

From: [Puco ContactOPSB](#)
To: [Puco Docketing](#)
Subject: public comment 21-0036-EL-BGN
Date: Wednesday, October 27, 2021 8:27:53 AM

Ohio Power Siting Board:

Thursday of this week, October 28, OPSB will hold a certificate hearing in the matter of Marion County Solar Project. I have stated my position before both written and verbal and wish to once again state my opposition for this application. The reasons that I am against the Marion County Solar project include my belief in the importance of farmland preservation, the construction of solar on farmland not being good use of the land, disruption of Marion County agriculture economy, out-of-town influence, and misleading information posted on the Marion County Solar facebook page.

Ohio taxpayers recognized the value of Ohio Farmland and in 2002 the tax-payer supported easement programs began. Since then over 540 farms totaling over 85,000 acres have been preserved through Ohio's Farmland Preservation Easement programs. We personally have preserved nearly 400 farmland acres in Marion County with a goal to preserve all of our owned farmland. The reasons are clear for Ohio to continue to seek to preserve farmland: 1) in the 50 years leading up to the year 2000, Ohio lost more than 6.9 million acres of farmland; 2) the loss of farmland goes beyond Ohio as reported by the Ohio Country Journal magazine in their article pointing out that from 2001-2016 over 11 million acres of agricultural land were paved over, converted or fragmented, and about 2000 acres of farm and ranchlands are developed PER DAY; 3) as stated on ODA's website, food and agriculture constitutes the states largest industry and provides employment to 1 in 7 Ohioans; 4) the Ohio Department of Agriculture states its commitment to maintaining Ohio's farming heritage and the growth of Ohio Agriculture; 5) the accumulative effect of leased land to solar does not contribute to maintaining our heritage or agriculture economic growth; 5) in a few short years, from the numbers I have been able to gather from OPSB's solar applications approved and in process, solar is converting over 47,000 acres of Ohio farmland; 6) Savion and many of its supporters are not from our community.

Marion County Solar is not the only solar project interested in Marion County agriculture land. We have received inquiries about leasing our farmland and there are other Marion County farm owners that have been contacted as well. When Marion County Solar tries to minimize their land use in our county by saying they will only develop .3% of land in Marion County, they are not the only game in town and that number will grow if OPSB continues to approve solar applications. Sarah Moser, Senior Development Manager for Savion informed me that of the 93 projects in their portfolio, 75% are sited on farmland. When asked if Savion avoided using farmland the response was "not necessarily." And according to Matthew Butler, Information Officer for OPSB, generally, solar applications are on farmland.

Marion County economy is largely based on the agricultural community. According to Marion County Community Profile on the Chamber of Commerce website, "Agriculture and diversified industries form the economic base of the Marion area. Approximately 80% of Marion County's land area is devoted to farming with corn, soybeans, hogs and dairy cattle as the principal products. Yet Savion states in their economic study their solar project is "a better land use on a purely economic basis than livestock or crops. This study contained in Savion's application devalues agriculture land-use in our county and the agriculture heritage of this community.

A number of Marion's industries reflect the importance of agriculture business to this community. And yet Savion, headquartered in another state, has made its presence in Marion County just since 2016 while many farm families in Marion County have been in the community for generations. Savion constantly points out at the end of the life of the project, the land will be returned to agriculture if the landowners wish. The loss of this farmland to solar and more to come will interrupt the agricultural resources and productivity of farmland in our community. Many Marion County businesses provide services to farmers for chemicals, fertilizer, parts, equipment, lumber , etc., and the loss of business due to solar in our county and surrounding counties will have an economic impact. Savion is trying to convince the people of Marion County that we need the tax revenue and jobs they will provide. After the construction phase is over, most of those jobs will be gone. I found the study completely one sided and disrespectful of the Marion County agriculture community that has been a steady force in Marion County far longer than Savion which has no connection to our heritage or county. When solar companies such as Savion offer large leasing prices for farmland, the ripple effect is that farmers wanting to continue in agriculture will experience a more difficult time paying affordable land leases for agriculture. Farmers cannot compete with the high lease amounts with numbers that range from approximately \$400 - \$1200 an acre over a 30-50 year time frame. One has to understand the demographics of farmers to know that it is highly unlikely that this land will return to agriculture in 3 to 5 decades. The construction of 43,000 steel posts driven into the ground, thousands of feet of electrical wire and cables in the ground, compaction, and much more is not beneficial to good farming practices of land and soil conservation.

I further add that Savion is not contributing to the economic benefit of Marion County, our state or country by its plan to purchase solar panels from foreign companies, which as is known, many do not use "green energy" to manufacture the panels. Savion states in their application that they plan to purchase panels from Jinko Solar headquartered in Shanghai, China; Longi located in [Xi'an, China](#); Risen Solar, a Chinese public company; and Trina located in [Changzhou, China](#).

In addition to Savion not being from our state or county, the 13 testimonies that were given at the public hearing on September 28th in Marion, only 4 were from the Marion Community. Two of the four were from the same household and live in the city where they will be unaffected by the view of thousands of solar panels. It was a meeting in which mostly the "public at large," not local residents, supported the project. It was an evening where most farmers were working hard to harvest their crops. It was also held during rising Covid cases in our county. I reluctantly attended to try to learn from the testimonies however I heard mostly opinion with few facts, no research or any information that would shed light on the benefit or lack of for a large scale utility project in our county. One person cited that there would be minimal clearing of the land but he failed to define "minimal clearing" or mention all the construction that would occur on the 970 acres. I do not consider the 13 testimonies to be an accurate representation of Marion County residents, rather it was more from people out-of-town promoting the jobs they hoped it would bring to their union members or construction companies.

I will further point out that Savion is taking land for their project that has been designated as an Agriculture District. That designation is for the benefit of farmers with specific exemptions and is supposed to be devoted exclusively to agricultural production or be qualified for compensation under a land conservation

program. Solar development on agriculture districts serves to erode the purpose and importance of the Agriculture District designation. Savion refers to a 2011 Marion County land use plan and believes that their large scale utility development is consistent with the county land use plan. They have ignored the recognition of the importance of agriculture that is in the plan because they want to align themselves with agriculture i.e. harvesting the sun. Solar use of farmland is not the best use of the land. Solar will not provide most of the energy needed and when solar energy goes onto the grid, it goes where the most need is which is usually large cities, not our community. Our community will change to accommodate the out-of-town solar company for their economic benefit.

There were many misleading and one-sided postings and photos on their facebook page, especially to those readers that are far removed from agriculture. Marion County Solar facebook page is identified as an educational resource to learn more about utility scale solar development. I was told that the solar panels were like "crop rotation" which is a real stretch of the truth. I will point out also that the landowner of some of the solar leased land obviously did not like my opposition and correction to information posted, and in a reply to my posting "threatened" to publish the huge amount of money that we have personally received from the State of Ohio for farmland preservation. I promptly told him to go ahead and disclose the amount of money we have received along with the other 500+ landowners in the farmland preservation program and actually provided a link to the ODA website because the information is public information. Of course he did not mention donations that farmers such as us make on easement purchases or that the amount we received is a one time payment unlike the large payments he will receive on a regular basis for 30+ years. His comment was quickly removed. A photo of field corn was captioned with "Marion County's corn looks delicious, and perfect for a Labor Day barbecue!" but the accompanying article was about Marion County crop projections. The delicious looking field corn and crop production will not occur on the 970 acres that will be converted to solar if the application is accepted. The "fun facts" post on solar energy development did not include information about the critical loss of farmland in Ohio and our country; they reimagined "cash crop" from solar energy when cash crop to a farmer is usually hay and wheat because it is harvested in the summer before corn and soybeans are harvested. In the article they posted about teaching renewable energy they failed to teach that renewable energy needs to go hand in hand with the finite source of land and how we use land to benefit people and the necessity of preserving land for the production of food, fuel and fiber. Their facebook page is utilizing agriculture terms to push the idea that somehow their large scale utility development is like agriculture. They use the attractive aspects of agriculture and "reimagine" them for their benefit which is mostly economic.

In closing, I will say that Savion Marion County Project contributes to the ever increasing accumulation of farmland loss. If their presence in Marion County were important, they would be here for generations, but it is for 30-50 years and then gone, and then other solar projects will take its place on more Ohio farmland. They cannot promise the return of the land to agriculture production because there is no documentation of this being done and they have no idea of how agriculture will look in the year 2050. We do know that farmland loss continues; that more food production will be needed to feed the world in 2050; that agriculture forms the economic base in Marion County and the state; that solar leasing of farmland and constructing large scale utility will change our community and its farming heritage. I am asking the Ohio Power Siting Board to consider the negative effects on our agriculture community and vote "no" to this application. More planning needs to occur as to how solar companies can capture the sun's energy without taking farmland and how the disposal of their solar panels, batteries and other components will be managed.

Thank you for your consideration of the content of this email letter.

Sincerely,

Betty Jo Lill
754 Owens Rd. W,
Marion, Ohio 43302

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in

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Summary: Public Comment of Betty Jo Lill, via website, electronically filed by
Docketing Staff on behalf of Docketing