

BEFORE THE OHIO POWER SITING BOARD

**In the Matter of the Application of
Kingwood Solar I LLC for a Certificate
of Environmental Compatibility and
Public Need**

)
)
)
)

Case No. 21-0117-EL-BGN

DIRECT TESTIMONY OF ANDREW ENGLISH

Q.1. Please state your name, title and business address.

A.1. My name is Andrew English and I am an owner and principal landscape architect at PLANIT Studios (“PLANIT”). My business address is 500 W. Wilson Bridge Rd., Suite 314, Worthington, Ohio 43085.

Q.2. What are your duties as an Owner and Principle of PLANIT?

A.2. I oversee and work with a professional team that is dedicated to serving our customers with landscape architecture, graphic design, and strategic planning (we call it wayfinding) services for a wide range of projects. There are a total of twelve members on our team.

Q.3. What is your educational and professional background?

A.3. I received a Bachelor of Science degree in Landscape Contracting from Pennsylvania State University, followed by a Master of Landscape Architecture from The Ohio State University. I have over 26 years of experience in design and management of numerous site design projects that incorporate landscaping and its effects, including screening single-family residential properties from proposed uses such as multi-family developments, industrial warehouses, and other commercial developments. I am a Registered Landscape Architect in the State of Ohio and a member of the American Society of Landscape Architects. I have also previously provided testimony as an expert witness

1 before the Ohio Power Siting Board for the Nestlewood Solar Project, Case No. 18-1546-
2 EL-BGN.

3 **Q.4. On whose behalf are you offering testimony?**

4 **A.4.** I am testifying on behalf of the Applicant, Kingwood Solar I LLC (“Applicant”),
5 in support of its Application filed in Case No. 21-117-EL-BGN.

6 **Q.5. What is the purpose of your testimony?**

7 **A.5.** The purpose of my testimony is to discuss my review of the landscaping plan
8 proposed by the Applicant and the minimization of the Project’s visual impact using
9 screening, specifically landscape plant material.

10 **Q.6. Have you reviewed the Project application?**

11 **A.6.** Yes. I have reviewed the Application narrative and the Visual Impact Analysis
12 (“VIA”), attached as Exhibit Q to the Application.

13 **Q.7. Have you reviewed the landscaping plan prepared by the Applicant, which was**
14 **submitted with the Application as Attachment C to the VIA?**

15 **A.7.** Yes.

16 **Q.8. Based on your experience, is the landscape screening approach proposed in the**
17 **landscape plan typical in your industry for the purposes of visual mitigation?**

18 **A.8.** Yes. In the plan, the Applicant is proposing perimeter plantings composed of native
19 vegetative materials to screen or soften the view of the Project, which is typical for the
20 purpose of minimizing and mitigating the visual impact of the addition of a new element
21 to the existing landscape. Based on my review, the conceptual planting proposed in the
22 landscaping plan will provide visual screening, soften the horizontal line created by the
23 installation of the solar panels, and aid in blending the Project into the surrounding

landscape. In addition to helping to blend the Project into the surrounding landscape, the use of native plant species will also provide environmental benefits to native wildlife and pollinator species.

Q.9. Please describe the landscaping scenarios proposed in the plan.

A.9. The landscaping plan describes three mitigation options. The Tall Screening option (Module 3) would only be an option in specific locations along the northern boundaries of the Project, where shading would not occur on the solar panels. This option incorporates a mixture of shorter and taller species to create interest and to allow for greater vegetative fill along the fenceline. Representative species selected are: Spruce, Pine, Oak, Maple and Elm.

The Medium (Module 2) and Light Screening (Module 1) landscaping scenarios could be applied in select locations at any point along the Project fenceline, as the shorter height of the plantings in combination with the distance from panels would not be expected to increase panel shading. The Medium Screening scenario combines slightly taller and shorter mixed deciduous and evergreen plantings. These would be utilized in areas where the project may be closer to a residence or right of way and would warrant a denser screen. The use of different sizes and species allows for a more natural appearance. The Light Screening scenario staggers a variety of lower growing evergreen species along the fenceline.

Q.10. When will each screening option become effective after planting?

A.10. The proposed plantings specified will provide a visual barrier from the day of the initial planting date; and the opacity of this barrier will increase over time, as most plantings in this type of installation typically do. All of the three landscaping scenarios use broad

1 spreading plants native to, and with a demonstrated track record of success in, Ohio.
2 Species have been selected with nursery availability in mind as well. For optimal success,
3 younger plant material would be planted; the illustrations of the landscaping scenarios in
4 the landscaping plan reflect the appearance approximately 8-10 years from initial planting
5 of the younger plant material with typical growing conditions. Based on the microclimate
6 surrounding the Project, some landscape screenings will fill in quicker. Also, the plant size
7 specified and installed at the time of planting will determine how quickly the plant material
8 will establish and begin putting on new growth. For example, a 2” caliper sized tree will
9 establish and acclimate to the microclimate sooner than a larger tree specified at 4” caliper
10 planted in the same area. In other words, though the 2” caliper tree is smaller at the time
11 of planting, it can surpass the size of the 4” caliper tree in the same timeframe.

12 **Q.11. How will the three screening modules create a visual buffer?**

13 **A.11.** Each of the three proposed screening modules would provide a visual buffer
14 between a viewer and the Project. For the Tall Screening scenario, glimpses of fence and
15 panels would be viewed from certain angles, but the massing appears denser when not
16 looking directly at the Project. With the variability of plantings reflected in the Medium
17 Screening scenario, visibility of fencing and panels would also be variable. However, the
18 differing shapes of species creates an organic pattern of vegetation that breaks up and
19 obscures the Project to a great degree. When using the Light Screening scenario, the use
20 of more limited varieties of evergreen species allows for a slightly denser screening of the
21 Project, although with a more regimented and consistent feel. However, each of these
22 conceptual plans would provide for a meaningful visual buffer when looking towards the
23 Project.

1 **Q.12. What is the goal of vegetative screening for this type of project?**

2 **A.12.** The goal of visual screening or mitigation is not to prevent a project from being
3 seen entirely. The use of an opaque “green wall” approach is generally not desirable or
4 effective, because it tends to contrast with the existing visual character of the surrounding
5 area and actually draws viewer attention because it looks out of place. Instead, the goal is
6 to soften the appearance of the project so that it blends more effectively into the
7 background.

8 **Q.13. Can screening like that proposed for the Project reduce and minimize visual impacts?**

9 **A.13.** Yes. In my experience, past mitigation strategies of this type have been successful
10 in reducing and minimizing the potential visual impacts. Based on our work on various
11 types of projects in Ohio, including those mentioned previously, vegetative mitigation,
12 applied appropriately, is very effective in reducing and minimizing project visibility and
13 visual impact. Additionally, the use of alternative fencing materials like that proposed for
14 this Project are effective in minimizing the visual contrasts typically presented by
15 traditional galvanized chain-link fence materials.

16 **Q.14. Does the type of planting or mitigation vary based on the size of a project?**

17 **A.14.** Not substantially. Mitigation is implemented to address specific views. So, to the
18 extent a solar facility is significant in size, the number of affected views is likely to
19 increase. However, it is important to note that in areas with relatively flat topography, the
20 potential impacts are generally constrained to areas near the project perimeter. Therefore,
21 the perimeter of the project should be the focus of mitigation efforts. In particular, those
22 views that are close to the perimeter should be mitigated to the extent practicable. In
23 essence, the mitigation should be view-based and, to the extent a larger project has a higher

1 number of affected views, mitigation should be applied accordingly if potential visual
2 impacts are identified.

3 **Q.15. Have you reviewed the Staff Report of Investigation in this proceeding, including**
4 **Condition 16, which addresses landscaping?**

5 **A.15.** Yes.

6 **Q.16. Based on your review, will Condition 16 mitigate the visual impact of the Project?**

7 **A.16.** Yes, it is my opinion that Condition 16 can adequately reduce or minimize the
8 potential visual impacts associated with the facility. As I mentioned earlier, the Applicant
9 has committed to submitting a final landscaping plan to the Ohio Power Siting Board Staff.
10 Condition 16 memorializes this commitment and ensures an effective visual mitigation
11 plan, focused on the line of sight from residences on non-participating parcels. The plan
12 will be developed in consultation with an Ohio licensed landscape architect prior to
13 commencement of any construction.

14 There are two important prongs to recommended Condition 16 that will ensure the
15 effectiveness of mitigation for adjacent, non-participating landowners. First, the Applicant
16 will replace and/or substitute any failed plantings during the first five years after
17 construction to ensure that at least 90% of the vegetation has survived as of the five-year
18 point. The purpose of the five-year period is to allow plantings to become established,
19 after which time plant survival is likely to increase. Second, Condition 16 requires the
20 Applicant to maintain vegetative screening for the life of the Project. As shown in the
21 landscape mitigation plan, screening for the Project will consist of various landscape
22 screening modules. To ensure that screening modules are functioning as designed for the
23 life of the Project, the second prong requires the Applicant to replace and/or substitute

1 failed plantings within a screening module if necessary to ensure the screening module
2 remains effective at that location. The requirement in Condition 16 to maintain vegetative
3 screening for the life of the Project will ensure that any plant die-off during the life of the
4 Project will not result in gaps in screening modules.

5 **Q.17. Based on your experience, what is your overall assessment of the potential visual**
6 **impact of the Project?**

7 **A.17.** Each of the three representative landscaping modules would provide a visual buffer
8 between the viewer and the Project. For the Tall Screening scenario, glimpses of fence and
9 panels would be viewed from certain angles, but the massing appears denser when not
10 looking directly at the Project. With the variability of plantings reflected in the Medium
11 Screening scenario, visibility of fencing and panels would also be variable. However, the
12 differing shapes of species creates an organic pattern of vegetation that breaks up and
13 obscures the Project to a great degree. When using the Light Screening scenario, the use
14 of more limited varieties of evergreen species allows for a slightly denser screening of the
15 Project, although with a more regimented and consistent feel. Individual viewers will have
16 preferences that can be considered in selecting an appropriate landscaping scenario.
17 However, each of these conceptual plans would provide for a meaningful visual buffer
18 when looking towards the Project. Overall, through the landscaping plan proposed by the
19 Applicant, and along with Condition 16, I expect that the visual impacts of the Project can
20 and will be minimized through the use of the three screening scenarios proposed.

21 **Q.19. Does this conclude your direct testimony?**

22 **A.19.** Yes, it does.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that a copy of the foregoing was served upon the following via email on
this 23rd day of February 2022.

Jodi J. Bair
Werner L. Margard
Attorneys for Ohio Power Siting Board Staff

Jodi.bair@ohioattorneygeneral.gov
Werner.margard@ohioattorneygeneral.gov

Daniel A. Brown
Attorney for Cedarville Township Trustees

dbrown@brownlawdayton.com

David Watkins
Kevin Dunn
Attorneys for Xenia Township Trustees

dw@planklaw.com
kdd@planklaw.com

Lee A. Slone
Attorney for Miami Township Board of Trustees

lee.slone@dinsmore.com

John E. Hart
Attorney for In Progress LLC

jehartlaw@gmail.com

Charles D. Swaney
Attorney for Tecumseh Land Preservation Association

cswaney@woh.rr.com

Jack A. Van Kley
Attorney for Citizens for Greene Acres, Inc.

jvankley@vankleywalker.com

Thaddeus M. Boggs
Attorney for the Greene County Commissioners

tboggs@fbtlaw.com

Chad A. Endsley
Leah F. Curtis
Amy M. Milam
Attorneys for Ohio Farm Bureau Federation

cendsley@ofbf.org
lcurtis@ofbf.org
amilam@ofbf.org

/s/ Michael J. Settineri

Michael J. Settineri

**This foregoing document was electronically filed with the Public Utilities
Commission of Ohio Docketing Information System on**

2/23/2022 2:27:58 PM

in

Case No(s). 21-0117-EL-BGN

Summary: Testimony Direct Testimony of Andrew English electronically filed by Mr.
Michael J. Settineri on behalf of Kingwood Solar I LLC