

LOCAL PUBLIC HEARING

IN THE MATTER OF:) Case No.
) 21-823-EL-BGN
)
WILD GRAINS SOLAR,)
LLC FOR A)
CERTIFICATE OF)
ENVIRONMENTAL)
COMPATIBILITY AND)
PUBLIC NEED)

**BEFORE ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
JACKY ST. JOHN**

DATE: Tuesday, May 3, 2022

TIME: 6:00 p.m.

PLACE: Van Wert County Fairgrounds
 1055 South Washington Street
 Van Wert, Ohio 45891

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1 APPEARANCES:

2

ON BEHALF OF WILD GRAINS SOLAR, LLC:

3

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Jeff Reinkemeyer, Avangrid Renewables

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Dale Arnold, Ohio Farm Bureau

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Todd Wolfrum, Commissioner

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Alfred Osting, Trustee

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I N D E X

PAGE

1		
2		
3		
4	Kip Siesel.....	11
	Ellen Girod Dove	14
5	Murlen Feasby	19
	Bob Barker	24
6	Keaton Brenneman	26
	Barry Thatcher	32
7	Jeff Snyder	34
	Kari Casto	37
8	Bradley Maunz	40
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
16		
17		
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
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1 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Good evening,
2 everyone. Good evening, everyone. Can
3 everyone hear me?

4 FEMALE VOICE: That's better.

5 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Good evening,
6 everybody. My clock is reading 6 o'clock, so
7 let's go ahead and get tonight's hearing
8 started.

9 The Ohio Power Siting Board has
10 scheduled for public hearing at this time and
11 place Case Number 21-823-EL-BGN, which is
12 captioned In The Matter of the Application of
13 Wild Grains Solar, LLC versus for Certificate
14 of Environmental Compatibility and Public
15 Need.

16 My name is Jacky St. John, and I am
17 the Administrative Law Judge in the Board's
18 Legal Department assigned to hear this case.

19 The passage of Senate Bill 52
20 provides new opportunities for county
21 commissioners and township trustees to
22 participate, excuse me, to participate in the
23 siting of solar projects in their community.
24 County commissioners may choose one
25 commissioner, or a designee, to serve as an ad

1 hoc board member. In addition, township
2 trustees may choose one trustee, or a
3 designee, to serve as their ad hoc board
4 member representative.

5 The Board of Van Wert County
6 Commissioners appointed Commissioner Todd
7 Wolfrum, and the Board of Trustees of Hoaglin
8 Township appointed Trustee Alfred Osting as
9 the ad hoc board members for this project.
10 Trustee Osting and Commissioner Wolfrum join
11 us this evening.

12 Trustee Osting, would you like to
13 stand, so folks know who you are?

14 (Doing as indicated.)

15 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Good evening.
16 Thank you for being here.

17 TRUSTEE OSTING: Yep.

18 JUDGE ST. JOHN: And Commissioner
19 Wolfrum?

20 (Doing as indicated.)

21 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Good evening.
22 Thank you.

23 There are also staff members from
24 the Board assisting us with the hearing
25 tonight, as well as individuals from the

1 Public Affairs Department. You likely passed
2 them on the way in this evening, but they are
3 the individuals wearing a PUCO or OPSB badge
4 or shirt. They're available if you have
5 questions concerning the Board's process, if
6 you need assistance in accessing any of the
7 documents submitted in this case, or if you
8 just have general questions about the hearing
9 tonight.

10 And at this time, I would like to
11 take appearances on behalf of the parties.
12 First, Wild Grains Solar, LLC.

13 MS. HERRNSTEIN: I'm
14 Kara Herrnstein of Bricker & Eckler, 100 South
15 Third Street, Columbus, Ohio 43209. On
16 behalf of the Applicant, I also have with me,
17 Jeff.

18 MR. REINKEMEYER: Jeff Reinkemeyer,
19 Lead Developer, 1237 Inverness Court,
20 Schererville, Indiana, and I'm the developer
21 with Avangrid Renewables.

22 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Okay. Thank you
23 both. And are there any other parties present
24 this evening that would like to make an
25 appearance at this time?

1 MR. ARNOLD: Thank you, your Honor.
2 My name is Dale, D-A-L-E, Arnold, A-R-N-O-L-D.
3 I'm Director Energy, Utility and Local
4 Government Policy for the Ohio Farm Bureau.
5 We are part of your record in this case,
6 however, I'm not legal counsel. I'm here
7 tonight basically to observe and take notes
8 and report to our legal counsel tomorrow.
9 Thank you.

10 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you.

11 The subject of today's hearing is
12 an application filed by Wild Grains Solar,
13 LLC, for the purpose of constructing a solar
14 powered electric generation facility of up to
15 150 megawatts in Van Wert County. The
16 application was filed on November 16, 2021.

17 The Board staff filed a report of
18 investigation on April 18, 2022. This report
19 is a recommendation of the Board staff and
20 does not necessarily reflect what the Board's
21 final determination in this case will be.

22 The purposes of this evening's
23 public hearing is to receive testimony
24 regarding the application from those in the
25 local community who are affected by the

1 proposed project, but who are not parties to
2 this case.

3 Tonight's public hearing will not
4 be a question and answer session, but rather
5 an opportunity for you to let the Board know
6 what you think about the proposed project.

7 Tonight's public hearing is only
8 one aspect of the process in this case. An
9 evidentiary hearing is scheduled to commence
10 on May 25th, 2022, at the Board's offices in
11 Columbus. The purpose of the evidentiary
12 hearing is for the parties and Board staff to
13 provide testimony and other evidence regarding
14 the project.

15 Tonight's hearing is being
16 transcribed by a court reporter. If you plan
17 to testify, please speak clearly, so that the
18 court reporter can accurately reflect your
19 comments on the record.

20 Also, if you have prepared a
21 written statement, it would be helpful if you
22 provide a copy to the court reporter for
23 reference, to ensure that the transcript is
24 accurate.

25 After I finish with this

1 introduction, we will begin by inviting
2 individuals on the sign-in sheet to speak
3 about the proposed project. Each person who
4 signed up to testify will be permitted to
5 speak once about the proposed project.

6 Before you present your testimony,
7 we will ask that you take an oath or
8 affirmation that what you're about to say is
9 the truth. We will also ask you to state your
10 name and address for the record. You will
11 then provide your thoughts on the proposed
12 project.

13 The parties to the case and I will
14 be permitted to ask you questions about your
15 statement. The testimony that you provide
16 tonight will be considered part of the
17 official record of this case, and it will be
18 reviewed by the Board before a final decision
19 is made on the application.

20 A couple of other notes. If you
21 decide that you do not want to testify when we
22 read your name from the sign-in sheet, you can
23 pass to the next witness. If you decide that
24 you prefer to file written comments in the
25 case docket, the Board staff can answer your

1 questions about how to do that.

2 Also, once you finish testifying,
3 or if you are here just to observe, you may
4 leave the hearing at any time you wish.

5 The Board appreciates your
6 participation in tonight's hearing, and we
7 want everyone who has signed up to testify to
8 have the opportunity to do so. For that
9 reason, please keep your statement to a
10 reasonable length of no more than five
11 minutes. I will be holding up a sign when you
12 have 30 seconds left to provide comments, and
13 I will also let you know when your five
14 minutes are up. Again, we set these time
15 limits so that everyone who would like to
16 testify has time to speak.

17 If you have additional comments
18 that you would like to make, but you run out
19 of time, you may file written comments in this
20 case.

21 And with that, at this time, we
22 will begin with the testimony.

23 The first individual that I have on
24 my list is Kip Siesel. At this time, if you'd
25 like to make your way to the front of the

1 microphone and make your comments. And before
2 you begin, please raise your right hand.

3 **KIPTON SIESEL,**

4 WHO, BEING FIRST DULY SWORN,

5 TESTIFIED AS FOLLOWS:

6 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you. Please
7 state and spell your name for the record.

8 MR. SIESEL: Kip Siesel, K-I-P,
9 S-I-E-S-E-L.

10 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Please provide
11 your address, including the Township.

12 MR. SIESEL: 2412 South Reynolds
13 Road, Toledo, Ohio. I'm not sure what the
14 Township is, so

15 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Okay. And do you
16 reside or work within the project area?

17 MR. SIESEL: I do not reside
18 within, but I do work in and around the
19 project area.

20 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Okay. Thank you.
21 And please proceed with your testimony.

22 MR. SIESEL: So on behalf of the
23 Operating Engineers Local Union 18, I am here
24 to support the approval of the Wild Grains
25 Solar project.

1 The operating engineers are the
2 individuals who operate heavy equipment, such
3 as bulldozers, excavators, backhoes, forklifts
4 and so on. The roads and bridges you drive on
5 were most likely built by members of Local 18,
6 along with our fellow Union tradesmen and
7 women.

8 Although we do not have an
9 agreement signed with Avangrid Renewables to
10 perform the work associated with the project,
11 we believe our Local signatory contractors
12 will secure this work, thus providing our
13 membership with numerous employment
14 opportunities. In turn, high-paying wages,
15 healthcare benefits, and apprenticeship
16 programs can continue to grow because of the
17 solar industry.

18 If approved, the Wild Grains Solar
19 project will not only create jobs, but you can
20 expect an economic impact, additional tax
21 money, and clean energy for Ohio as a result
22 from the project.

23 We encourage the Ohio Power Siting
24 Board to support the jobs of the men and women
25 of Local 18 by approving the Wild Grains Solar

1 project. Thank you.

2 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you. Are
3 there any questions for this witness from
4 counsel?

5 MS. HERRNSTEIN: No questions.

6 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Okay. And I don't
7 have any questions either. Thank you for your
8 testimony.

9 The next person on my list is
10 Daniel Nussbaum.

11 MR. NUSSBAUM: I pass.

12 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Okay. The next
13 person on my list, there are two people listed
14 on the same field, I have Ellen (Girod) Dove
15 and Ruth Girod. Not sure if you'd like to
16 testify together or separately.

17 MS. DOVE: I'm speaking on behalf
18 of my mom, if --

19 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Okay.

20 MS. GIROD: I didn't know I was
21 going to be up here.

22 JUDGE ST. JOHN: And please raise
23 your right hand.

24 **ELLEN GIROD DOVE,**

25 **WHO, BEING FIRST DULY SWORN,**

1 TESTIFIED AS FOLLOWS:

2 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you. Please
3 state and spell your name for the record.

4 MS. DOVE: Ellen, E-L-L-E-N, Girod,
5 G-I-R-O-D, Dove, D-O-V-E.

6 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you. And
7 please provide your address, including the
8 Township.

9 MS. DOVE: Hers or mine? Because I
10 live in Van Wert, 669 South Washington Street, Van
11 Wert, Ohio. She is 6423 Hoaglin Center, Van Wert,
12 which is Hoaglin Township.

13 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Okay. And do you
14 reside or work within the project area?

15 MS. DOVE: She does.

16 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Okay. Thank you.
17 And please proceed with your testimony.

18 MS. DOVE: Good evening. I'm speaking
19 on behalf of my mom, even though she is present at
20 this meeting. My 91-year-old mother and I want to
21 go on record regarding the Wild Grains solar panel
22 issue. It is our understanding that there are
23 certain individuals who believe they have the
24 right to dictate how our family farm is utilized.

25 My dad, a lifelong farmer, who passed

1 away four years ago, worked hard alongside my mom
2 to develop and care for their property. The
3 family farm, bought and paid for by my parents
4 through sacrifice and an unparalleled work ethic,
5 is now my mom's. And it amazes us that despite
6 the fact that she is the landowner, other
7 residents of the county believe they have a right
8 to tell her what she can do with her property. Is
9 she planning to engage in illegal activity? Of
10 course not.

11 To add a few details, we lived next to
12 a hog farm for years. We often couldn't enjoy
13 being outside, due to the disgusting stench, but
14 not once did we ever think that our neighbor with
15 hogs didn't have the right to earn a living on his
16 property, in whatever legal way he determined to
17 be appropriate.

18 Additionally, as people who enjoy
19 the beauty of the countryside's horizon, the
20 wind turbines completely changed our view.
21 However, not once did we think that the
22 landowners didn't have the right to earn a
23 living on their property, in whatever legal
24 way they chose.

25 We have considered very carefully

1 and deliberately the opportunity to be
2 involved in the Wild Grains solar panel
3 project. And my mom, the landowner,
4 determined this was an excellent use of her
5 land for a number of reasons. But let's
6 assume she hadn't gone that direction. Could
7 she have sold plots of land on which to build
8 homes? Might she have turned all of the
9 ground into a golf course, or a Christmas tree
10 farm? Or even a cattle farm? It is beyond
11 comprehension to us that there are residents
12 in this county, who, for whatever selfish
13 reasons they have, believe they can tell a
14 landowner what they can or cannot do with
15 their own land, with the understanding, of
16 course, that it doesn't include illegal
17 activity.

18 What has happened to landowner
19 rights? It is her ground, and she should be
20 able to legally do whatever she chooses with
21 her land.

22 I respectfully ask that you
23 consider the ramifications of allowing those
24 who don't own the land to dictate to those who
25 do what can be grown or used on said land.

1 Where does it end?

2 Also, since we first began
3 communicating with Avangrid reps, we have
4 appreciated the way they have addressed or
5 responded to landowner and homeowner concerns,
6 including farming the setbacks in such a way
7 that it would help preserve the farm landscape
8 view.

9 We are with other landowners in
10 recommending that all setbacks be farmed by
11 the landowner, or the tenant, just as it has
12 been in the past.

13 One of the attractive aspects of
14 this solar panel project is that it can be a
15 win-win for our community. There are a number
16 of entities who will benefit from this
17 project, not just the landowners.

18 It is our understanding that
19 Hoaglin Township, Van Wert County, which is,
20 and my mom's previous employer, Lincolnview
21 Local School, my alma mater, will all be on
22 the list of those who will enjoy the outcomes
23 from the solar panel project.

24 In addition to that, we understand
25 there is also an agreement between the

1 commissioners, Lincolnview Local Schools,
2 Hoaglin Township and Avangrid, which will
3 provide compensation to homeowners in Hoaglin
4 Township. This is clearly a desire to ensure
5 that all stakeholders have something to gain
6 from the project.

7 The entire package is one that we
8 support with, of course, the primary factor
9 being that as the landowner, who has been the
10 one paying the real estate taxes on the Girod
11 farm for 50 years, my mom should have the
12 right to use her land in whatever legal way
13 she sees fit in order to earn a living. The
14 last we knew, there was nothing illegal about
15 solar panels.

16 The thoughts I have expressed are
17 those of my mom, who is still of sound mind,
18 but for transparency purposes, I also have
19 power of attorney, and will always speak for
20 my mom's best interest. Thank you.

21 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you.
22 Counsel, do you have any questions for this
23 witness?

24 MS. HERRNSTEIN: No questions.

25 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Okay. Thank you.

1 Next on the list, again, we have two
2 individuals signed up together, Ed Feasby and
3 Wilota Collins.

4 MR. FEASBY: She -- she's not here.
5 She's the primary landowner that I rent the
6 land from.

7 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Okay. Would you
8 mind stating that on the record as well?

9 MR. FEASBY: Yes.

10 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you. Please
11 raise your right hand.

12 **MURLEN FEASBY,**

13 WHO, BEING FIRST DULY SWORN,

14 TESTIFIED AS FOLLOWS:

15 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you. Please
16 state and spell your name on the record.

17 MR. FEASBY: My name is Murlen Feasby,
18 better known as Ed, but M-U-R-L-E-N, F-E-A-S-B-Y.

19 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you. And
20 please provide your address, including the
21 township.

22 MR. FEASBY: 4508 Payne Road, Convoy,
23 Ohio, and that's Tully Township.

24 JUDGE ST. JOHN: And do you reside or
25 work within the project area?

1 MR. FEASBY: I own some property
2 there.

3 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Okay.

4 MR. FEASBY: And the other name on
5 your note there is my mother-in-law, who owns
6 property there also, and she can't be here
7 tonight, so this is my -- my speaking, but she
8 agrees with me.

9 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you. Please
10 proceed with your testimony.

11 MR. FEASBY: Okay. I sent a letter to
12 the Siting Board on March 9th expressing my
13 frustration that landowners were being denied the
14 right to use their land as they desire. To recap
15 that letter, and a few new thoughts I had, I just
16 find it unbelievable that I, or any landowner, is
17 being dictated to as to how we use our land, when
18 there is no harm being done to the community.
19 Whether I plant soybeans, corn, sunflowers, or
20 solar panels, seems to be at my discretion, not
21 someone else's. I don't expect to be able to tell
22 my neighbor how to plant their garden, take care
23 of their lawn, or what they should or shouldn't do
24 with their property, their house, or their barn.

25 When I moved here from Fort Wayne

1 30 years ago, I chose a nice, quiet, isolated
2 area. Since then, I have had a commercial
3 dairy barn started five miles west of me, two
4 hog farms within two miles of me, there is
5 hundreds of windmills to my north and east out
6 my kitchen window, and the huge Robert Mone
7 Electrical Generating Plant is less than a
8 mile from my house. That's all been built
9 since I moved there. Now, that's called
10 progress and growth. I don't especially
11 appreciate any of those changes. As a matter
12 of fact, the smell is unbearable sometimes.
13 But I certainly acknowledge the right of the
14 landowners to do what is best for them and
15 their families. I only ask for the same
16 consideration. These solar panels don't
17 smell, make noise, or bother anyone's way of
18 life, or the comfort of their homes.

19 You know, I travel a lot in my job,
20 and I see solar panels popping up all over
21 Southern Michigan and Northern Indiana. I
22 don't understand why Ohio is not welcoming
23 these projects, instead of allowing
24 unreasonable complaints to stall them.

25 It appears to me that Avangrid has

1 gone above and beyond to try to appease those
2 with concerns. They have removed large tracts
3 of land from the project, at a great loss to
4 the landowners, and held meetings to address
5 concerns.

6 I know there are some in the area
7 that have voiced their opposition, and even
8 after their issues were addressed, they
9 continue to oppose the project and encourage
10 others to do likewise. You know, progress for
11 the many is rarely made without angering some.

12 I understand that a concerned raise
13 by many of the homeowners is they like to
14 preserve the look of the farm landscape. And
15 so I firmly support allowing setbacks to be
16 farmed as possible, so that it continue to
17 look like corn and soybeans out in the
18 country.

19 I also know that Avangrid has
20 worked hard to earn cooperation for everybody
21 involved. They reached an agreement early on
22 with Van Wert County, Hoaglin Township, and
23 Lincolnview officials that was beneficial to
24 all residents, and entered into an agreement
25 to compensate homeowners near the project

1 site. I cannot understand any reason for this
2 project not to go forward, after seeing the
3 generous benefits for all involved.

4 I might add in closing that if
5 farmers had not allowed their farms to be used
6 for other than farming, there would be no
7 homeowners in the area to object to this
8 project anyway.

9 Thank you for your time, and I ask
10 that you approve the project.

11 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you. Are
12 there any questions for this witness?

13 MS. HERRNSTEIN: No questions.

14 JUDGE ST. JOHN: All right. Thank
15 you for your testimony. Next on my list, I
16 have Bob Barker.

17 MR. BARKER: Come on down.

18 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Good evening.
19 Please raise your right hand.

20 **BOB BARKER,**

21 WHO, BEING FIRST DULY SWORN,

22 TESTIFIED AS FOLLOWS:

23 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you. Please
24 state --

25 MR. BARKER: Wouldn't say anything

1 else.

2 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Please state and
3 spell your name for the record.

4 MR. BARKER: Bob Barker, B-O-B,
5 B-A-R-K-E-R.

6 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you. And
7 please provide your address.

8 MR. BARKER: 5308 John Yoh Road, Van
9 Wert, Ohio.

10 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you. Do you
11 reside or work within the project area?

12 MR. BARKER: Right in the middle of
13 it.

14 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Reside or work?

15 MR. BARKER: I live there.

16 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you. Please
17 proceed with your testimony.

18 MR. BARKER: Well, I've heard a lot
19 about compensation for the homeowners out there,
20 but I have not heard anything from your lawyers,
21 or anything else, and how this is not going to
22 increase the value of my home, having all these
23 stuck around it. Can you tell me, if somebody
24 goes to a Realtor, they're not going to ask, take
25 me out there, so I can see all of these and see

1 this home out here? They're not going to do that.
2 That's going to devalue my property with the
3 farmers making money on their property, but I'm
4 going to be losing money. You know, I'd like to
5 have an answer for that. I mean, you've done all
6 kind of surveys, I know you have, and whether it's
7 good or bad for the homeowners in the area that
8 these farms are being put in.

9 And you got prime farmland out here
10 that you're putting these in, that they can't no
11 longer farm. And there is places all over the
12 country that, the desert would appreciate some of
13 these panels out there, the sun shines most of the
14 time. Here in Ohio, especially in Van Wert, I
15 don't see the sun a whole lot during the
16 wintertime. I know the rest of you don't either.

17 So really that's all I've got to say.
18 I'm just curious about the depreciation of my
19 property.

20 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Sir, tonight is
21 not a question and answer session, so I'm not
22 able to answer questions that you may have. I
23 will let you know that counsel for the
24 Applicant is here, as well as members, or
25 representatives from the Power Siting Board,

1 so if you'd like to ask any of those
2 individuals questions after the hearing,
3 you're certainly more than welcome to.

4 MR. BARKER: Okay. Thank you.

5 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you. And
6 are there any questions for this witness?

7 MS. HERRNSTEIN: No questions.

8 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you.

9 Next on my list I have Keaton
10 Brenneman. Please raise your right hand.

11 **KEATON BRENNEMAN,**

12 WHO, BEING FIRST DULY SWORN,

13 TESTIFIED AS FOLLOWS:

14 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you. Please
15 state and spell your name for the record.

16 MR. BRENNEMAN: My name is Keaton
17 Brenneman, K-E-A-T-O-N, Brenneman,
18 B-R-E-N-N-E-M-A-N.

19 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you. And
20 please provide your address.

21 MR. BRENNEMAN: 15314 U.S. Route 224,
22 Van Wert, Hoaglin Township.

23 JUDGE ST. JOHN: And do you reside or
24 work within the project area?

25 MR. BRENNEMAN: Yes.

1 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Reside or work?

2 MR. BRENNEMAN: Reside and work.

3 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you. And
4 please proceed with your testimony.

5 MR. BRENNEMAN: Good evening. My name
6 is Keaton Brenneman. I'm a homeowner and farmer
7 in Hoaglin Township, and I hope my time tonight
8 can bring some different perspectives to the
9 Board. My family has over 650 acres in the Wild
10 Grains solar development area, much of which will
11 be put to panels.

12 As the heir of this future farmland, I
13 stand to benefit from the payments this land
14 generates. That being said, I passionately oppose
15 the solar farms for many reasons. These include
16 the utter permanence of the project, the mission
17 creep of future panel development, the lack of a
18 referendum/vote on an issue that so deeply affects
19 this community, a gerrymandered development map
20 that makes this project sprawl, and the
21 devastating effect on property values in the
22 Hoaglin Township area.

23 The first issue I see is the utter
24 longevity of this project. Once a field is
25 put to panels, for all practical purposes, it

1 does not come out. These projects are
2 expected to last 50 years. Any issue that
3 will affect our grandchildren shouldn't be
4 rushed through, and the Board should consider
5 this.

6 Another area of concern I have is
7 the mission creep of future panel development.
8 Once this solar farm is established, it will
9 become easier and easier for farmers in the
10 panel development area to sign lease
11 agreements, because the damage to property and
12 home values has already been done. No one
13 will want to build a home anywhere near the
14 panel development area, and people may avoid
15 Hoaglin Township altogether, if they fear the
16 growth of the solar farm's footprint. Also,
17 future trustees may decide to expand the
18 already-sprawling solar panel development
19 zone.

20 This brings me to my third area of
21 concern, a gerrymandered development area. If
22 we look at a map of the proposed panel
23 locations, this is not an area contained to
24 the immediate area surrounding the Maddox
25 Creek substation on Fife Road. The distance

1 from the northwest corner of the development
2 area to the southeast corner is 4.79 miles,
3 from corner to corner, as measured by Google
4 Earth satellite imagery. This is an absolute
5 sprawling footprint. This represents a lack
6 of care for containing the project so as to
7 limit the damage to local property values.

8 The Commissioners of Allen County
9 recently approved a map of solar development
10 in Allen County, and it makes much more sense.
11 They contained any future panel development to
12 an area south of Lima that, as far as I know,
13 was already zoned for industrial use. They
14 then banned panel development in the rest of
15 the county to limit the sprawl of future
16 development of panels, so the local property
17 owners could feel assured that no solar farms
18 will sweep in and lower property values.

19 This leads me to my next point
20 concerning property values in the Hoaglin
21 Township area. As anyone can imagine, taking
22 a home in the beautiful countryside, and
23 placing it in the middle of an industrial
24 complex, isn't desirable. I can't imagine
25 many homeowners that are thrilled at the

1 prospect of their home being surrounded by
2 solar panels. The buffer zone that calls for
3 trees to be grown around the panels lays bare
4 the fact that these farms are awful to look
5 at. When looking at the petition signed by
6 the residents of Hoaglin Township to the Ohio
7 Power Siting Board, it appears that one of the
8 residents' largest concerns is the affects
9 these farms will have on property values.
10 Many residents describe these panels as an
11 eyesore.

12 I have a research paper from
13 Dr. Varun Rai of the University of Texas at
14 Austin that indicates survey participants
15 would value homes within 100 feet of a solar
16 development \$26,000 less. This needs to be
17 taken into careful consideration.

18 There are various other issues,
19 that for the sake of time, I will mention
20 briefly. Is it wise to take highly-productive
21 farm ground out of use, on a massive scale,
22 during a time of food insecurity around the
23 world? Should the citizens of Hoaglin
24 Township have the opportunity to vote on a
25 referendum approving the panels, especially on

1 an issue that affects us so directly?

2 Also, I would like to ask the Board
3 how they would appreciate living in the middle
4 of this development zone, if it were your
5 property.

6 When I asked a farmer who is
7 leasing land to the Wild Grains solar
8 development how he would like to live around
9 these solar fields, if he were in my position,
10 he stated that he wouldn't rent his ground
11 around his home, because he wouldn't like how
12 they look. He lives in Allen County, though,
13 so he doesn't have to worry about looking at
14 them every day, but we will in Hoaglin
15 Township. Thank you for your time.

16 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you. I have
17 one quick question for you. You reference a
18 study or an article. Is that something that
19 you have with you --

20 MR. BRENNEMAN: I do.

21 JUDGE ST. JOHN: -- that you'd like
22 to submit as an exhibit to your testimony?

23 MR. BRENNEMAN: Yes. Yeah.

24 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Okay. Thank you.

25 MR. BRENNEMAN: I'll get it.

1 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thanks. Does
2 counsel have any other questions for this
3 witness?

4 MS. HERRNSTEIN: No.

5 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you. And
6 the next witness I have for this evening is
7 Barry Thatcher. Please raise your right hand.

8 **BARRY THATCHER,**

9 WHO, BEING FIRST DULY SWORN,

10 TESTIFIED AS FOLLOWS:

11 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you. Please
12 state or -- state and spell your name for the
13 record.

14 MR. THATCHER: My name is Barry
15 Thatcher, B-A-R-R-Y, Thatcher, T-H-A-T-C-H-E-R.

16 JUDGE ST. JOHN: And please provide
17 your address.

18 MR. THATCHER: I live at 1051 Madison
19 Boulevard here in Van Wert.

20 JUDGE ST. JOHN: And do you live or
21 work within the project area?

22 MR. THATCHER: I own property --

23 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Okay.

24 MR. THATCHER: -- within the project
25 area.

1 JUDGE ST. JOHN: All right. Thank
2 you, and please proceed with your testimony.

3 MR. THATCHER: One of my concerns is
4 the energy. And I think that we overlooked the
5 security aspects of having good energy for our
6 country. I think all forms of energy are
7 beneficial to the security of our country; wind,
8 solar, fossil fuels, even nuclear energy, because
9 once we give up the energy rights, why, we're in a
10 not very good, secure situation.

11 I represent my folks that own the
12 property, and it's in a trust, and I'm the
13 Trustee, with the fiduciary responsibility of
14 looking after it for future generations. So with
15 that, now, I have dealt with the same people for
16 the wind turbines, which they have done everything
17 they're going to do, and they have said everything
18 they're going to say, and everything has worked
19 out great. And I think they have addressed all
20 the issues concerning any of the neighbors.

21 And the biggest thing is I just don't
22 think that anybody should be able to tell me what
23 to do with our land, as long as it's legal and not
24 harming anybody else. That does it.

25 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you. Are there

1 any questions for this witness --

2 MS. HERRNSTEIN: No questions.

3 JUDGE ST. JOHN: -- from counsel? All
4 right. Thank you for your testimony.

5 MR. THATCHER: Thank you.

6 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Next I have Jeff
7 Snyder. Please raise your right hand.

8 **JEFF SNYDER,**

9 WHO, BEING FIRST DULY SWORN,

10 TESTIFIED AS FOLLOWS:

11 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you. Please
12 state and -- please state and spell your name for
13 the record.

14 MR. SNYDER: My name is Jeff Snyder,
15 J-E-F-F, Snyder, S-N-Y-D-E-R.

16 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you. And
17 please provide your address?

18 MR. SNYDER: I'm representing the
19 School District. Do you want the School District
20 or my address?

21 JUDGE ST. JOHN: School address,
22 school address would be fine.

23 MR. SNYDER: 15945 Middle Point Road,
24 Van Wert, Ohio 45891.

25 JUDGE ST. JOHN: And what school

1 district are you in?

2 MR. SNYDER: Lincolnview Local.

3 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you. And is
4 the School District within the project area?

5 MR. SNYDER: The district and the
6 school encompasses a whole number of townships,
7 and this is one of them, Hoaglin Township.

8 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Okay. Thank you.
9 Please proceed with your testimony.

10 MR. SNYDER: Thank you. The
11 Lincolnview Local Schools Board of Education and
12 Administration would like to thank the Ohio Power
13 Siting Board for the invitation of today's local
14 hearing regarding the Wild Grains solar proposal.

15 Throughout this process, the
16 Lincolnview Local Schools would like to commend
17 the collaboration of this proposed project between
18 the Hoaglin Township Trustees, the Van Wert County
19 Commissioners, and Avangrid Renewables. All
20 parties had much discussion, conversation and
21 dialogue over a lengthy period of time.

22 The District's goal was and is to be a
23 team player in the process and work towards a
24 common objective for all. We want to thank all
25 entities for the amount of time and effort that

1 they have given regarding this proposed project,
2 and the potential opportunity this could be
3 financially to Lincolnview Local Schools, without
4 imposing our constituents with an additional tax
5 burden.

6 As we have done in the past, we will
7 continue to be good stewards of our financial
8 dollars, maintain and enhance our buildings and
9 ground, and also evolve our educational offerings
10 and needs of our students through new programming
11 and technology.

12 From a Van Wert County perspective, we
13 want to add to the growth and value of people
14 wanting to live here and prosper here.

15 In closing, thank you for allowing us
16 to present at today's hearing. Jeff Snyder.

17 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you. Are there
18 any questions for this witness?

19 MS. HERRNSTEIN: No questions.

20 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you for your
21 testimony. Next on my list, I have Kari Casto.
22 Please raise your right hand.

23 **KARI CASTO,**

24 WHO, BEING FIRST DULY SWORN,

25 TESTIFIED AS FOLLOWS:

1 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you. Please
2 state and spell your name for the record.

3 MS. CASTO: My name is Kari Casto,
4 K-A-R-I, C-A-S-T-O. And I live at 6671 Hoaglin
5 Center Road, Van Wert, Ohio.

6 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Do you live or work
7 within the project area?

8 MS. CASTO: I live within the area and
9 previously had a business located there too.

10 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you. Please
11 proceed with your testimony.

12 MS. CASTO: Good evening. My name is
13 Kari Casto. I am a landowner in Hoaglin Township,
14 a Lincolnview graduate, an educator, and local
15 business owner. I also have children attending
16 Lincolnview.

17 I am excited for my small community to
18 have the opportunity to expand in business
19 revenue. Our community has not always been open
20 to new business. We have pushed new business
21 opportunities away, because we do not like change.
22 I struggle with this as well, because I own a
23 business. Everyone goes where they have always
24 gone. I encourage my friends and neighbors to try
25 something outside the box. Try to understand the

1 rights of the landowners. Try to understand the
2 benefits for the community, the job opportunities,
3 and how our children and grandchildren will
4 benefit.

5 I guess I look at the solar farms in
6 -- in -- in a way, different way than most. As an
7 educator, local business owner, parent, landowner,
8 and neighbor to the possible solar farms, I ask
9 you to take into consideration all the
10 opportunities that our community stands to benefit
11 from. Our county, our township, our schools and
12 landowners, you are not being affected by
13 accepting these opportunities. However, you are
14 affecting the neighbors by speaking against
15 landowners' rights, the rights of your neighbors
16 to do what is in their best interest.

17 My grandmother is a landowner. It is
18 very important to me that we make the decisions
19 for her and make sure she is provided for. If
20 this was your parent, or grandparent, you would
21 want to do what was needed to make sure that they
22 were taken care of. I would not step in or
23 interfere with you taking care of your loved one.
24 I am asking for that same consideration for our
25 family.

1 Please hear the words that all of us
2 are speaking and let them sit in your heart.
3 Process our requests, and soften your stance on
4 solar panels. We all are neighbors and friends.
5 Allow us to do what is right for our families and
6 our farm ground, and we will do the same for you.
7 Thank you.

8 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you. Are
9 there any questions --

10 MS. HERRNSTEIN: No questions.

11 JUDGE ST. JOHN: -- for this
12 witness? Thank you.

13 Next on my list, I have Brad
14 Mauroz. Anyone here named Brad who signed up
15 to testify?

16 MR. MAUNZ: Bradley?

17 JUDGE ST. JOHN: If you signed up,
18 then this is you.

19 MR. MAUNZ: Yeah. I think I signed
20 up Bradley Maunz, so if you've got a Brad,
21 that ain't me, but Bradley.

22 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Well, this is the
23 last name on our list, so I think it might be.

24 MR. MAUNZ: If that's the last one,
25 that would be me. I talked at the last

1 meeting.

2 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Please raise your
3 right hand.

4 **BRADLEY MAUNZ,**

5 WHO, BEING FIRST DULY SWORN,

6 TESTIFIED AS FOLLOWS:

7 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Please state and
8 spell your name for the record.

9 MR. MAUNZ: My name is Bradley A.
10 Maunz, B-R-A-D-L-E-Y, M-A-U-N-Z.

11 JUDGE ST. JOHN: And please provide
12 your address.

13 MR. MAUNZ: 4108 John Yoh Road.

14 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Do you reside or work
15 within the project area?

16 MR. MAUNZ: I reside down the road
17 from Bob that talked earlier, right on the corner.
18 We're pretty much in the middle of the project,
19 like he said, or we're actually to the, more of
20 the west of the project.

21 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Okay. Thank you.
22 And please proceed with your testimony.

23 MR. MAUNZ: Okay. I talked at the
24 last meeting, and I -- I've heard everything
25 talked about about the -- the money. Nobody's

1 talked about the wildlife. That's what I talked
2 about the last meeting.

3 I know that the deer, and I talked
4 about the deer and stuff, and that really is no
5 big concern to the farmers, and I understand that.
6 However, I can tell you that the big woods that,
7 in the back, the biggest woods within probably
8 five miles, beside four miles of the operation, no
9 hunting allowed. The game wardens have already
10 talked to me about the woods being overpopulated,
11 and this and that. All I'm going to say about the
12 deer population, it don't matter, all the deer
13 aren't going to be able to go east. They're all
14 going to run to 127. There is going to be, I
15 would bet, four or five times more deer/car
16 accidents, which, I guess don't mean anything, to
17 the west of the project on 127. I have looked at
18 the map many times. I was here at the last one,
19 and there is no way around. They're going to all
20 go to 127. That's where they're going to cross.

21 I talked about the windmills, the
22 effect that it already had on us, the hunting. No
23 big deal.

24 The money, yes, like Bob said, I have
25 lived there for 30 years. I just got my house

1 paid for. Bought the house in '91. This will be
2 my 31st year there. All my kids went to
3 Lincolnview also. Got a nice, new school there.
4 I -- some of my kids went to the other schools,
5 the little ones, before they built the big one,
6 and we're paying the extra tax dollars now. That
7 doesn't bother me. So I don't think the money
8 needs all that -- the money needs to go to all
9 that schooling. That's -- that's one thing.

10 But as far as the last meeting, I
11 talked about both sides. I tried to put myself on
12 both sides of it, like these landowners, and I
13 understand they have older people that are, that
14 are going to -- 80 years old. My daddy is 84.
15 And that's -- they don't have to lease out the
16 land. My mom is 79, and she leases land out on
17 the other side of Van Wert County to a Neate
18 farmer, which is, she has him farming for her.
19 It's kind of a pain in the fanny for her to do
20 that, so I can see her, or these older people,
21 trying to -- to jump on that, the money, because
22 it would be a lot easier. I can understand that.
23 So I put myself on both sides, but I can't
24 understand why nobody, besides the deer and
25 turkeys, it's not that.

1 All you have to do, I have Googled, I
2 have brought, and nobody is going to get to see
3 them, but you can go to the internet, go to
4 Google, pull up solar farms and the effect on the
5 environment. Nobody's talked about the
6 environment. They talk about the money, money,
7 money.

8 It talks in here about ducks flying
9 over and their wings melting and falling to the
10 ground. I mean, all you have to do is -- is
11 research it. I've read hours and hours. There is
12 hundreds and hundreds of things on the internet.
13 It talks about all the ones that are already out
14 in -- in the -- in the California area, where the
15 tortoise turtle, remember years ago, when they
16 first started all these projects, the tortoise
17 turtle was a big thing. Well, that reptile, they,
18 it went -- pretty much went extinct, because the
19 heat in the ground. The reptiles, it tells you
20 all in this, that the reptiles in the creeks, it's
21 going to affect the frogs, it's going to affect
22 the turtles, muskrats, all of the reptiles are
23 going to be affected. Fish. Who knows? The fish
24 are going to get affected, and then they're going
25 to wind up in Lake Erie. Who knows what it's

1 going to do this close. All of these creeks flow
2 that way and end up there in the Maumee River.
3 Who knows? But all I know is all of these
4 articles talk about reptiles, birds, birds flying
5 over, and just literally their wings melting.

6 I mean, I guess I'm here to talk about
7 the reptiles and the animals forgot. I don't hunt
8 turtles and frogs. I hunt a little bit of deer,
9 but mostly just big racks. We don't, you know,
10 it's -- it's a -- it's a wildlife thing, like I
11 talked about with -- with the windmills. The deer
12 already are affected by the windmills, which I
13 know, the farmers don't care.

14 We -- we bought that property out
15 there. We love to hunt. Now, I go, instead of
16 coming out my door and walk into a creek that I
17 could hunt, it's just going to be worse. Instead
18 of walking out the door and actually not get in a
19 vehicle and walking and hunting wildlife, like
20 when I bought the property I expected to do, and
21 anybody that buys in the country, I grew up on the
22 other side of Van Wert County, my whole life, on
23 the -- on the other side, where they were going to
24 put windmills after our windmills, but I went to
25 some meetings over there, and between the people,

1 we got that got rid of. Mom -- mom and them would
2 have never loved -- she would have never wanted to
3 go through what we go through with the windmills
4 already.

5 You know, just out shooting the bow
6 yesterday and hearing the squeaking of a bearing
7 on the windmill close to me that's been squeaking
8 for two months. It's always windy out there. Go
9 to the pond, do a little fishing, you hear the
10 windmills.

11 They're saying they don't make no
12 noise, they're not going to affect the
13 environment. They do. All them things are right
14 in writing. All you have to do is Google solar
15 farms and impact on the environment. Tells you
16 hundreds and hundreds of scientists that go both
17 ways. Yes, they talk about, yes, this is a good
18 thing, windmills, or solar panels would be nice,
19 like they said, in areas where nobody lives, where
20 wildlife doesn't matter really as much. I mean,
21 wildlife always matters. Don't get me wrong
22 there, the ducks, turtles, anywhere they were
23 located, like the desert, where they put them and
24 they thought that would be great. They didn't
25 expect that. That -- that was 20 years ago. That

1 was some of the first places they went.

2 Now, I just want to know how many
3 people have actually went to where -- I know they
4 have all kinds of little ones, like we work out of
5 Fort Wayne every day. Over by Huntertown, they
6 have got like three acres in, three to four acres
7 of them solar panels, and they'll have the
8 seven-foot fence, so you can see the fence. You
9 can see what the fence is going to be around them.
10 They have them right off of going into Huntertown.
11 There is three, four acres. We look at them.
12 Seven-foot fence, barbed wire. But has anybody
13 ever been and went to where there is this many of
14 them? I've seen some fields -- I went to some
15 fields that were not even close, 4 or 500 acres in
16 an area. It was def -- it was crazy.

17 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Your --

18 MR. MAUNZ: We're talking about --

19 JUDGE ST. JOHN: -- your time is up.
20 Would you like to make a conclusion?

21 MR. MAUNZ: Was I supposed to get a
22 warning?

23 JUDGE ST. JOHN: I did hold the 30
24 seconds up --

25 MR. MAUNZ: I know you did.

1 JUDGE ST. JOHN: -- up here. Just if
2 you'd like to make any concluding statements.

3 MR. MAUNZ: Well, my -- when I bought
4 this house 30 years ago, my dad told me, he had a
5 car dealership in Van Wert back in the '70s,
6 before the energy crisis. He's eighty -- he's 83
7 now. And he told me, son, I bought a house here,
8 because my mother lived close. And I went to
9 Lincolnview School district. And my daddy always
10 told me that Van Wert County was the duck's A-hole
11 of Ohio. And now it's really getting close to, in
12 my eyes, actually seeing that.

13 The windmills were enough. We don't
14 need the solar. I think it's the farmers just
15 want to take the easy way out. Thank you.

16 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you for your
17 testimony.

18 MS. HERRNSTEIN: No questions.

19 JUDGE ST. JOHN: All right. And
20 this concludes the witnesses who have signed
21 up to testify. Is there anyone else present
22 this evening who would like to testify?

23 (No response.)

24 JUDGE ST. JOHN: All right. Seeing
25 none, thank you to everyone for their

1 participation this evening. We'd also like to
2 thank the Van Wert County Fairgrounds for
3 allowing us to use their facilities to conduct
4 this public hearing. And thank you to Trustee
5 Osting and Commissioner Wolfrum for attending.

6 The hearing is now concluded, and
7 the hearing transcript will be submitted on
8 the record for the Board's consideration in
9 this case. Thank you all and have a good
10 evening.

11 MAN: Judge, there are two other
12 sheets in the back that they can sign either
13 support or opposition of the project.

14 JUDGE ST. JOHN: Thank you.
15 Everyone -- everyone, there is -- I would like
16 to make just one quick announcement.
17 Everyone. Hey, everybody. Just want to make
18 one quick announcement. There are sign-up
19 sheets in the back. If all you would like to
20 say is whether you support or oppose the
21 project, there are sign-up sheets in the back
22 that you can sign your name. And again,
23 that's another way that you can let the Board
24 know. Thank you.

25 (Whereupon, at 6:46, the

1 proceedings concluded.)

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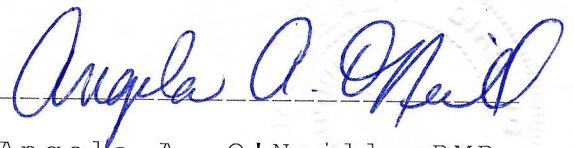
I, Angela A. O'Neill, Registered Merit Reporter, do hereby certify that the foregoing, consisting of 49 pages, is a true and complete transcript of the proceedings conducted on the 10th day of May, 2022, before Jacky St. John, Administrative Law Judge.

Angela A. O'Neill, RMR

My Comm Expires: Aug 2022

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Angela A. O'Neill, Registered Merit Reporter, do hereby certify that the foregoing, consisting of 49 pages, is a true and complete transcript of the proceedings conducted on the 10th day of May, 2022, before Jacky St. John, Administrative Law Judge.



Angela A. O'Neill, RMR .

My Comm Expires: Aug 2022

\$	4108 ^[1] - 40:13 419 ^[1] - 1:24 43209 ^[1] - 6:15 43215 ^[1] - 2:5 4508 ^[1] - 19:22 45882 ^[1] - 1:23 45891 ^[2] - 1:14, 34:24 49 ^[1] - 50:5	16:17 ad ^[3] - 4:25, 5:3, 5:9 add ^[3] - 15:11, 23:4, 36:13 addition ^[2] - 5:1, 17:24 additional ^[3] - 10:17, 12:20, 36:4 additionally ^[1] - 15:18 address ^[13] - 9:10, 11:11, 14:7, 19:20, 22:4, 24:7, 26:20, 32:17, 34:17, 34:20, 34:21, 34:22, 40:12 addressed ^[3] - 17:4, 22:8, 33:19 Administration ^[1] - 35:12 Administrative ^[2] - 4:17, 50:8 ADMINISTRATIVE ^[1] - 1:8 Affairs ^[1] - 6:1 affect ^[4] - 28:3, 43:21, 45:12 affected ^[5] - 7:25, 38:12, 43:23, 43:24, 44:12 affecting ^[1] - 38:14 affects ^[3] - 27:18, 30:8, 31:1 affirmation ^[1] - 9:8 ago ^[5] - 15:1, 21:1, 43:15, 45:25, 47:4 agreement ^[4] - 12:9, 17:25, 22:21, 22:24 agreements ^[1] - 28:11 agrees ^[1] - 20:8 ahead ^[1] - 4:7 ain't ^[1] - 39:21 Alfred ^[2] - 2:10, 5:8 Allen ^[3] - 29:8, 29:10, 31:12 allow ^[1] - 39:5 allowed ^[2] - 23:5, 41:9 allowing ^[5] - 16:23, 21:23, 22:15, 36:15, 48:3 alma ^[1] - 17:21 alongside ^[1] - 15:1 already-sprawling ^[1] - 28:18 altogether ^[1] - 28:15 amazes ^[1] - 15:5 amount ^[1] - 35:25 AND ^[1] - 1:5 Angela ^[3] - 1:22,	50:3, 50:12 angering ^[1] - 22:11 animals ^[1] - 44:7 announcement ^[2] - 48:16, 48:18 answer ^[5] - 8:4, 9:25, 25:5, 25:21, 25:22 anyway ^[1] - 23:8 appearance ^[1] - 6:25 APPEARANCES ^[1] - 2:1 appearances ^[1] - 6:11 appease ^[1] - 22:1 Applicant ^[2] - 6:16, 25:24 Application ^[1] - 4:12 application ^[4] - 7:12, 7:16, 7:24, 9:19 appointed ^[2] - 5:6, 5:8 appreciate ^[3] - 21:11, 25:12, 31:3 appreciated ^[1] - 17:4 appreciates ^[1] - 10:5 apprenticeship ^[1] - 12:15 appropriate ^[1] - 15:17 approval ^[1] - 11:24 approve ^[1] - 23:10 approved ^[2] - 12:18, 29:9 approving ^[2] - 12:25, 30:25 April ^[1] - 7:18 area ^[30] - 11:16, 11:19, 14:14, 19:25, 21:2, 22:6, 23:7, 24:11, 25:7, 26:24, 27:10, 27:22, 28:6, 28:10, 28:14, 28:20, 28:21, 28:23, 28:24, 29:2, 29:12, 29:21, 32:21, 32:25, 35:4, 37:7, 37:8, 40:15, 43:14, 46:16 areas ^[1] - 45:19 ARNOLD ^[1] - 7:1 Arnold ^[2] - 2:8, 7:2 article ^[1] - 31:18 articles ^[1] - 44:4 AS ^[9] - 11:5, 14:1, 19:14, 23:22, 26:13, 32:10, 34:10, 36:25, 40:6 aspect ^[1] - 8:8 aspects ^[2] - 17:13, 33:5 assigned ^[1] - 4:18	assistance ^[1] - 6:6 assisting ^[1] - 5:24 associated ^[1] - 12:10 assume ^[1] - 16:6 assured ^[1] - 29:17 attending ^[2] - 37:15, 48:5 attorney ^[1] - 18:19 attractive ^[1] - 17:13 Aug ^[1] - 50:13 Austin ^[1] - 30:14 available ^[1] - 6:4 Avangrid ^[8] - 2:7, 6:21, 12:9, 17:3, 18:2, 21:25, 22:19, 35:19 avoid ^[1] - 28:14 awful ^[1] - 30:4
1	5	B		
100 ^[3] - 2:4, 6:14, 30:15 1051 ^[1] - 32:18 1055 ^[1] - 1:13 10th ^[1] - 50:7 11 ^[1] - 3:4 1237 ^[1] - 6:19 127 ^[3] - 41:14, 41:17, 41:20 14 ^[1] - 3:4 150 ^[1] - 7:15 15314 ^[1] - 26:21 15945 ^[1] - 34:23 16 ^[1] - 7:16 18 ^[4] - 7:18, 11:23, 12:5, 12:25 19 ^[1] - 3:5	50 ^[2] - 18:11, 28:2 500 ^[1] - 46:15 52 ^[1] - 4:19 5308 ^[1] - 24:8	B-A-R-K-E-R ^[1] - 24:5 B-R-E-N-N-E-M-A-N ^[1] - 26:18 backhoes ^[1] - 12:3 bad ^[1] - 25:7 badge ^[1] - 6:3 banned ^[1] - 29:14 barbed ^[1] - 46:12 bare ^[1] - 30:3 Barker ^[3] - 3:5, 23:16, 24:4 BARKER ^[9] - 23:17, 23:20, 23:25, 24:4, 24:8, 24:12, 24:15, 24:18, 26:4 barn ^[2] - 20:24, 21:3 BARRY ^[2] - 32:8, 32:15 Barry ^[3] - 3:6, 32:7, 32:14 bearing ^[1] - 45:6 beautiful ^[1] - 29:22 beauty ^[1] - 15:19 become ^[1] - 28:9 BEFORE ^[1] - 1:8 began ^[1] - 17:2 begin ^[3] - 9:1, 10:22, 11:2 behalf ^[5] - 6:11, 6:16, 11:22, 13:17, 14:19 BEHALF ^[1] - 2:2 BEING ^[9] - 11:4, 13:25, 19:13, 23:21, 26:12, 32:9, 34:9, 36:24, 40:5 beneficial ^[2] - 22:23, 33:7 benefit ^[4] - 17:16, 27:13, 38:4, 38:10		
2	6			
20 ^[1] - 45:25 2021 ^[1] - 7:16 2022 ^[5] - 1:11, 7:18, 8:10, 50:7, 50:13 21-823-EL-BGN ^[2] - 1:2, 4:11 224 ^[1] - 26:21 227-2300 ^[1] - 2:5 24 ^[1] - 3:5 2412 ^[1] - 11:12 25th ^[1] - 8:10 26 ^[1] - 3:6	6 ^[1] - 4:6 614 ^[1] - 2:5 6423 ^[1] - 14:11 650 ^[1] - 27:9 6671 ^[1] - 37:4 669 ^[1] - 14:10 6729 ^[1] - 1:23 6:00 ^[1] - 1:12 6:46 ^[1] - 48:25			
3	7			
3 ^[1] - 1:11 30 ^[5] - 10:12, 21:1, 41:25, 46:23, 47:4 302-4039 ^[1] - 1:24 31st ^[1] - 42:2 32 ^[1] - 3:6 34 ^[1] - 3:7 37 ^[1] - 3:7	79 ^[1] - 42:16			
4	8			
4 ^[1] - 46:15 4.79 ^[1] - 29:2 40 ^[1] - 3:8	80 ^[1] - 42:14 83 ^[1] - 47:6 84 ^[1] - 42:14			
	9			
	A			
	A-hole ^[1] - 47:10 A-R-N-O-L-D ^[1] - 7:2 able ^[5] - 16:20, 20:21, 25:22, 33:22, 41:13 absolute ^[1] - 29:4 accepting ^[1] - 38:13 accessing ^[1] - 6:6 accidents ^[1] - 41:16 accurate ^[1] - 8:24 accurately ^[1] - 8:18 acknowledge ^[1] - 21:13 acres ^[5] - 27:9, 46:6, 46:11, 46:15 activity ^[2] - 15:9,			

benefits [3] - 12:15, 23:3, 38:2 beside [1] - 41:8 best [3] - 18:20, 21:14, 38:16 bet [1] - 41:15 better [2] - 4:4, 19:18 between [3] - 17:25, 35:17, 44:25 beyond [2] - 16:10, 22:1 big [6] - 41:5, 41:6, 41:23, 42:5, 43:17, 44:9 biggest [2] - 33:21, 41:7 Bill [1] - 4:19 birds [2] - 44:4 bit [1] - 44:8 Board [21] - 4:9, 5:5, 5:7, 5:24, 7:17, 7:19, 8:5, 8:12, 9:18, 9:25, 10:5, 12:24, 20:12, 25:25, 27:9, 28:4, 30:7, 31:2, 35:11, 35:13, 48:23 board [3] - 5:1, 5:3, 5:9 Board's [5] - 4:17, 6:5, 7:20, 8:10, 48:8 Bob [5] - 3:5, 23:16, 24:4, 40:17, 41:24 BOB [2] - 23:20, 24:4 bother [2] - 21:17, 42:7 bought [6] - 15:3, 42:1, 44:14, 44:20, 47:3, 47:7 Boulevard [1] - 32:19 bow [1] - 45:5 box [1] - 37:25 Brad [3] - 39:13, 39:14, 39:20 Bradley [5] - 3:8, 39:16, 39:20, 39:21, 40:9 BRADLEY [2] - 40:4, 40:10 BRENNEMAN [9] - 26:11, 26:16, 26:21, 26:25, 27:2, 27:5, 31:20, 31:23, 31:25 Brenneman [5] - 3:6, 26:10, 26:17, 27:6 Bricker [2] - 2:4, 6:14 bridges [1] - 12:4 briefly [1] - 30:20 bring [1] - 27:8 brings [1] - 28:20 brought [1] - 43:2	buffer [1] - 30:2 build [2] - 16:7, 28:13 buildings [1] - 36:8 built [3] - 12:5, 21:8, 42:5 bulldozers [1] - 12:3 burden [1] - 36:5 Bureau [2] - 2:8, 7:4 business [7] - 37:9, 37:15, 37:18, 37:20, 37:23, 38:7 buys [1] - 44:21	closing [2] - 23:4, 36:15 collaboration [1] - 35:17 Collins [1] - 19:3 Columbus [3] - 2:5, 6:15, 8:11 comfort [1] - 21:18 coming [1] - 44:16 Comm [1] - 50:13 commence [1] - 8:9 commend [1] - 35:16 comments [6] - 8:19, 9:24, 10:12, 10:17, 10:19, 11:1 commercial [1] - 21:2 commissioner [1] - 4:25 Commissioner [5] - 2:9, 5:6, 5:10, 5:18, 48:5 commissioners [3] - 4:21, 4:24, 18:1 Commissioners [3] - 5:6, 29:8, 35:19 common [1] - 35:24 communicating [1] - 17:3 community [9] - 4:23, 7:25, 17:15, 20:18, 27:19, 37:17, 37:19, 38:2, 38:10 COMPATIBILITY [1] - 1:5 Compatibility [1] - 4:14 compensate [1] - 22:25 compensation [2] - 18:3, 24:19 complaints [1] - 21:24 complete [1] - 50:5 completely [1] - 15:20 complex [1] - 29:24 comprehension [1] - 16:11 concern [3] - 28:6, 28:21, 41:5 concerned [1] - 22:12 concerning [3] - 6:5, 29:20, 33:20 concerns [5] - 17:5, 22:2, 22:5, 30:8, 33:3 concluded [2] - 48:6, 49:1 concludes [1] - 47:20 concluding [1] - 47:2 conclusion [1] - 46:20 conduct [1] - 48:3	conducted [1] - 50:6 consider [2] - 16:23, 28:4 consideration [5] - 21:16, 30:17, 38:9, 38:24, 48:8 considered [2] - 9:16, 15:25 consisting [1] - 50:5 constituents [1] - 36:4 constructing [1] - 7:13 contained [2] - 28:23, 29:11 containing [1] - 29:6 continue [4] - 12:16, 22:9, 22:16, 36:7 contractors [1] - 12:11 conversation [1] - 35:20 Convoy [1] - 19:22 cooperation [1] - 22:20 copy [1] - 8:22 corn [2] - 20:19, 22:17 corner [5] - 29:1, 29:2, 29:3, 40:17 counsel [7] - 7:6, 7:8, 13:4, 18:22, 25:23, 32:2, 34:3 country [5] - 22:18, 25:12, 33:6, 33:7, 44:21 countryside [1] - 29:22 countryside's [1] - 15:19 County [14] - 1:13, 5:5, 7:15, 17:19, 22:22, 29:8, 29:10, 31:12, 35:18, 36:12, 42:17, 44:22, 47:10, 48:2 county [6] - 4:20, 4:24, 15:7, 16:12, 29:15, 38:11 couple [1] - 9:20 course [4] - 15:10, 16:9, 16:16, 18:8 court [3] - 8:16, 8:18, 8:22 Court [1] - 6:19 crazy [1] - 46:16 create [1] - 12:19 creek [1] - 44:16 Creek [1] - 28:25 creeks [2] - 43:20, 44:1 creep [2] - 27:17, 28:7	crisis [1] - 47:6 cross [1] - 41:20 curious [1] - 25:18
D				
D-O-V-E [1] - 14:5 dad [2] - 14:25, 47:4 daddy [2] - 42:14, 47:9 dairy [1] - 21:3 DALE [1] - 7:2 Dale [2] - 2:8, 7:2 damage [2] - 28:11, 29:7 Daniel [1] - 13:10 DATE [1] - 1:11 deal [1] - 41:23 dealership [1] - 47:5 dealt [1] - 33:15 decide [3] - 9:21, 9:23, 28:17 decision [1] - 9:18 decisions [1] - 38:18 deeply [1] - 27:18 deer [7] - 41:3, 41:4, 41:12, 42:24, 44:8, 44:11 deer/car [1] - 41:15 def [1] - 46:16 deliberately [1] - 16:1 denied [1] - 20:13 Department [2] - 4:18, 6:1 depreciation [1] - 25:18 describe [1] - 30:10 desert [2] - 25:12, 45:23 designee [2] - 4:25, 5:3 desirable [1] - 29:24 desire [2] - 18:4, 20:14 despite [1] - 15:5 details [1] - 15:11 determination [1] - 7:21 determined [2] - 15:16, 16:4 devalue [1] - 25:2 devastating [1] - 27:21 develop [1] - 15:2 Developer [1] - 6:19 developer [1] - 6:20 development [16] - 27:10, 27:17, 27:19, 28:7, 28:10, 28:14, 28:18, 28:21, 29:1, 29:9, 29:11, 29:14,				

<p>29:16, 30:16, 31:4, 31:8</p> <p>dialogue [1] - 35:21</p> <p>dictate [2] - 14:24, 16:24</p> <p>dictated [1] - 20:17</p> <p>different [2] - 27:8, 38:6</p> <p>direction [1] - 16:6</p> <p>directly [1] - 31:1</p> <p>Director [1] - 7:3</p> <p>discretion [1] - 20:20</p> <p>discussion [1] - 35:20</p> <p>disgusting [1] - 15:13</p> <p>distance [1] - 28:25</p> <p>District [3] - 34:19, 35:4</p> <p>district [3] - 35:1, 35:5, 47:9</p> <p>District's [1] - 35:22</p> <p>docket [1] - 9:25</p> <p>documents [1] - 6:7</p> <p>dollars [2] - 36:8, 42:6</p> <p>done [5] - 20:18, 25:5, 28:12, 33:16, 36:6</p> <p>door [2] - 44:16, 44:18</p> <p>Dove [3] - 3:4, 13:14, 14:5</p> <p>DOVE [6] - 13:17, 13:24, 14:4, 14:9, 14:15, 14:18</p> <p>down [2] - 23:17, 40:16</p> <p>Dr [1] - 30:13</p> <p>drive [1] - 12:4</p> <p>duck's [1] - 47:10</p> <p>ducks [2] - 43:8, 45:22</p> <p>due [1] - 15:13</p> <p>DULY [9] - 11:4, 13:25, 19:13, 23:21, 26:12, 32:9, 34:9, 36:24, 40:5</p> <p>during [2] - 25:15, 30:22</p>	<p>38:7</p> <p>effect [3] - 27:21, 41:22, 43:4</p> <p>effort [1] - 35:25</p> <p>eighty [1] - 47:6</p> <p>either [3] - 13:7, 25:16, 48:12</p> <p>electric [1] - 7:14</p> <p>Electrical [1] - 21:7</p> <p>Ellen [3] - 3:4, 13:14, 14:4</p> <p>ELLEN [2] - 13:24, 14:4</p> <p>employer [1] - 17:20</p> <p>employment [1] - 12:13</p> <p>encompasses [1] - 35:6</p> <p>encourage [3] - 12:23, 22:9, 37:24</p> <p>end [2] - 17:1, 44:2</p> <p>energy [7] - 12:21, 33:4, 33:5, 33:6, 33:8, 33:9, 47:6</p> <p>Energy [1] - 7:3</p> <p>engage [1] - 15:9</p> <p>Engineers [1] - 11:23</p> <p>engineers [1] - 12:1</p> <p>enhance [1] - 36:8</p> <p>enjoy [3] - 15:12, 15:18, 17:22</p> <p>ensure [2] - 8:23, 18:4</p> <p>entered [1] - 22:24</p> <p>entire [1] - 18:7</p> <p>entities [2] - 17:16, 35:25</p> <p>environment [4] - 43:5, 43:6, 45:13, 45:15</p> <p>Environmental [1] - 4:14</p> <p>ENVIRONMENTAL [1] - 1:5</p> <p>equipment [1] - 12:2</p> <p>Erie [1] - 43:25</p> <p>especially [3] - 21:10, 25:14, 30:25</p> <p>ESQ [1] - 2:3</p> <p>established [1] - 28:8</p> <p>estate [1] - 18:10</p> <p>ethic [1] - 15:4</p> <p>evening [16] - 4:1, 4:2, 4:5, 5:11, 5:15, 5:21, 6:2, 6:24, 14:18, 23:18, 27:5, 32:6, 37:12, 47:22, 48:1, 48:10</p> <p>evening's [1] - 7:22</p> <p>evidence [1] - 8:13</p> <p>evidentiary [2] - 8:9,</p>	<p>8:11</p> <p>evolve [1] - 36:9</p> <p>excavators [1] - 12:3</p> <p>excellent [1] - 16:4</p> <p>excited [1] - 37:17</p> <p>excuse [1] - 4:22</p> <p>exhibit [1] - 31:22</p> <p>expand [2] - 28:17, 37:18</p> <p>expect [3] - 12:20, 20:21, 45:25</p> <p>expected [2] - 28:2, 44:20</p> <p>Expires [1] - 50:13</p> <p>expressed [1] - 18:16</p> <p>expressing [1] - 20:12</p> <p>extinct [1] - 43:18</p> <p>extra [1] - 42:6</p> <p>eyes [1] - 47:12</p> <p>eyesore [1] - 30:11</p>	<p>fear [1] - 28:15</p> <p>FEASBY [8] - 19:4, 19:9, 19:12, 19:17, 19:22, 20:1, 20:4, 20:11</p> <p>Feasby [3] - 3:5, 19:2, 19:17</p> <p>feet [1] - 30:15</p> <p>fellow [1] - 12:6</p> <p>FEMALE [1] - 4:4</p> <p>fence [4] - 46:8, 46:9, 46:12</p> <p>few [2] - 15:11, 20:15</p> <p>fiduciary [1] - 33:13</p> <p>field [2] - 13:14, 27:24</p> <p>fields [3] - 31:9, 46:14, 46:15</p> <p>Fife [1] - 28:25</p> <p>file [2] - 9:24, 10:19</p> <p>filed [3] - 7:12, 7:16, 7:17</p> <p>final [2] - 7:21, 9:18</p> <p>financial [1] - 36:7</p> <p>financially [1] - 36:3</p> <p>fine [1] - 34:22</p> <p>finish [2] - 8:25, 10:2</p> <p>firmly [1] - 22:15</p> <p>FIRST [9] - 11:4, 13:25, 19:13, 23:21, 26:12, 32:9, 34:9, 36:24, 40:5</p> <p>first [6] - 6:12, 10:23, 17:2, 27:23, 43:16, 46:1</p> <p>fish [2] - 43:23</p> <p>fishing [1] - 45:9</p> <p>fit [1] - 18:13</p> <p>five [5] - 10:10, 10:13, 21:3, 41:8, 41:15</p> <p>flow [1] - 44:1</p> <p>flying [2] - 43:8, 44:4</p> <p>folks [2] - 5:13, 33:11</p> <p>FOLLOWS [9] - 11:5, 14:1, 19:14, 23:22, 26:13, 32:10, 34:10, 36:25, 40:6</p> <p>food [1] - 30:22</p> <p>foot [2] - 46:8, 46:12</p> <p>footprint [2] - 28:16, 29:5</p> <p>FOR [1] - 1:4</p> <p>foregoing [1] - 50:4</p> <p>forgot [1] - 44:7</p> <p>forklifts [1] - 12:3</p> <p>forms [1] - 33:6</p> <p>Fort [2] - 20:25, 46:5</p> <p>forward [1] - 23:2</p> <p>fossil [1] - 33:8</p> <p>four [5] - 15:1, 41:8,</p>	<p>41:15, 46:6, 46:11</p> <p>friends [2] - 37:24, 39:4</p> <p>frogs [2] - 43:21, 44:8</p> <p>front [1] - 10:25</p> <p>frustration [1] - 20:13</p> <p>fuels [1] - 33:8</p> <p>future [7] - 27:12, 27:17, 28:7, 28:17, 29:11, 29:15, 33:14</p>
G				
<p>gain [1] - 18:5</p> <p>game [1] - 41:9</p> <p>garden [1] - 20:22</p> <p>general [1] - 6:8</p> <p>generates [1] - 27:14</p> <p>Generating [1] - 21:7</p> <p>generation [1] - 7:14</p> <p>generations [1] - 33:14</p> <p>generous [1] - 23:3</p> <p>gerrymandered [2] - 27:19, 28:21</p> <p>GIROD [3] - 13:20, 13:24, 14:5</p> <p>Girod [5] - 3:4, 13:14, 13:15, 14:4, 18:10</p> <p>given [1] - 36:1</p> <p>goal [1] - 35:22</p> <p>golf [1] - 16:9</p> <p>Google [3] - 29:3, 43:4, 45:14</p> <p>Googled [1] - 43:1</p> <p>Government [1] - 7:4</p> <p>graduate [1] - 37:14</p> <p>GRAINS [2] - 1:3, 2:2</p> <p>Grains [11] - 4:13, 6:12, 7:12, 11:24, 12:18, 12:25, 14:21, 16:2, 27:10, 31:7, 35:14</p> <p>grandchildren [2] - 28:3, 38:3</p> <p>grandmother [1] - 38:17</p> <p>grandparent [1] - 38:20</p> <p>great [3] - 22:3, 33:19, 45:24</p> <p>grew [1] - 44:21</p> <p>ground [8] - 16:9, 16:19, 30:21, 31:10, 36:9, 39:6, 43:10, 43:19</p> <p>grow [1] - 12:16</p> <p>grown [2] - 16:25, 30:3</p> <p>growth [3] - 21:10,</p>				

28:16, 36:13 guess [3] - 38:5, 41:16, 44:6	hole [1] - 47:10 home [7] - 24:22, 25:1, 28:12, 28:13, 29:22, 30:1, 31:11 homeowner [2] - 17:5, 27:6 homeowners [7] - 18:3, 22:13, 22:25, 23:7, 24:19, 25:7, 29:25 homes [3] - 16:8, 21:18, 30:15 Honor [1] - 7:1 hope [1] - 27:7 horizon [1] - 15:19 hours [2] - 43:11 house [6] - 20:24, 21:8, 41:25, 42:1, 47:4, 47:7 huge [1] - 21:6 hundreds [5] - 21:5, 43:12, 45:16 hunt [4] - 44:7, 44:8, 44:15, 44:17 Huntertown [2] - 46:5, 46:10 hunting [3] - 41:9, 41:22, 44:19	instead [3] - 21:23, 44:15, 44:17 interest [2] - 18:20, 38:16 interfere [1] - 38:23 internet [2] - 43:3, 43:12 introduction [1] - 9:1 Inverness [1] - 6:19 investigation [1] - 7:18 invitation [1] - 35:13 inviting [1] - 9:1 involved [3] - 16:2, 22:21, 23:3 isolated [1] - 21:1 issue [5] - 14:22, 27:18, 27:23, 28:2, 31:1 issues [3] - 22:8, 30:18, 33:20	40:21, 46:17, 46:19, 46:23, 47:1, 47:16, 47:19, 47:24, 48:14 john [2] - 23:23, 50:7 join [1] - 5:10 judge [1] - 48:11 Judge [2] - 4:17, 50:8 JUDGE [88] - 1:8, 4:1, 4:5, 5:15, 5:18, 5:21, 6:22, 7:10, 11:6, 11:10, 11:15, 11:20, 13:2, 13:6, 13:12, 13:19, 13:22, 14:2, 14:6, 14:13, 14:16, 18:21, 18:25, 19:7, 19:10, 19:15, 19:19, 19:24, 20:3, 20:9, 23:11, 23:14, 23:18, 23:23, 24:2, 24:6, 24:10, 24:14, 24:16, 25:20, 26:5, 26:8, 26:14, 26:19, 26:23, 27:1, 27:3, 31:16, 31:21, 31:24, 32:1, 32:5, 32:11, 32:16, 32:20, 32:23, 33:1, 33:25, 34:3, 34:6, 34:11, 34:16, 34:21, 34:25, 35:3, 35:8, 36:17, 36:20, 37:1, 37:6, 37:10, 39:8, 39:11, 39:17, 39:22, 40:2, 40:7, 40:11, 40:14, 40:21, 46:17, 46:19, 46:23, 47:1, 47:16, 47:19, 47:24, 48:14 jump [1] - 42:21	kitchen [1] - 21:6 known [1] - 19:18 knows [3] - 43:23, 43:25, 44:3
H	I	J	K	L
hand [9] - 11:2, 13:23, 19:11, 23:19, 26:10, 32:7, 34:7, 36:22, 40:3 hard [2] - 15:1, 22:20 harm [1] - 20:18 harming [1] - 33:24 healthcare [1] - 12:15 hear [4] - 4:3, 4:18, 39:1, 45:9 heard [3] - 24:18, 24:20, 40:24 HEARING [1] - 1:1 hearing [20] - 4:7, 4:10, 5:24, 6:8, 7:11, 7:23, 8:3, 8:7, 8:9, 8:12, 8:15, 10:4, 10:6, 26:2, 35:14, 36:16, 45:6, 48:4, 48:6, 48:7 heart [1] - 39:2 heat [1] - 43:19 heavy [1] - 12:2 heir [1] - 27:12 held [1] - 22:4 help [1] - 17:7 helpful [1] - 8:21 hereby [1] - 50:4 HERRNSTEIN [10] - 2:3, 6:13, 13:5, 18:24, 23:13, 26:7, 34:2, 36:19, 39:10, 47:18 hERRNSTEIN [1] - 32:4 Herrnstein [1] - 6:14 high [1] - 12:14 high-paying [1] - 12:14 highly [1] - 30:20 highly-productive [1] - 30:20 Hoaglin [19] - 5:7, 14:11, 14:12, 17:19, 18:2, 18:3, 22:22, 26:22, 27:7, 27:22, 28:15, 29:20, 30:6, 30:23, 31:14, 35:7, 35:18, 37:4, 37:13 hoc [3] - 5:1, 5:3, 5:9 hog [2] - 15:12, 21:4 hogs [1] - 15:15 hold [1] - 46:23 holding [1] - 10:11	illegal [3] - 15:9, 16:16, 18:14 imagery [1] - 29:4 imagine [2] - 29:21, 29:24 immediate [1] - 28:24 impact [2] - 12:20, 45:15 important [1] - 38:18 imposing [1] - 36:4 IN [1] - 1:2 include [2] - 16:16, 27:15 including [4] - 11:11, 14:7, 17:6, 19:20 increase [1] - 24:22 Indiana [2] - 6:20, 21:21 indicated [2] - 5:14, 5:20 indicates [1] - 30:14 individual [1] - 10:23 individuals [7] - 5:25, 6:3, 9:2, 12:2, 14:23, 19:2, 26:2 industrial [2] - 29:13, 29:23 industry [1] - 12:17 insecurity [1] - 30:22	Jacky [2] - 4:16, 50:7 JACKY [1] - 1:9 Jeff [7] - 2:7, 3:7, 6:17, 6:18, 34:6, 34:14, 36:16 JEFF [2] - 34:8, 34:15 job [2] - 21:19, 38:2 jobs [2] - 12:19, 12:24 John [3] - 4:16, 24:8, 40:13 JOHN [87] - 1:9, 4:1, 4:5, 5:15, 5:18, 5:21, 6:22, 7:10, 11:6, 11:10, 11:15, 11:20, 13:2, 13:6, 13:12, 13:19, 13:22, 14:2, 14:6, 14:13, 14:16, 18:21, 18:25, 19:7, 19:10, 19:15, 19:19, 19:24, 20:3, 20:9, 23:11, 23:14, 23:18, 24:2, 24:6, 24:10, 24:14, 24:16, 25:20, 26:5, 26:8, 26:14, 26:19, 26:23, 27:1, 27:3, 31:16, 31:21, 31:24, 32:1, 32:5, 32:11, 32:16, 32:20, 32:23, 33:1, 33:25, 34:3, 34:6, 34:11, 34:16, 34:21, 34:25, 35:3, 35:8, 36:17, 36:20, 37:1, 37:6, 37:10, 39:8, 39:11, 39:17, 39:22, 40:2, 40:7, 40:11, 40:14,	Kara [1] - 6:14 KARA [1] - 2:3 KARI [2] - 36:23, 37:4 Kari [4] - 3:7, 36:21, 37:3, 37:13 KEATON [2] - 26:11, 26:17 Keaton [4] - 3:6, 26:9, 26:16, 27:6 keep [1] - 10:9 kherrnstein@bricker .com [1] - 2:6 kids [2] - 42:2, 42:4 kind [2] - 25:6, 42:19 kinds [1] - 46:4 KIP [1] - 11:8 Kip [3] - 3:4, 10:24, 11:8 KIPTON [1] - 11:3	lack [2] - 27:17, 29:5 Lake [1] - 43:25 land [16] - 16:5, 16:7, 16:15, 16:21, 16:24, 16:25, 18:12, 19:6, 20:14, 20:17, 22:3, 27:13, 31:7, 33:23, 42:16 landowner [12] - 15:6, 16:3, 16:14, 16:18, 17:5, 17:11, 18:9, 19:5, 20:16, 37:13, 38:7, 38:17 landowners [9] - 15:22, 17:9, 17:17, 20:13, 21:14, 22:4, 38:1, 38:12, 42:12 landowners' [1] - 38:15 landscape [2] - 17:7, 22:14 large [1] - 22:2 largest [1] - 30:8 last [9] - 18:14, 28:2, 39:23, 39:24, 39:25, 40:24, 41:2, 41:18, 42:10 LAW [1] - 1:8 law [1] - 20:5 Law [2] - 4:17, 50:8 lawn [1] - 20:23 lawyers [1] - 24:20 lays [1] - 30:3 Lead [1] - 6:19 leads [1] - 29:19 lease [2] - 28:10, 42:15 leases [1] - 42:16 leasing [1] - 31:7 leave [1] - 10:4 left [1] - 10:12 legal [6] - 7:6, 7:8, 15:16, 15:23, 18:12, 33:23 Legal [1] - 4:18 legally [1] - 16:20 length [1] - 10:10 lengthy [1] - 35:21 less [2] - 21:7, 30:16 letter [2] - 20:11, 20:15 life [2] - 21:18, 44:22 lifelong [1] - 14:25

<p>likely [2] - 6:1, 12:5 likewise [1] - 22:10 Lima [1] - 29:12 limit [2] - 29:7, 29:15 limits [1] - 10:15 Lincolnview [10] - 17:20, 18:1, 22:23, 35:11, 35:16, 36:3, 37:14, 37:16, 42:3, 47:9 lincolnview [1] - 35:2 list [10] - 10:24, 13:9, 13:13, 17:22, 19:1, 23:15, 26:9, 36:21, 39:13, 39:23 listed [1] - 13:13 literally [1] - 44:5 live [9] - 14:10, 24:15, 31:8, 32:18, 32:20, 36:14, 37:4, 37:6, 37:8 lived [3] - 15:11, 41:25, 47:8 lives [2] - 31:12, 45:19 living [4] - 15:15, 15:23, 18:13, 31:3 LLC [5] - 1:4, 2:2, 4:13, 6:12, 7:13 Local [11] - 7:3, 11:23, 12:5, 12:11, 12:25, 17:21, 18:1, 35:2, 35:11, 35:16, 36:3 LOCAL [1] - 1:1 local [6] - 7:25, 29:7, 29:16, 35:13, 37:14, 38:7 located [2] - 37:9, 45:23 locations [1] - 28:23 longevity [1] - 27:24 look [7] - 22:14, 22:17, 28:22, 30:4, 31:12, 38:5, 46:11 looked [1] - 41:17 looking [3] - 30:5, 31:13, 33:14 losing [1] - 25:4 loss [1] - 22:3 love [1] - 44:15 loved [2] - 38:23, 45:2 lower [1] - 29:18</p>	<p>29:9, 41:18 March [1] - 20:12 massive [1] - 30:21 mater [1] - 17:21 Matter [1] - 4:12 matter [3] - 21:11, 41:12, 45:20 MATTER [1] - 1:2 matters [1] - 45:21 Maumee [1] - 44:2 Maunz [3] - 3:8, 39:20, 40:10 MAUNZ [12] - 39:16, 39:19, 39:24, 40:4, 40:9, 40:13, 40:16, 40:23, 46:18, 46:21, 46:25, 47:3 Mauroz [1] - 39:14 mean [5] - 25:5, 41:16, 43:10, 44:6, 45:20 measured [1] - 29:3 meeting [5] - 14:20, 40:1, 40:24, 41:2, 42:10 meetings [2] - 22:4, 44:25 megawatts [1] - 7:15 melting [2] - 43:9, 44:5 member [2] - 5:1, 5:4 members [4] - 5:9, 5:23, 12:5, 25:24 membership [1] - 12:13 men [1] - 12:24 mention [1] - 30:19 Merit [1] - 50:3 Michigan [1] - 21:21 microphone [1] - 11:1 middle [4] - 24:12, 29:23, 31:3, 40:18 Middle [1] - 34:23 MIDWEST [1] - 1:22 might [3] - 16:8, 23:4, 39:23 mile [1] - 21:8 miles [5] - 21:3, 21:4, 29:2, 41:8 mind [2] - 18:17, 19:8 mine [1] - 14:9 minutes [2] - 10:11, 10:14 mission [2] - 27:16, 28:7 mom [9] - 13:18, 14:19, 15:1, 16:3, 18:11, 18:17, 42:16, 45:1 mom's [3] - 15:5, 17:20, 18:20</p>	<p>Mone [1] - 21:6 money [11] - 12:21, 25:3, 25:4, 40:25, 41:24, 42:7, 42:8, 42:21, 43:6, 43:7 months [1] - 45:8 most [3] - 12:5, 25:13, 38:6 mostly [1] - 44:9 mother [3] - 14:20, 20:5, 47:8 mother-in-law [1] - 20:5 moved [2] - 20:25, 21:9 MR [53] - 6:18, 7:1, 11:8, 11:12, 11:17, 11:22, 13:11, 19:4, 19:9, 19:17, 19:22, 20:1, 20:4, 20:11, 23:17, 23:25, 24:4, 24:8, 24:12, 24:15, 24:18, 26:4, 26:16, 26:21, 26:25, 27:2, 27:5, 31:20, 31:23, 31:25, 32:14, 32:18, 32:22, 32:24, 33:3, 34:5, 34:14, 34:18, 34:23, 35:2, 35:5, 35:10, 39:16, 39:19, 39:24, 40:9, 40:13, 40:16, 40:23, 46:18, 46:21, 46:25, 47:3 MS [20] - 2:3, 6:13, 13:5, 13:17, 13:20, 14:4, 14:9, 14:15, 14:18, 18:24, 23:13, 26:7, 32:4, 34:2, 36:19, 37:3, 37:8, 37:12, 39:10, 47:18 MURLEN [2] - 19:12, 19:18 Murlen [2] - 3:5, 19:17 muskrats [1] - 43:22</p>	<p>NEED [1] - 1:6 Need [1] - 4:15 need [2] - 6:6, 47:14 needed [1] - 38:21 needs [4] - 30:16, 36:10, 42:8 neighbor [3] - 15:14, 20:22, 38:8 neighbors [5] - 33:20, 37:24, 38:14, 38:15, 39:4 never [2] - 45:2 new [6] - 4:20, 20:15, 36:10, 37:20, 42:3 Next [1] - 39:13 next [11] - 9:23, 13:9, 13:12, 15:11, 19:1, 23:15, 26:9, 29:19, 32:6, 34:6, 36:21 nice [3] - 21:1, 42:3, 45:18 nobody [3] - 42:24, 43:2, 45:19 nobody's [2] - 40:25, 43:5 noise [2] - 21:17, 45:12 none [1] - 47:25 north [1] - 21:5 Northern [1] - 21:21 northwest [1] - 29:1 note [1] - 20:5 notes [2] - 7:7, 9:20 nothing [1] - 18:14 November [1] - 7:16 nuclear [1] - 33:8 Number [1] - 4:11 number [3] - 16:5, 17:15, 35:6 numerous [1] - 12:13 Nussbaum [1] - 13:10 NUSSBAUM [1] - 13:11</p>	<p>2:5, 2:8, 4:9, 6:15, 7:4, 11:13, 12:21, 12:23, 14:11, 19:23, 21:22, 24:9, 25:14, 30:6, 34:24, 35:12, 37:5, 47:11 old [1] - 42:14 older [2] - 42:13, 42:20 ON [1] - 2:2 once [7] - 9:5, 10:2, 15:14, 15:21, 27:24, 28:8, 33:9 one [17] - 4:24, 5:2, 8:8, 18:7, 18:10, 28:12, 30:7, 31:17, 33:3, 35:7, 38:23, 39:24, 41:18, 42:5, 42:9, 48:16, 48:18 One [1] - 17:13 ones [3] - 42:5, 43:13, 46:4 open [1] - 37:19 operate [1] - 12:2 Operating [1] - 11:23 operating [1] - 12:1 operation [1] - 41:8 opportunities [6] - 4:20, 12:14, 37:21, 38:2, 38:10, 38:13 opportunity [6] - 8:5, 10:8, 16:1, 30:24, 36:2, 37:18 oppose [3] - 22:9, 27:14, 48:20 opposition [2] - 22:7, 48:13 OPSB [1] - 6:3 order [1] - 18:13 Osting [5] - 2:10, 5:8, 5:10, 5:12, 48:5 OSTING [1] - 5:17 outcomes [1] - 17:22 outside [2] - 15:13, 37:25 overlooked [1] - 33:4 overpopulated [1] - 41:10 own [6] - 16:15, 16:24, 20:1, 32:22, 33:11, 37:22 owner [2] - 37:15, 38:7 owners [1] - 29:17 owns [1] - 20:5</p>
<p>M</p>	<p>M</p>	<p>N</p>	<p>O</p>	<p>P</p>
<p>M-A-U-N-Z [1] - 40:10 Maddox [1] - 28:24 Madison [1] - 32:18 maintain [1] - 36:8 MAN [1] - 48:11 map [4] - 27:19, 28:22,</p>	<p>M</p>	<p>name [24] - 4:16, 7:2, 9:10, 9:22, 11:7, 14:3, 19:16, 19:17, 20:4, 24:3, 26:15, 26:16, 27:5, 32:12, 32:14, 34:12, 34:14, 37:2, 37:3, 37:12, 39:23, 40:8, 40:9, 48:22 named [1] - 39:14 near [2] - 22:25, 28:13 Neate [1] - 42:17 necessarily [1] - 7:20</p>	<p>o'clock [1] - 4:6 O'Neill [3] - 1:22, 50:3, 50:12 oath [1] - 9:7 object [1] - 23:7 objective [1] - 35:24 observe [2] - 7:7, 10:3 OF [3] - 1:2, 1:4, 2:2 offerings [1] - 36:9 offices [1] - 8:10 official [1] - 9:17 officials [1] - 22:23 often [1] - 15:12 Ohio [20] - 1:14, 1:23,</p>	<p>p.m [1] - 1:12 package [1] - 18:7</p>

<p>PAGE [1] - 3:2 pages [1] - 50:5 paid [2] - 15:3, 42:1 pain [1] - 42:19 panel [12] - 14:21, 16:2, 17:14, 17:23, 27:17, 28:7, 28:10, 28:14, 28:18, 28:22, 29:11, 29:14 panels [15] - 18:15, 20:20, 21:16, 21:20, 25:13, 27:11, 27:25, 29:16, 30:2, 30:3, 30:10, 30:25, 39:4, 45:18, 46:7 paper [1] - 30:12 parent [2] - 38:7, 38:20 parents [1] - 15:3 part [2] - 7:5, 9:16 participants [1] - 30:14 participate [2] - 4:22 participation [2] - 10:6, 48:1 parties [6] - 6:11, 6:23, 8:1, 8:12, 9:13, 35:20 pass [2] - 9:23, 13:11 passage [1] - 4:19 passed [2] - 6:1, 14:25 passionately [1] - 27:14 past [2] - 17:12, 36:6 paying [3] - 12:14, 18:10, 42:6 payments [1] - 27:13 Payne [1] - 19:22 people [9] - 13:13, 15:18, 28:14, 33:15, 36:13, 42:13, 42:20, 44:25, 46:3 perform [1] - 12:10 period [1] - 35:21 permanence [1] - 27:16 permitted [2] - 9:4, 9:14 person [3] - 9:3, 13:9, 13:13 perspective [1] - 36:12 perspectives [1] - 27:8 petition [1] - 30:5 place [1] - 4:11 PLACE [1] - 1:13 places [2] - 25:11, 46:1 placing [1] - 29:23</p>	<p>plan [1] - 8:16 planning [1] - 15:9 Plant [1] - 21:7 plant [2] - 20:19, 20:22 player [1] - 35:23 plots [1] - 16:7 Point [1] - 34:23 point [1] - 29:19 Policy [1] - 7:4 pond [1] - 45:9 popping [1] - 21:20 population [1] - 41:12 position [1] - 31:9 possible [2] - 22:16, 38:8 potential [1] - 36:2 power [1] - 18:19 Power [5] - 4:9, 12:23, 25:25, 30:7, 35:12 powered [1] - 7:14 practical [1] - 27:25 prefer [1] - 9:24 prepared [1] - 8:20 present [5] - 6:23, 9:6, 14:19, 36:16, 47:21 preserve [2] - 17:7, 22:14 pretty [2] - 40:18, 43:18 previous [1] - 17:20 previously [1] - 37:9 primary [2] - 18:8, 19:5 prime [1] - 25:9 proceed [9] - 11:21, 14:17, 20:10, 24:17, 27:4, 33:2, 35:9, 37:11, 40:22 proceedings [2] - 49:1, 50:6 process [5] - 6:5, 8:8, 35:15, 35:23, 39:3 productive [1] - 30:20 Professional [1] - 1:25 programming [1] - 36:10 programs [1] - 12:16 progress [2] - 21:10, 22:10 project [45] - 5:9, 8:1, 8:6, 8:14, 9:3, 9:5, 9:12, 11:16, 11:19, 11:25, 12:10, 12:19, 12:22, 13:1, 14:14, 16:3, 17:14, 17:17, 17:23, 18:6, 19:25, 22:3, 22:9, 22:25, 23:2, 23:8, 23:10,</p>	<p>24:11, 26:24, 27:16, 27:20, 27:24, 29:6, 32:21, 32:24, 35:4, 35:17, 36:1, 37:7, 40:15, 40:18, 40:20, 41:17, 48:13, 48:21 projects [4] - 4:23, 21:23, 28:1, 43:16 property [22] - 15:2, 15:8, 15:16, 15:23, 20:1, 20:6, 20:24, 25:2, 25:3, 25:19, 27:21, 28:11, 29:7, 29:16, 29:18, 29:20, 30:9, 31:5, 32:22, 33:12, 44:14, 44:20 proposal [1] - 35:14 proposed [8] - 8:1, 8:6, 9:3, 9:5, 9:11, 28:22, 35:17, 36:1 prospect [1] - 30:1 prosper [1] - 36:14 provide [14] - 8:13, 8:22, 9:11, 9:15, 10:12, 11:10, 14:7, 18:3, 19:20, 24:7, 26:20, 32:16, 34:17, 40:11 provided [1] - 38:19 provides [1] - 4:20 providing [1] - 12:12 PUBLIC [2] - 1:1, 1:6 public [5] - 4:10, 7:23, 8:3, 8:7, 48:4 Public [2] - 4:14, 6:1 PUCO [1] - 6:3 pull [1] - 43:4 purpose [2] - 7:13, 8:11 purposes [3] - 7:22, 18:18, 27:25 pushed [1] - 37:20 put [7] - 25:8, 27:11, 27:25, 42:11, 42:23, 44:24, 45:23 putting [1] - 25:10</p>	<p>R racks [1] - 44:9 Rai [1] - 30:13 raise [10] - 11:2, 13:22, 19:11, 22:12, 23:19, 26:10, 32:7, 34:7, 36:22, 40:2 ramifications [1] - 16:23 rarely [1] - 22:11 rather [1] - 8:4 reached [1] - 22:21 read [2] - 9:22, 43:11 reading [1] - 4:6 real [1] - 18:10 really [4] - 25:17, 41:4, 45:20, 47:11 Realtor [1] - 24:24 reason [2] - 10:9, 23:1 reasonable [1] - 10:10 reasons [3] - 16:5, 16:13, 27:15 recap [1] - 20:14 receive [1] - 7:23 recently [1] - 29:9 recommendation [1] - 7:19 recommending [1] - 17:10 record [16] - 7:5, 8:19, 9:10, 9:17, 11:7, 14:3, 14:21, 19:8, 19:16, 24:3, 26:15, 32:13, 34:13, 37:2, 40:8, 48:8 reference [2] - 8:23, 31:17 referendum [1] - 30:25 referendum/vote [1] - 27:18 reflect [2] - 7:20, 8:18 regarding [5] - 7:24, 8:13, 14:21, 35:14, 36:1 Registered [2] - 1:25, 50:3 REINKEMEYER [1] - 6:18 Reinkemeyer [2] - 2:7, 6:18 remember [1] - 43:15 removed [1] - 22:2 Renewables [4] - 2:7, 6:21, 12:9, 35:19 rent [2] - 19:5, 31:10 report [3] - 7:8, 7:17, 7:18 Reporter [1] - 50:4</p>	<p>reporter [3] - 8:16, 8:18, 8:22 Reporters [1] - 1:25 REPORTING [1] - 1:23 represent [1] - 33:11 representative [1] - 5:4 representatives [1] - 25:25 representing [1] - 34:18 represents [1] - 29:5 reps [1] - 17:3 reptile [1] - 43:17 reptiles [5] - 43:19, 43:20, 43:22, 44:4, 44:7 requests [1] - 39:3 research [2] - 30:12, 43:11 reside [11] - 11:16, 11:17, 14:14, 19:24, 24:11, 24:14, 26:23, 27:1, 27:2, 40:14, 40:16 residents [5] - 15:7, 16:11, 22:24, 30:6, 30:10 residents' [1] - 30:8 respectfully [1] - 16:22 responded [1] - 17:5 response [1] - 47:23 responsibility [1] - 33:13 rest [2] - 25:16, 29:14 result [1] - 12:21 revenue [1] - 37:19 reviewed [1] - 9:18 Reynolds [1] - 11:12 rid [1] - 45:1 rights [5] - 16:19, 33:9, 38:1, 38:15 River [1] - 44:2 RMR [2] - 1:22, 50:12 road [1] - 40:16 Road [8] - 1:23, 11:13, 19:22, 24:8, 28:25, 34:23, 37:5, 40:13 roads [1] - 12:4 Robert [1] - 21:6 Rockford [1] - 1:23 Ross [1] - 1:23 Route [1] - 26:21 run [2] - 10:18, 41:14 rushed [1] - 28:4 Ruth [1] - 13:15</p>
Q				
<p>questions [23] - 6:5, 6:8, 9:14, 10:1, 13:3, 13:5, 13:7, 18:22, 18:24, 23:12, 23:13, 25:22, 26:2, 26:6, 26:7, 32:2, 34:1, 34:2, 36:18, 36:19, 39:9, 39:10, 47:18 quick [3] - 31:17, 48:16, 48:18 quiet [1] - 21:1</p>				

S				
<p>S-I-E-S-E-L [1] - 11:9</p> <p>S-N-Y-D-E-R [1] - 34:15</p> <p>sacrifice [1] - 15:4</p> <p>sake [1] - 30:19</p> <p>satellite [1] - 29:4</p> <p>scale [1] - 30:21</p> <p>scheduled [2] - 4:10, 8:9</p> <p>Schererville [1] - 6:20</p> <p>school [5] - 34:21, 34:22, 34:25, 35:6, 42:3</p> <p>School [5] - 17:21, 34:19, 35:4, 47:9</p> <p>schooling [1] - 42:9</p> <p>schools [2] - 38:11, 42:4</p> <p>Schools [4] - 18:1, 35:11, 35:16, 36:3</p> <p>scientists [1] - 45:16</p> <p>seconds [2] - 10:12, 46:24</p> <p>secure [2] - 12:12, 33:10</p> <p>security [2] - 33:5, 33:7</p> <p>see [9] - 21:20, 24:25, 25:15, 27:23, 42:20, 43:2, 46:8, 46:9</p> <p>seeing [3] - 23:2, 47:12, 47:24</p> <p>sees [1] - 18:13</p> <p>selfish [1] - 16:12</p> <p>Senate [1] - 4:19</p> <p>sense [1] - 29:10</p> <p>sent [1] - 20:11</p> <p>separately [1] - 13:16</p> <p>serve [2] - 4:25, 5:3</p> <p>SERVICE [1] - 1:23</p> <p>session [2] - 8:4, 25:21</p> <p>set [1] - 10:14</p> <p>setbacks [3] - 17:6, 17:10, 22:15</p> <p>seven [2] - 46:8, 46:12</p> <p>seven-foot [2] - 46:8, 46:12</p> <p>sheet [2] - 9:2, 9:22</p> <p>sheets [3] - 48:12, 48:19, 48:21</p> <p>shines [1] - 25:13</p> <p>shirt [1] - 6:4</p> <p>shooting [1] - 45:5</p> <p>side [3] - 42:17, 44:22, 44:23</p> <p>sides [3] - 42:11,</p>	<p>42:12, 42:23</p> <p>Siesel [2] - 10:24, 11:8</p> <p>SIESEL [5] - 11:3, 11:8, 11:12, 11:17, 11:22</p> <p>Siesel..... [1] - 3:4</p> <p>sign [8] - 9:2, 9:22, 10:11, 28:10, 48:12, 48:18, 48:21, 48:22</p> <p>sign-in [2] - 9:2, 9:22</p> <p>sign-up [2] - 48:18, 48:21</p> <p>signatory [1] - 12:11</p> <p>signed [9] - 9:4, 10:7, 12:9, 19:2, 30:5, 39:14, 39:17, 39:19, 47:20</p> <p>sit [1] - 39:2</p> <p>site [1] - 23:1</p> <p>Siting [6] - 4:9, 12:23, 20:12, 25:25, 30:7, 35:13</p> <p>siting [1] - 4:23</p> <p>situation [1] - 33:10</p> <p>small [1] - 37:17</p> <p>smell [2] - 21:12, 21:17</p> <p>Snyder [5] - 3:7, 34:7, 34:14, 34:15, 36:16</p> <p>SNYDER [7] - 34:8, 34:14, 34:18, 34:23, 35:2, 35:5, 35:10</p> <p>soften [1] - 39:3</p> <p>SOLAR [2] - 1:3, 2:2</p> <p>Solar [6] - 4:13, 6:12, 7:12, 11:25, 12:18, 12:25</p> <p>solar [32] - 4:23, 7:13, 12:17, 14:21, 16:2, 17:14, 17:23, 18:15, 20:20, 21:16, 21:20, 27:10, 27:15, 28:8, 28:16, 28:18, 29:9, 29:17, 30:2, 30:15, 31:7, 31:9, 33:8, 35:14, 38:5, 38:8, 39:4, 43:4, 45:14, 45:18, 46:7, 47:14</p> <p>sold [1] - 16:7</p> <p>someone [1] - 20:21</p> <p>sometimes [1] - 21:12</p> <p>son [1] - 47:7</p> <p>sound [1] - 18:17</p> <p>south [1] - 29:12</p> <p>South [5] - 1:13, 2:4, 6:14, 11:12, 14:10</p> <p>southeast [1] - 29:2</p> <p>Southern [1] - 21:21</p> <p>soybeans [2] - 20:19,</p>	<p>22:17</p> <p>speaking [5] - 13:17, 14:18, 20:7, 38:14, 39:2</p> <p>spell [9] - 11:7, 14:3, 19:16, 24:3, 26:15, 32:12, 34:12, 37:2, 40:8</p> <p>sprawl [2] - 27:20, 29:15</p> <p>sprawling [2] - 28:18, 29:5</p> <p>squeaking [2] - 45:6, 45:7</p> <p>ST [88] - 1:9, 4:1, 4:5, 5:15, 5:18, 5:21, 6:22, 7:10, 11:6, 11:10, 11:15, 11:20, 13:2, 13:6, 13:12, 13:19, 13:22, 14:2, 14:6, 14:13, 14:16, 18:21, 18:25, 19:7, 19:10, 19:15, 19:19, 19:24, 20:3, 20:9, 23:11, 23:14, 23:18, 23:23, 24:2, 24:6, 24:10, 24:14, 24:16, 25:20, 26:5, 26:8, 26:14, 26:19, 26:23, 27:1, 27:3, 31:16, 31:21, 31:24, 32:1, 32:5, 32:11, 32:16, 32:20, 32:23, 33:1, 33:25, 34:3, 34:6, 34:11, 34:16, 34:21, 34:25, 35:3, 35:8, 36:17, 36:20, 37:1, 37:6, 37:10, 39:8, 39:11, 39:17, 39:22, 40:2, 40:7, 40:11, 40:14, 40:21, 46:17, 46:19, 46:23, 47:1, 47:16, 47:19, 47:24, 48:14</p> <p>St [2] - 4:16, 50:7</p> <p>staff [5] - 5:23, 7:17, 7:19, 8:12, 9:25</p> <p>stakeholders [1] - 18:5</p> <p>stall [1] - 21:24</p> <p>stance [1] - 39:3</p> <p>stand [2] - 5:13, 27:13</p> <p>stands [1] - 38:10</p> <p>started [3] - 4:8, 21:3, 43:16</p> <p>state [13] - 9:9, 11:7, 14:3, 19:16, 23:24, 24:2, 26:15, 32:12, 34:12, 37:2, 40:7</p> <p>statement [3] - 8:21,</p>	<p>9:15, 10:9</p> <p>statements [1] - 47:2</p> <p>stating [1] - 19:8</p> <p>stench [1] - 15:13</p> <p>step [1] - 38:22</p> <p>stewards [1] - 36:7</p> <p>still [1] - 18:17</p> <p>Street [4] - 1:13, 2:4, 6:15, 14:10</p> <p>struggle [1] - 37:22</p> <p>stuck [1] - 24:23</p> <p>students [1] - 36:10</p> <p>study [1] - 31:18</p> <p>stuff [1] - 41:4</p> <p>subject [1] - 7:11</p> <p>submit [1] - 31:22</p> <p>submitted [2] - 6:7, 48:7</p> <p>substation [1] - 28:25</p> <p>sun [2] - 25:13, 25:15</p> <p>sunflowers [1] - 20:19</p> <p>support [6] - 11:24, 12:24, 18:8, 22:15, 48:13, 48:20</p> <p>supposed [1] - 46:21</p> <p>surrounded [1] - 30:1</p> <p>surrounding [1] - 28:24</p> <p>survey [1] - 30:14</p> <p>surveys [1] - 25:6</p> <p>sweep [1] - 29:18</p> <p>SWORN [9] - 11:4, 13:25, 19:13, 23:21, 26:12, 32:9, 34:9, 36:24, 40:5</p>	<p>24:17, 27:4, 31:22, 33:2, 34:4, 35:9, 36:21, 37:11, 40:22, 47:17</p> <p>Texas [1] - 30:13</p> <p>THATCHER [7] - 32:8, 32:14, 32:18, 32:22, 32:24, 33:3, 34:5</p> <p>Thatcher [4] - 3:6, 32:7, 32:15</p> <p>THE [1] - 1:2</p> <p>third [1] - 28:20</p> <p>Third [2] - 2:4, 6:15</p> <p>thoughts [3] - 9:11, 18:16, 20:15</p> <p>three [3] - 46:6, 46:11</p> <p>thrilled [1] - 29:25</p> <p>throughout [1] - 35:15</p> <p>TIME [1] - 1:12</p> <p>today's [3] - 7:11, 35:13, 36:16</p> <p>Todd [2] - 2:9, 5:6</p> <p>together [2] - 13:16, 19:2</p> <p>Toledo [1] - 11:13</p> <p>tomorrow [1] - 7:8</p> <p>tonight [7] - 5:25, 6:9, 7:7, 9:16, 20:7, 25:20, 27:7</p> <p>Tonight's [2] - 8:3, 8:15</p> <p>tonight's [3] - 4:7, 8:7, 10:6</p> <p>tortoise [2] - 43:15, 43:16</p> <p>towards [1] - 35:23</p> <p>Township [21] - 5:8, 11:11, 11:14, 14:8, 14:12, 17:19, 18:2, 18:4, 19:23, 22:22, 26:22, 27:7, 27:22, 28:15, 29:21, 30:6, 30:24, 31:15, 35:7, 35:18, 37:13</p> <p>township [4] - 4:21, 5:1, 19:21, 38:11</p> <p>townships [1] - 35:6</p> <p>tracts [1] - 22:2</p> <p>tradesmen [1] - 12:6</p> <p>transcribed [1] - 8:16</p> <p>transcript [3] - 8:23, 48:7, 50:6</p> <p>transparency [1] - 18:18</p> <p>travel [1] - 21:19</p> <p>tree [1] - 16:9</p> <p>trees [1] - 30:3</p> <p>tried [1] - 42:11</p> <p>true [1] - 50:5</p> <p>trust [1] - 33:12</p>
T				
			<p>T-H-A-T-C-H-E-R [1] - 32:15</p> <p>talks [2] - 43:8, 43:13</p> <p>tax [3] - 12:20, 36:4, 42:6</p> <p>taxes [1] - 18:10</p> <p>team [1] - 35:23</p> <p>technology [1] - 36:11</p> <p>tenant [1] - 17:11</p> <p>TESTIFIED [9] - 11:5, 14:1, 19:14, 23:22, 26:13, 32:10, 34:10, 36:25, 40:6</p> <p>testify [9] - 8:17, 9:4, 9:21, 10:7, 10:16, 13:16, 39:15, 47:21, 47:22</p> <p>testifying [1] - 10:2</p> <p>testimony [20] - 7:23, 8:13, 9:6, 9:15, 10:22, 11:21, 13:8, 14:17, 20:10, 23:15,</p>	

Trustee ^[5] - 2:10, 5:8, 5:12, 33:13, 48:4 trustee ^[2] - 5:2, 5:10 TRUSTEE ^[1] - 5:17 trustees ^[3] - 4:21, 5:2, 28:17 Trustees ^[2] - 5:7, 35:18 truth ^[1] - 9:9 try ^[4] - 22:1, 37:24, 37:25, 38:1 trying ^[1] - 42:21 Tuesday ^[1] - 1:11 Tully ^[1] - 19:23 turbines ^[2] - 15:20, 33:16 turkeys ^[1] - 42:25 turn ^[1] - 12:14 turned ^[1] - 16:8 turtle ^[2] - 43:15, 43:17 turtles ^[3] - 43:22, 44:8, 45:22 two ^[6] - 13:13, 19:1, 21:3, 21:4, 45:8, 48:11	24:8, 25:14, 26:22, 32:19, 34:24, 35:18, 36:12, 37:5, 42:17, 44:22, 47:5, 47:10, 48:2 various ^[1] - 30:18 Varun ^[1] - 30:13 vehicle ^[1] - 44:19 versus ^[1] - 4:13 view ^[2] - 15:20, 17:8 VOICE ^[1] - 4:4 voiced ^[1] - 22:7 vote ^[1] - 30:24	windmills ^[10] - 21:5, 41:21, 44:11, 44:12, 44:24, 45:3, 45:10, 45:18, 47:13 window ^[1] - 21:6 windy ^[1] - 45:8 wings ^[2] - 43:9, 44:5 wintertime ^[1] - 25:16 wire ^[1] - 46:12 wise ^[1] - 30:20 wish ^[1] - 10:4 witness ^[10] - 9:23, 13:3, 18:23, 23:12, 26:6, 32:3, 32:6, 34:1, 36:18, 39:12 witnesses ^[1] - 47:20 Wolfrum ^[5] - 2:9, 5:7, 5:10, 5:19, 48:5 women ^[2] - 12:7, 12:24 woods ^[3] - 41:6, 41:7, 41:10 words ^[1] - 39:1 world ^[1] - 30:23 worry ^[1] - 31:13 worse ^[1] - 44:17 writing ^[1] - 45:14 written ^[3] - 8:21, 9:24, 10:19
U	W	
U.S ^[1] - 26:21 unbearable ^[1] - 21:12 unbelievable ^[1] - 20:16 Union ^[2] - 11:23, 12:6 University ^[1] - 30:13 unparalleled ^[1] - 15:4 unreasonable ^[1] - 21:24 up ^[22] - 7:14, 9:4, 10:7, 10:11, 10:14, 13:21, 19:2, 21:20, 33:9, 39:14, 39:17, 39:20, 43:4, 43:25, 44:2, 44:21, 46:19, 46:24, 47:1, 47:21, 48:18, 48:21 Utility ^[1] - 7:3 utilized ^[1] - 14:24 utter ^[2] - 27:16, 27:23	wages ^[1] - 12:14 walk ^[1] - 44:16 walking ^[2] - 44:18, 44:19 wardens ^[1] - 41:9 warning ^[1] - 46:22 Washington ^[2] - 1:13, 14:10 Wayne ^[2] - 20:25, 46:5 ways ^[1] - 45:17 wearing ^[1] - 6:3 welcome ^[1] - 26:3 welcoming ^[1] - 21:22 Wert ^[22] - 1:13, 1:14, 5:5, 7:15, 14:10, 14:11, 17:19, 22:22, 24:9, 25:14, 26:22, 32:19, 34:24, 35:18, 36:12, 37:5, 42:17, 44:22, 47:5, 47:10, 48:2 west ^[3] - 21:3, 40:20, 41:17 WHO ^[9] - 11:4, 13:25, 19:13, 23:21, 26:12, 32:9, 34:9, 36:24, 40:5 whole ^[3] - 25:15, 35:6, 44:22 Wild ^[11] - 4:13, 6:12, 7:12, 11:24, 12:18, 12:25, 14:21, 16:2, 27:9, 31:7, 35:14 WILD ^[2] - 1:3, 2:2 wildlife ^[5] - 41:1, 44:10, 44:19, 45:20, 45:21 Wilota ^[1] - 19:3 win ^[2] - 17:15 win-win ^[1] - 17:15 wind ^[4] - 15:20, 33:7, 33:16, 43:25 windmill ^[1] - 45:7	year ^[1] - 42:2 years ^[10] - 15:1, 15:12, 18:11, 21:1, 28:2, 41:25, 42:14, 43:15, 45:25, 47:4 yesterday ^[1] - 45:6 Yoh ^[2] - 24:8, 40:13
		Y
		Z
		zone ^[3] - 28:19, 30:2, 31:4 zoned ^[1] - 29:13
V		
value ^[3] - 24:22, 30:15, 36:13 values ^[6] - 27:21, 28:12, 29:7, 29:18, 29:20, 30:9 Van ^[22] - 1:13, 1:14, 5:5, 7:15, 14:10, 14:11, 17:19, 22:22,		

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Summary: Transcript of Local Public Hearing held on May 3, 2022 at the Van Wert County Fairgrounds electronically filed by Ms. Mary E. Fischer on behalf of Angela A. O'Neill, RMR, Midwest Reporting Service