: Yes.

19 ALJ SEE: What I have here before me is a
20 copy of what you have before you; is that correct?

21 MR. HAMMOND: Yes.

22 ALJ SEE: Thank you. Go ahead with your
23 testimony.

24 MR. HAMMOND: All right. So my name is

1 Dan Hammond. Here's my map. And I live actually
2 right here. And I just want everyone to know I'm
3 against putting this solar field right here in my
4 neighborhood. I want to share some reasons why.

5 So I did like most people. Most people
6 that don't know about solar fields, what do you do,
7 you Google it, right? And so when I Googled it, some
8 things came up. And I think a lot of people brought
9 this to a point.

10 And so the solar panels only going to last
11 25 to 30 years. They're filled with toxic materials.
12 And 80 percent of the solar panels that have been
13 manufactured to this date are from China. So we're
14 virtually giving a bunch of money to China.

15 My background is in the electrical
16 engineering, so then my next thought process was:
17 Well, is it even feasible to put solar energy in
18 Ohio? I mean, look. It's raining right now.
19 Anybody ever been sunburnt in the middle of winter?
20 I haven't.

21 So the next thing I did was I pulled up a
22 map. And this shows the solar energy in the United
23 States. And as you can see, it looks like Florida,
24 it looks like Texas, Arizona, these are places to put

1 solar. You can see that Ohio is like a blue color on
2 this map. Blue is indicating that there's less solar
3 energy.

4 Next question I had was: These solar
5 panels -- So they release this picture, which I --
6 the picture looks horrible. This picture here shows
7 the rotating solar panels. These rotating panels are
8 15 feet tall -- or could be up to 15 feet tall. So
9 this is right at the end of my road.

10 And I kind of want to talk a little bit
11 about the way real quick that I was notified about
12 this. And so there's some people that live, like --
13 in my original picture back here, the people that
14 live in these four houses, those four houses, they
15 received letters about the solar field. The rest of
16 these houses, this entire community was not notified.
17 We were notified through Facebook. That's the only
18 way we found out about this.

19 My next concern is decreased property
20 value. And so as you can see, like, in 2019, I built
21 a beautiful deck. This is my beautiful deck. This
22 is where my kids play. I see beautiful sunsets every
23 night.

24 This is a place of glory. This is where

1 it's all at. This is my dream. So this is really
2 rough to think that that's going to change.

3 I'd like to make my next point. My next
4 point people brought up earlier. I did a little
5 research. So what does this look like? So these are
6 buildings owned by Amazon actually in the area. Some
7 of these are only a couple miles away. They got
8 these massive rooftops, massive, massive buildings.
9 Do you see any solar panels on their roof?

10 MR. MUNCY: No.

11 MR. HAMMOND: Do you see this down here at
12 the bottom? I got, "What does the homeowner do?"
13 The homeowner wants solar, they put the panels on the
14 roof. I ask these large companies who want to put
15 solar panels in my backyard, put them on the roof of
16 your facilities first. That's where you should be
17 putting them.

18 Next point I'd like to make is: I think
19 they realized that big companies were taking
20 advantage of people. And you can see Mike DeWine
21 right there. He signed Senate Bill 52. Now, this
22 project was excluded from that. It does not have to
23 follow these regulations. But you can see that
24 Senate Bill 52 is supposed to protect people like me,

1 people like you. It's supposed to protect us.

2 They realized there was a problem. People
3 were building solar panels in people's backyards.
4 They're not building solar panels in big fields where
5 nobody is looking at them. It's in my backyard.
6 It's in your backyard.

7 And so Senate Bill 52, what it does, it
8 gives the county commissioner more oversight. It
9 restricts certain areas, areas that would be like my
10 backyard.

11 They have to submit a decommissioning
12 plan. And so I haven't seen a decommissioning plan.
13 But I can tell you that these solar panels are very
14 toxic. Are they going to end up in our landfills?
15 Are they going to poison our water 30 years from now?
16 I don't know.

17 So I ask people to really consider that
18 they're not putting these solar fields -- they're not
19 putting them in big fields where you can see them.
20 They're putting them in my backyard. Thank you.

21 ALJ SEE: Mr. Hammond?

22 Is there any cross-examination for this
23 witness?

24 MR. BORCHERS: No, Your Honor. Thank you.

1 ALJ SEE: Are there -- Mr. Hammond, is
2 that an extra copy of your reference exhibits?

3 MR. HAMMOND: It is.

4 ALJ SEE: I had put your name on each one
5 and numbered them so it can be attached to the
6 transcript. And may I ask -- If that's an extra, may
7 I also have that one?

8 MR. HAMMOND: You may. I didn't think
9 that you would have a projector tonight, so I printed
10 them out.

11 ALJ SEE: You were well prepared. Thank
12 you.

13 Valerie Hans.

14 MS. HANS: Hi. I'm Valerie Hans.

15 ALJ SEE: I need you to raise your right
16 hand. And just so all of you know, Ms. Hans has been
17 very helpful in helping us secure this facility so
18 that you could come here and offer your testimony
19 tonight. So thank you very much.

20 MS. HANS: Thank you.

21 ALJ SEE:

22 (Witness sworn.)

23 ALJ SEE: Please state and spell your name
24 for the record.

1 MS. HANS: My name is Valerie Hans,
2 V-A-L-E-R-I-E, H-A-N-S.

3 ALJ SEE: Please give us your address.

4 MS. HANS: My address is 5600 York Road
5 Southwest, Pataskala, Ohio.

6 ALJ SEE: And do you live or work in the
7 project area?

8 MS. HANS: I live and work in the project
9 area.

10 ALJ SEE: Okay. Go ahead with your
11 testimony.

12 MS. HANS: Hello. I just wanted to make
13 the -- make the board aware of something. I work for
14 Harrison Township as the zoning inspector. And I've
15 read through -- obviously I've read through all the
16 paperwork that has come out on Union Ridge Solar.
17 They've been very willing to work with us.

18 However, I do have a couple of questions
19 about the landscaping and buffering. And this
20 pertains especially to -- I know we have residents
21 who, although they may not be affected enough to
22 where they received the letters, they are definitely
23 affected.

24 And our Article 10.17 of the Harrison

1 Township Resolution and zoning code states that
2 plantings must be at least six feet high at time of
3 planting; they must be at least 70 percent opaque at
4 the time of planting. And they obviously must have a
5 plan in place to replace things if they do not
6 survive.

7 When I looked at some of the plans that
8 I've looked over, it appears that there's a very good
9 depiction of what the project area looks like before
10 the solar panels are put into place, after the solar
11 panels are put into place and then five to seven
12 years down the road. But what that picture does not
13 show is what does the landscaping look like at time
14 of planting. And I think that's something that's an
15 unknown. I think that makes a lot of folks a little
16 nervous about that right now.

17 I would like to see something that shows
18 that those plantings reflect what our code requires,
19 that they have to be at least six feet in height and
20 at least 70 percent opaque during the winter months.

21 ALJ SEE: Ms. Hans, could you repeat that
22 resolution number for me?

23 MS. HANS: Yes. It is Harrison Township
24 Zoning Code Article 10.17.

1 ALJ SEE: Thank you.

2 Any cross-examination for Ms. Hans?

3 MR. BORCHERS: No, Your Honor.

4 ALJ SEE: Thank you very much.

5 MS. HANS: Thank you. Have a good
6 evening.

7 ALJ SEE: Eric Archer is the next witness.
8 (Witness sworn.)

9 ALJ SEE: Please state and spell your name
10 for the record and provide us your address.

11 MR. ARCHER: Eric Archer. 7097 Watkins
12 Road Southwest, Pataskala.

13 ALJ SEE: And do you live or work in the
14 project area?

15 MR. ARCHER: I live right next to it.

16 ALJ SEE: Go ahead with your testimony.

17 MR. ARCHER: I work in the electric
18 industry. And one of the only, like, big benefits I
19 see to it is the more I see the government shut down
20 all the coal and nuclear generation, we're more and
21 more likely to be like California where they lose
22 power and they do normal brownouts every day. Having
23 local generation will help our community still have
24 power, not rely on personal generators and stuff like

1 that. And it's one of the big benefits that I'm
2 seeing for it.

3 This solar, you're only get power during
4 the day, but -- There's no backup storage or
5 anything. But just watching the Weather Channel
6 today with all the disasters in Louisiana, and that's
7 what they've said. If they had localized generation,
8 they said the two units that are being built down
9 there, 600 megawatts, that could have provided
10 critical infrastructure. Like, if we lose our big
11 power sources, the little bit that this one is going
12 to put out could still help our area.

13 ALJ SEE: Is that --

14 MR. ARCHER: That's it.

15 ALJ SEE: Any cross-examination for this
16 witness?

17 MR. BORCHERS: No, Your Honor.

18 ALJ SEE: Thank you, Mr. Archer.

19 Heather Minor; is that correct?

20 MS. MINOR: Yep.

21 (Witness sworn.)

22 ALJ SEE: Please state and spell your name
23 for the record and provide us your address.

24 MS. MINOR: Heather Minor. 372 Granville

1 Street, Newark, Ohio, 43055.

2 ALJ SEE: Is that in the -- in Harrison
3 Township?

4 MS. MINOR: Licking County.

5 ALJ SEE: It's in Licking County. Do you
6 reside or work in the county?

7 MS. MINOR: I do both.

8 ALJ SEE: Thank you. Go ahead.

9 MS. MINOR: Good evening. My name is
10 Heather Minor, and I live in Newark. I moved to
11 Licking County from Columbus because I was looking
12 for a slower pace. I fell in love with our home and
13 the current revitalization of the Licking County
14 area. As a licensed Realtor, I understand the value
15 of increased economic opportunity and what that means
16 for a stable housing market.

17 The Union Ridge Solar project is
18 partnering with Amazon to supply their power here
19 locally. Amazon is growing and expanding, and with
20 that comes job opportunities and, in turn, a need for
21 a growing housing market.

22 Additionally, projects like Union Ridge
23 contribute significantly to our schools and
24 government services. This also helps to additionally

1 improve the housing market and overall quality of
2 life.

3 Lastly, clean energy projects contribute
4 to clean air and reduce harmful carbon emissions.
5 Thank you for the opportunity to testify here
6 tonight.

7 ALJ SEE: Thank you.

8 Any cross-examination for this witness?

9 MR. BORCHERS: No, Your Honor.

10 ALJ SEE: Thank you, Ms. Minor.

11 The next witness is Jesse Henry.

12 (Witness sworn.)

13 ALJ SEE: Please state and spell your name
14 for the record.

15 MR. HENRY: Jesse Henry, J-E-S-S-E,
16 H-E-N-R-Y.

17 ALJ SEE: Please provide us your address.

18 MR. HENRY: 372 Granville Street, Newark,
19 Ohio, 43055.

20 ALJ SEE: And do you live or work in the
21 project area?

22 MR. HENRY: I do not. I live in Newark,
23 in Licking County.

24 ALJ SEE: Okay. Thank you.

1 MR. HENRY: My name is Jesse. And I'm
2 happy to be speaking today in support of the Union
3 Ridge Solar project being built in Harrison Township.
4 Heather and I moved here to get out of Columbus. We
5 found a comfort here in the community and in Newark,
6 starting a new life.

7 Having been a music teacher for 20 years,
8 I know first-hand how important it is that schools
9 have proper funding to ensure programs like music and
10 the arts to help children grow and learn. The Union
11 Ridge Solar project is going to bring \$750,000
12 annually to the local schools, township and the
13 county. That is huge for our kids and for the
14 programs that don't get as much attention like the
15 arts.

16 With the greater Newark area growing
17 daily, this revenue is going to make a huge
18 difference in helping expand the reach of our
19 community. I'm happy to call Licking County home and
20 happy to see us all work together towards a clean
21 energy future.

22 ALJ SEE: Mr. Henry, Ms. Minor, I noticed
23 that you had statements you were reading from. If
24 you don't mind, if you would leave a copy of your

1 statement so it could be provided to the court
2 reporter. It's just for her reference.

3 I'm assuming there's no cross for
4 Mr. Henry.

5 MR. BORCHERS: Correct, Your Honor. No
6 cross.

7 ALJ SEE: The next witness is Kevin
8 Gordon. Kevin Gordon.

9 (Witness sworn.)

10 ALJ SEE: Please state and spell your name
11 for the record.

12 MR. GORDON: My name is Kevin Gordon,
13 K-E-V-I-N, G-O-R-D-O-N.

14 ALJ SEE: State your address.

15 MR. GORDON: 7408 York Road, Pataskala,
16 43062.

17 ALJ SEE: Do you live in Harrison
18 Township?

19 MR. GORDON: That's correct.

20 ALJ SEE: Okay. Do I live in the project
21 area?

22 MR. GORDON: Yes. I do.

23 ALJ SEE: Okay. Go ahead with your
24 testimony.

1 MR. GORDON: Good evening. So my name is
2 Kevin Gordon. I've lived in Harrison Township for
3 over 30 years now. I graduated from Watkins. That's
4 where I met my wife. And we got married, and I
5 started my business here, which I'm in 12 years now.
6 This community has, you know, brought me to where I'm
7 at. I really care about the community.

8 With that being said, I'm here tonight to
9 voice my concerns for not just our community, for all
10 other communities as well. I'm not against the fact
11 of having solar directly behind my property. I
12 believe landowners have the right to do what they
13 want with their land. My concerns are not esthetics
14 and the change of view from my back porch. My
15 concerns are known unknowns and the unknown unknowns
16 for the community, the township and the county. For
17 these reasons, I cannot be on board with the solar
18 fields currently.

19 It was stated by the Licking County
20 commissioner in the Newark Advocate, the article was
21 published on the 26th of February 2021, that "There
22 was no aspect of this that was negative." I don't
23 know if this is true or not. But I do know I have
24 several concerns.

1 Is Union Ridge fully funding this project
2 on their own? Is any part of government money
3 assisting Union Ridge in constructing this project?
4 Is there a tax credit if Union Ridge -- Union Ridge
5 for completing the project by the end of 2022? Does
6 making this entire process go smooth and quick for
7 Union Ridge without resistance allow them to better
8 qualify for this tax credit? This raises questions
9 and concerns for me. Why would you need to expedite
10 a project of this size and complexity?

11 My first concern is: What does the future
12 look like for our schools, our parks, our fire
13 department, et cetera, after taking this in lieu of
14 tax money? Does the community have a thought process
15 of: If these organizations are making this money
16 that's being paid to them, why do they need another
17 levy? Is this going to be hard for the community to
18 vote for another levy? Are levies going to be harder
19 to pass now? These are thoughts that all community
20 members and leaders should have.

21 Every positive project, no matter what,
22 comes with a baggage of potential negatives. The
23 community is growing, and I don't want to see
24 the -- I don't want to see the community miss out on

1 future income because we took a lump sum of money for
2 a solar field to be built. I don't feel this project
3 should be rushed without looking at the whole
4 picture.

5 My next concern is: Will there be a
6 subsidy to our electric bill to cover any additional
7 costs created by these facilities into the future? I
8 think this question is extremely hard to answer
9 because nobody can predict the future, and I don't
10 think anybody in this room right now can promise you
11 that there will not be a subsidy in the future.

12 And I ask Union Ridge to guarantee us, as
13 a community, that no matter what will happen in the
14 future, consumer charges for the entire lifespan of
15 this major energy infrastructure does not come back
16 us to.

17 Another concern is property values. Will
18 property values around this infrastructure reduce?
19 Will they stay the same? Will they drop during the
20 first year of construction? Will they start to
21 decline years from now? Again, I don't think anybody
22 in this room really, truly has the answer to that and
23 what it looks like for a major power facility, and
24 that's what concerns me.

1 Tied to this question is what
2 accountability does Union Ridge have to maintain the
3 perimeter of these facilities to keep them remaining
4 pleasant for our community, and who enforces those?
5 Who can call them up and tell them and hold them to a
6 standard, and who decides whether it's pleasant or
7 abrasive?

8 My last question concerning our community
9 is the fact that the solar field is in our township.
10 If we will be housing this major facility, why will
11 our township get such little proceeds from this from
12 in lieu of taxes payout? Pretty sure there was talk
13 in the Newark Advocate that the county commissioners
14 might kick back some extra money for our township
15 because we're hosting this facility. Not sure if
16 this is a question for the Siting Board or for the
17 Licking County commissioners. But this was also
18 published in the Newark Advocate on the 26th of
19 February, 2021.

20 And lastly, if this green energy project
21 is so great for our community, why can't we as
22 residents, our schools, our public buildings purchase
23 this energy and utilize it for ourselves?

24 In conclusion, I think my biggest concerns

1 are the unknown unknowns beyond the known unknowns.
2 What does this actually look like in the future for
3 our community, bringing this major generation
4 facility into our township? I stand with hesitation
5 to support this project because I do not think seven
6 months from when we were notified is long enough for
7 the community to fully grasp the intensity of this
8 project and any negative long-term effects that could
9 come with it.

10 I also urge the Ohio Power Siting Board do
11 carefully review this project, take no shortcuts and
12 take your time on your decision and don't rush it
13 just to make a deadline for a tax credit that could
14 happen in 2022. Thank you for your time. Thank you.
15 And I would -- Can I add one more --

16 ALJ SEE: Go ahead.

17 MR. GORDON: -- that I -- So this question
18 came up to me after watching everybody. The problem
19 I have is the people that stand up and expose their
20 feelings for having this project come to our
21 community, every single one of those people are
22 receiving money from Union Ridge. My check and
23 balance to that is: I encourage the superintendent
24 of the schools, the township trustees, the

1 commissioners, everybody go and take a look at other
2 communities, making sure you're calling them, making
3 sure that existing facilities that are up, everything
4 is working out. And maybe you guys have done that,
5 and that's why you're standing up here talking. But
6 if you're standing up here talking just because
7 you're receiving money, I -- I don't believe in that.
8 And that's all I have to say.

9 ALJ SEE: Any cross for this witness?

10 MR. BORCHERS: No, Your Honor.

11 ALJ SEE: Thank you, sir.

12 The next witness is Matt Langel.

13 MR. LANGEL: You got it right.

14 (Witness sworn.)

15 MR. LANGEL: As accurate as possible, yes.

16 ALJ SEE: Let me try that again.

17 (Witness sworn.)

18 MR. LANGEL: Yes.

19 ALJ SEE: Could you state and spell your
20 name for the record.

21 MR. LANGEL: Sure. Matt Langel, M-A-T-T,
22 L-A-N-G-E-L. Address is 7749 Blacks Road, Pataskala,
23 Ohio, 43062.

24 ALJ SEE: And do you live or work in

1 Harrison Township?

2 MR. LANGEL: I live in Harrison Township.

3 ALJ SEE: Okay.

4 MR. LANGEL: Sometimes work there as well.

5 ALJ SEE: Go ahead with your testimony.

6 MR. LANGEL: Sure. So as I understand it,
7 Union Ridge is a private company that is proposing to
8 build the solar farm. What I would like to talk
9 directly towards the Siting Board tonight is: There
10 is Ohio Revised Code that requires a certain
11 percentage of not only renewable energy in the state
12 of Ohio, but also specifically solar energy in the
13 state of Ohio. I believe, if I recall correctly,
14 that it's 1 percent by 2026 directly related to solar
15 powered generation.

16 So my question is that -- I guess my
17 question is situated around customer/consumer energy
18 costs. And is there any commitment from the Ohio
19 Power Siting Board or, for that matter, the State of
20 Ohio, that electric grids, in fact, will not be
21 affected by this alternative energy, especially in
22 our direct community? There are multiple articles
23 from other parts of the country where the local
24 consumer eventually starts seeing consumption

1 increases for the operation and maintenance of a
2 facility like this, and those consumer costs increase
3 substantially. That would make all of the generous
4 donations and school monies seem much less appealing.

5 So my question is: Is there any
6 commitment, is there any factual information that
7 goes out to the community that says that 20 years
8 from now when the operations and maintenance of this
9 facility become substantially higher, that our
10 consumer costs in terms of our energy bill are not
11 going to be affected? That's all I've got. Thanks.

12 ALJ SEE: Okay. Thank you. Any
13 cross-examination for this witness?

14 MR. BORCHERS: No, Your Honor.

15 ALJ SEE: Thank you, Mr. Langel.

16 Derek Jones. Did I get the last name
17 right?

18 MR. JONES: Correct.

19 (Witness sworn.).

20 ALJ SEE: Please state and spell your name
21 for the record.

22 MR. JONES: The first name is Derek,
23 D-E-R-E-K. Last name Jones, J-O-N-E-S.

24 ALJ SEE: Provide us your address.

1 MR. JONES: Address is 7151 Watkins Road
2 Southwest, Pataskala, Ohio, 43062.

3 ALJ SEE: And do you live or work in the
4 project area?

5 MR. JONES: I reside in Harrison Township
6 and Licking County.

7 ALJ SEE: Go ahead with your testimony.

8 MR. JONES: Good evening, folks. I
9 apologize. I don't have a prepared a speech. I
10 intended actually on not saying anything. But
11 feelings have gotten to me, and just I feel like I
12 need to say it.

13 I don't have anything against solar
14 energy. I like to think I'm a good old red-blooded
15 American. And I can't stop anything from doing
16 something that they want on their own property. That
17 being said, I recently moved back to Pataskala. I
18 lived here when I was a young man, going through
19 middle school and high school at Watkins Memorial
20 just two miles from my home currently.

21 The property that I recently purchased,
22 there is -- there are two sides of my property that
23 will be directly facing the Union Ridge project.
24 And, in fact, my bedroom window is less than 50 feet

1 from my property line where I will be staring
2 directly at the solar panels through the lovely
3 shrubbery that they plan on doing.

4 The folks at Union Ridge have been very
5 responsive, very easy to talk to. I have nothing but
6 respect for the folks that I have communicated with
7 about this project.

8 I do have some very strong opinions
9 against the project. A lot of it is the esthetics.
10 I purchased my home staring out at the field directly
11 next to my home. I had intentions of living in the
12 home that I have. Signed a 30-year mortgage. I'm
13 committed to this that property at this point.
14 There's no going back on that.

15 That being said, the property I purchased
16 during that process, at no point in time did the
17 previous owner or the real estate agent inform me of
18 this project happening directly next to my home. My
19 only guess to that, as I'm sure some of you guys can
20 imagine, is it would make it harder to sell.

21 They didn't put, you know, in the
22 advertisement "Soon to be next to a solar field."
23 Does that sound appealing to anybody? Does anybody
24 look at that as a value to their home? No.

1 I am committed to living in the property I
2 have now because if I were to sell it currently, I
3 would disclose that information to somebody, and I
4 know that I would not get the same value out of my
5 home that I just put into it.

6 I am currently making improvements into my
7 home. I just put \$8,000 worth of carpet in. I just
8 put \$3,000 worth of money into updating the pole barn
9 that's behind my house for electricity so I can have
10 lights and things. I'm glad to pay for that sort of
11 stuff. I'm trying to add value to my home.

12 I intended on moving to Licking County,
13 specifically to the school system that I used to
14 attend, because I wanted to provide that kind of a
15 lifestyle for my children that I enjoyed in
16 Pataskala. And most of my nights as a young man in
17 high school learning to drive on those roads in
18 Pataskala, I enjoyed driving through, staring at
19 cornfields, having a good time, enjoying the slow
20 country living.

21 I don't live in New York City for a
22 reason. I don't like the traffic. I don't want to
23 stare at highrise skyscrapers, things like that. I
24 listened to a young man who is part of the family

1 that owns that property directly next door to my
2 home. It sounds like it is a bother for them to
3 bring their equipment up here and farm that field. I
4 understand that. I would like the opportunity to
5 purchase the area immediately around my home. I
6 think that's a reasonable solution as to why I
7 shouldn't have to stare at that.

8 They want to sell the property to Union
9 Ridge for 30 years to do solar panel stuff. There's
10 about six acres directly around my home I would love
11 the opportunity to purchase, and I believe I have a
12 couple neighbors who would be willing to chip in on
13 that sort of thing. I think that that is a
14 reasonable solution for some of the folks who don't
15 want to stare at this.

16 I drive down 70 all the time, and I stare
17 at fields that line 70. I don't know about you guys.
18 But I'd rather drive down my road that I live on and
19 stare at a cornfield or something of that nature and
20 drive down the freeway and look at solar panels. All
21 we're looking at is billboards and blacktop anyways.
22 I don't understand why we can't look at alternative
23 places to put this particular solar panel field where
24 it would be less of a nuisance or less of a bother to

1 these folks.

2 The other concern I have is: Being a
3 homeowner on that property, there is going to be an
4 increase of traffic going down that road because of
5 the folks putting together this property. There's
6 going to be dust. There's going to be noise, things
7 like that. I understand that it's not long-term.
8 But it is something that I'm going to have to live
9 with on a daily basis.

10 I also, when learning about this project,
11 took it upon myself to drive two and a half hours
12 away to visit a -- the only place I could find that
13 had a solar field of any size that wasn't just a
14 standard homeowner. And I parked my truck as close
15 as I could get to that property, rolled my windows
16 down, turned the engine off and sat there.

17 It wasn't silent. There was a nice
18 "mmmmm" going on the whole time. I'm going to have
19 to listen to that every day.

20 There are folks that stood up here today
21 in support of Union Ridge. And I applaud that Union
22 Ridge is putting money into the community, updating
23 the pool, things like that. That's fantastic. This
24 project is a 30-year project. Did anybody hear them

1 say that they signed on to support that pool for 30
2 years?

3 MR. MUNCY: No.

4 MR. JONES: It's the immediate sale,
5 right, "Let's do the bright and shiny things. Let's
6 help them immediately." I haven't heard anybody say
7 anything about long-term commitment to the community
8 other than providing electricity, which, by the way,
9 I get no benefit of even though I get that in my
10 backyard right next door to me. Our prices aren't
11 dropping. My property value will.

12 My desire to live in my home will also
13 drop. I've decided the property -- The project is
14 supposed to be up and running by 2023 if I read the
15 timeline correctly. That gives me two years to enjoy
16 my home. I will find out if I can live with that
17 project next door to me. If not, I'm hoping that the
18 updates I do to my home make it so that I can walk
19 away from my house with nothing but my tail between
20 my legs and a little bit of loss of pride.

21 I -- I think that it's interesting
22 everybody who is in support of this project does not
23 have an address where it is directly behind them,
24 directly next door to them, directly outside of their

1 bedroom window. I think there should be some weight
2 to that. Those who would be directly affected by the
3 project should have a greater say in what's going on
4 than the small benefits going around.

5 I understand the solar company has
6 provided money to fix up the school or the pool or
7 what have you. I provide that money too, folks.

8 MR. MUNCY: Yes, sir.

9 MR. JONES: I work a lot of hours. I put
10 a lot of money into this community with my tax
11 dollars. I would like to have that treated with some
12 level of respect. It's great the solar company has
13 done that. I've been doing that and will continue to
14 do that for as long as I live in this area. And I
15 think that that has some weight to it.

16 I appreciate your time, folks. Hopefully
17 we can treat each other with respect. And no
18 disrespect to anybody here. It is just purely
19 something that we as homeowners are going to have to
20 live with in this area, and I don't think that there
21 is anything that can be done to outweigh the costs of
22 the negative effects that we're going to see
23 long-term in property values and the unfortunate site
24 that's going to be outside of our windows every day.

1 Thank you.

2 ALJ SEE: Any cross?

3 MR. BORCHERS: No cross.

4 ALJ SEE: Thank you.

5 That gentleman was the last witness that
6 had signed up to offer testimony tonight. At this
7 point, I'd like to know if there's anyone present who
8 wants to offer testimony that has not had the
9 opportunity to do so. With that --

10 MS. FOOR: I'd just like to make a
11 statement.

12 ALJ SEE: I need you to come forward.

13 MS. FOOR: I'll embarrass my husband, who
14 is a Harrison Township trustee.

15 (Witness sworn.)

16 ALJ SEE: Please state and spell your
17 name.

18 MS. FOOR: Susan Foor, S-U-S-A-N, F-O-O-R.

19 ALJ SEE: Please give us your address.

20 MS. FOOR: 9397 Wesleyan, W-E-S-L-E-Y-A-N,
21 Church Road Southwest, Pataskala.

22 ALJ SEE: And do you live or work in the
23 project area?

24 MS. FOOR: I don't either.

1 ALJ SEE: Do you live in Harrison
2 Township?

3 MS. FOOR: I do live in Harrison Township.

4 ALJ SEE: Okay. Go ahead with your
5 testimony.

6 MS. FOOR: Okay. What I'd like to say is
7 that I just spoke with my son, Randy Foor, who is an
8 Etna Township trustee. And in Etna Township, they
9 have Amazon, Google, several large manufacturing
10 areas. And they do not have whatever this solar
11 panel deal -- proposal is. There are no solar
12 panels.

13 So in order to bring industry in here,
14 Mr. Williams said something about solar panels, and I
15 don't think that holds water really. And that's all
16 I have to say.

17 ALJ SEE: Okay.

18 MR. MUNCY: It don't. Thank you.

19 ALJ SEE: Any cross-examination for
20 Ms. Foor?

21 MR. BORCHERS: No, Your Honor.

22 ALJ SEE: Thank you, ma'am.

23 Is there anybody else who didn't have an
24 opportunity to offer testimony that wishes to do so

1 now?

2 (No response.)

3 ALJ SEE: Thank you all very much for
4 coming out this evening. We appreciate Harrison
5 Township trustees allowing us to use to their
6 facility. Take care. The hearing is adjourned.

7 - - -

8 And, thereupon, the hearing was adjourned
9 at 7:40 p.m.

10 - - -

C-E-R-T-I-F-I-C-A-T-E

I do hereby certify that the foregoing is
a true, correct and complete written transcript of
the proceedings in this matter, taken by me on the
31st day of August, 2021, and transcribed from my
stenographic notes.



MARILYN K. MARTIN
Notary Public in and for the State of Ohio
and Registered Professional Reporter.

My Commission Expires October 15, 2021.

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