Ohio Power Siting Board (OPSB) Case 19-1641-EL-BGN:
Ohio State University Combined Heat and Power Facility
Hearing June 30, 2020
NOTE: This testimony was emailed to: contactopsb@puc.state.oh.us on June 30, ,2020

COMMENTS/TESTIMONY by **Linda Sekura, Sustainability Specialist and Ecologist**, Maple Heights, Ohio, LSekura@aol.com. 216-598-0113

First, two main points:
1) The Ohio Power Siting Board should reject the proposed natural gas plant for Ohio State University (OSU), since Ohio law requires that the OPSB not allow construction and operation unless it provides the minimum adverse environmental impact (it does not), considering what else is available (and much is).

2) It is in OSU's best interests, including for their economic future, to reconsider their current plan, since it will result in a much larger carbon footprint and more ecological harm than they may be considering.

To explain my background: I am a lifetime Ohioan, with ten years of professional experience as a contractor at a federal agency, being recruited to assess the life cycle viability of projects, for both economic and environmental sustainability - comparing the alternatives, and providing guidance.*

My feedback saved the agency much time and funds, since based on my guidance, they did not pursue projects that would likely fail. At the time, billions of dollars in grants were offered for biomass projects, so I provided quite a bit of guidance in that area. But I also reviewed other energy concepts, and green alternatives for operations and maintenance. Also, for a bit more background before I get to the point…

During and after that time, I coordinated two collaborative projects: one for renewable hydrogen, and another that I conceived, to either provide a highly sustainable method to utilize biomass (by harvesting invasive biomass to restore a wetland), or to potentially indicate that bio-energy may not be a truly sustainable option - and may only be opportune if diverting waste from landfills.

The answer was the latter. One main reason for this conclusion was simple - with biomass and fossil fuels, there is the need for ongoing feedstock (fuel), and ongoing transport of that feedstock (also using fuel). So, how could this be the most viable choice, economically and environmentally? On the other hand, sun and wind (and storage), represent unlimited feedstock, with no freight.**

Shipping of natural gas may not mean trucking or fuel, but it does mean the building and maintenance of tens of thousands of miles of pipeline in Ohio alone, with more planned. These are, in effect, separate dedicated "roads" for natural gas alone - networks of pipelines that fragment Ohio's natural systems, resulting in habitat loss, which is the #1 driver of species extinction.

But, more to the point of carbon footprint, fragmenting these systems also degrades our natural carbon sinks of deep forests, soils and freshwater systems. Climate change cannot be addressed without sequestration, even if 100% renewable energy was in place right now. So we must protect these natural carbon sinks. Natural gas infrastructure instead degrades them.

Also, by increasing the demand for natural gas, OSU's carbon footprint would greatly increase, and well beyond OSU's borders. For example, natural gas hydraulic fracturing ("fracking") requires a certain grain

size of sand to be shipped (again shipping) across long distances. Each well requires about 300,000 to 4 million pounds of sand, and multiple trucks and trips to handle this heavy freight. Fracking also requires water resources, up to millions of gallons of water per well, forced underground.

Ohio State is a highly visible university, and ranked highly for academics, and would do well to take the lead , including in modeling sustainability leadership for students. Sustainable infrastructure experts are widely available, within the state and globally, and would provide free or inexpensive guidance, including for extreme efficiency and zero-carbon buildings to reduce power and heating/cooling demand.

All-electric is the best path to sustainable infrastructure, and one that will likely be forced upon us no matter what path we currently choose. For OSU to be investing instead in fossil fuel infrastructure should be of concern to its managers. Ohio's grid currently offers 100% renewable generation, or at the very least, that capability. Other states see Ohio as a prime region to build wind farms. With natural gas, Ohio and OSU will be left behind, while those who understand what Ohio has to offer take the lead.

Bottom line: I am asking that the OPSB and OSU please reconsider natural gas, and invest in all-electric energy-efficient infrastructure -- as should any organization wishing to sustain economically viable operations well into the future.

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* The agency had pulled me in for this work because of my unique background, with decades of field experience in ecosystems. a Master's in Environmental Science - and 20+ years of business experience (12 of that in management), and as a CPA and financial analyst. I quit the business career cold-turkey at age 42 to focus on the climate and water crisis, social equity and mass species extinction. So there I was.

** Hydrogen from electrolyzed local water, using renewable power to drive the process, is a good second choice. But it's still a feedstock with a related cost, although without shipping burdens.

Summary: Comments Testimony of Linda Sekura electronically filed by Ms. Mary E Fischer on behalf of Ohio Power Siting Board