

Public comment for 17-0774-EL-BGN

From: Mathew Roberts [<mailto:mathew.c.roberts@gmail.com>]

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To: Puco ContactOPSB <contactopsb@puco.ohio.gov>

Subject: Comment on Case No. 17-0774-EL-BGN

This week, Tuesday, July 24, 2018, I attended an Ohio Power Siting Board (OPSB) meeting to learn about the Vinton Solar Farm project. I was pleased that the OPSB was present to allow for public input and that the representative from Invenergy, the Chicago-based developer of the project, was forthcoming and open about the process to the locals. As for me, I simply wanted to be a fly on the wall to listen.

Solar energy is a valuable technology that will provide homegrown, electric power generation with less atmosphere-warming gases and pollutants compared to other forms of power production. Even if you include the heavy metals and raw materials needed to construct a utility-scale solar facility, like the one being considered here in Vinton County, solar is a promising road with benefits that far outweigh the costs.

The Vinton Solar Farm project will have a capacity up to 125 megawatts (MW) that would include a large-scale advanced battery system of up to 42 MW. To translate into usable terms, this project could provide power for up to 25,000 American homes. According to Invenergy's fact sheet, 428 jobs will be created during the construction phase, providing \$452,000 to the Vinton County Local School District and \$93,000 to the Vinton County General Fund each year, and \$10.6 million will be earned by workers over the estimated 12 to 18-month timeline for construction. Seems like a pretty good deal that will provide ongoing community benefits and clean, renewable power for decades to come.

At the meeting, nearby property owners expressed just about every concern you can imagine when solar facilities come into a community. I'm glad they spoke up and provided their sworn testimony. Local government officials were concerned about a Road Use Maintenance Agreement (RUMA), and rightly so. If the construction process tears up the roads, then Invenergy should fix the problems, or improve the road conditions. Neighbors of the proposed project were concerned about the health of the area for wildlife and hunting, if the project would affect property values, if panel glare would ruin their daytime leisure or cause light pollution during nighttime stargazing, and if water resources would be safe.

These are all worthwhile concerns but are largely addressed in the "Staff Report of Investigation" created by Invenergy and submitted to OPSB for review. The fact remains that this solar project, if approved, will bring much more good than bad for the community. Renewable power production is a win for national security and the dangers of international energy exploration, it's a win for local tax benefits, it's a win for cleaner air by producing electricity with less fine particulates found in energy production that requires combustion and heat – these tiny pollutants have been shown to worsen health problems such as asthma and diabetes, so it's a big win for public health.

**I work for a nonprofit organization called UpGrade Ohio. We're based in Athens and we are a small but dedicated group actively exploring strategies to ensure that the Appalachian Ohio region can benefit from the booming clean energy economy.

Thanks,

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