

LOCAL PUBLIC HEARING

MORROW COUNTY, OHIO

In Re: The Application of :
Blossom Solar, LLC, for a :
Certificate of Environmental : Case No. 22-151-EL-BGN
Compatibility and :
Public Need to Construct a :
Solar-Power Farm :

* * *

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE GRETA SEE, Presiding

* * *

Tuesday, November 15th, 2022

6:00 p.m.

Washington Township Trustee Hall

3612 Township Road 49

Iberia, Ohio 43140

* * *

EMMA JANE TROYER

COURT REPORTER

* * *

1 APPEARANCES:

2
3 On behalf of Blossom Solar, LLC:

4 Vorys, Sater, Seymour & Pease, LLP

5
6 By: Anna Sanyal
7 52 East Gay Street
8 Columbus, Ohio 43216

9
10 On behalf of the Ohio Environmental Council:

11 Karin Nordstrom
12 1145 Chesapeake Avenue, Suite 1
13 Columbus, Ohio 43212
14 &
15 Chris Tavenor
16 1145 Chesapeake Avenue, Suite 1
17 Columbus, Ohio 43212
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PROCEEDINGS:

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MS. SEE: The Ohio Power Siting Board has scheduled for public hearing at this time and place Case Number 22-151-EL-BGN, which is captioned in the matter of the Application of Blossom Solar, LLC, for Certificate of Environmental Compatibility and Public Need to Construct a Solar-powered Electric Generation Facility in Morrow County, Ohio.

My name is Greta See, and I am an administrative law judge in the Board's legal department, and I have been assigned to this case. The passage of Senate Bill 52 provides for a new opportunity for county commissioners and township trustees to participate in the siting of solar projects in their community.

County commissioners may choose one commissioner or designee. In addition, township trustees may choose one trustees or designee to serve as their ad hoc board member representative. Tom Whiston will be the representative of the county commissioner. Unfortunately, Mr. Whiston is unable to attend the hearing tonight.

Joining us on behalf of Washington Township

1 is Washington Township trustee Dona Kochman. Would you
2 please stand? Thank you.

3 There are several other board staff members
4 assisting with the hearing tonight. They are the
5 individuals wearing a badge or an Ohio Board t-shirt,
6 and the two ladies here at the front at the table as you
7 came in the door. They are available if you have
8 questions concerning the board's process, if you need
9 assistance in accessing any of the documents submitted
10 in this case, or if you just have general questions
11 about the hearing tonight.

12 At this time, I'd like to take appearances
13 of the parties on behalf of counsel for -- strike that.
14 At this time, I would like to take appearances of
15 counsel on behalf of the parties. Counsel for Blossom
16 Solar, LLC.

17 MS. SANYAL: Thank you, your Honor. Anna
18 Sanyal from the law firm of Vorys, Sater, Seymour and
19 Pease, 52 East Gay Street, Columbus, Ohio, 43215.

20 I also have with me from Blossom for Blossom
21 Solar project Patrick Buckley. He's the project lead.
22 He's very tall, you can't miss him, and he and other
23 members of the project are here to answer any questions.
24 They also have a badge that says Open Road Renewables.
25 So after the hearing, if anyone has any questions, they

1 are here to answer those questions.

2 MS. SEE: Thank you. Counsel on behalf of
3 the Ohio Farm Bureau Federation? Counsel on behalf of
4 the Environmental Council?

5 MS. NORDSTROM: Karin Nordstrom with the
6 Ohio Environmental Council, located at 1154 Chesapeake
7 Road, Columbus, Ohio, 43212, and I have with me Chris
8 Tavenor, Associate General Counsel for Ohio
9 Environmental Council.

10 MS. SEE: Thank you. The subject of today's
11 hearing is an application filed by Blossom Solar, LLC,
12 an affiliate of Open Road Renewables, for the purpose of
13 constructing a 144 megawatt solar power electric
14 generation facility on approximately 1,073 acres in
15 Washington Township, Morrow County.

16 The application was filed on May 27th, 2022,
17 and supplemented and amended in accordance with data
18 responses filed by Blossom -- I'm sorry, data responses
19 filed by Blossom. The Board staff filed its report of
20 investigation on October 31st, 2022, recommending that
21 the Board approve the application to construct,
22 maintain, and operate the facility, subject to 41
23 conditions.

24 This report is a recommendation of the staff
25 and does not necessarily reflect the Board's final

1 decision in this case. Indeed, the Board is not bound
2 to the recommendation. The purpose of this evening's
3 public hearing is to receive testimony regarding the
4 proposed project and application from persons in the
5 local community.

6 Tonight's public hearing will not be treated
7 as a question and answer session, but rather an
8 opportunity to let the Board know what you think about
9 the proposed project. The public hearing is only one
10 aspect of the process in this case.

11 An evidentiary hearing has been scheduled to
12 commence on December 19th, 2022, at the Board's offices
13 in Columbus, Ohio. The purpose of the evidentiary
14 hearing is for the parties, the applicant, Blossom
15 Solar, Ohio Farm Bureau Federation, Ohio Environmental
16 Council, and the Board's staff to provide testimony and
17 other evidence regarding the proposed solar project.

18 Tonight's hearing is being transcribed by a
19 court reporter. If you plan to testify, please speak
20 clearly so that the court reporter can accurately
21 reflect your comments on the record. Also, if you have
22 a prepared written statement, it would be helpful if you
23 provide a copy to the court reporter for reference to
24 ensure the transcript is accurate.

25 After I finish with the introduction, we'll

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

4 Before you present your testimony I will ask
5 you to take an oath or affirmation that what you are
6 about to say is the truth. We will also ask you to
7 state your name and address for the record and indicate
8 if you work or reside in the project area.

9 You will then provide your thoughts on the
10 proposed project. Counsel for the parties to the case
11 and I will be permitted to ask you questions about your
12 statement. The testimony that you provide tonight will
13 be considered part of the official record in this case,
14 and the transcript will be reviewed by the Board before
15 a final decision is made on the application.

16 A couple of other notes. If, when your name
17 is called from the sign-in sheet, you decide that you no
18 longer want to testify, you can say that you pass, and
19 we'll move to the next witness. If you would prefer to
20 file written comments in this case, approach one of the
21 Board staff members here tonight and they will provide
22 you with the instructions on how you can file comments
23 in the case.

24 Once you finish testifying, or if you're
25 just here to observe, you may leave the hearing at any

1 time you wish. I only ask that you do so quietly while
2 the hearing is in session.

3 The Board appreciates your participation in
4 tonight's hearing, and we want everyone who has signed
5 up to testify to have the opportunity to do so. For
6 that reason, please keep your statement to a reasonable
7 length of no more than five minutes.

8 If you have not finished your testimony
9 within five minutes, I'll give you a sign to wrap up
10 your comments and move to the next speaker. I'll hold
11 up a sign that you have 30 seconds left, and then I will
12 also let you know you need to wrap it up. Again, these
13 time limits are so that everyone who would like to
14 testify has the time to speak.

15 I remind you that anyone may file a public
16 comment in this case at any time before the Board issues
17 its order. Also, if you have any questions, Board
18 staff -- which is here at the door, and there's a
19 gentleman in the back -- will be happy to answer your
20 questions about the process.

21 Are there any questions about how we will
22 proceed tonight? Okay. With that, I'll move to the
23 first name on the sign-up sheet. First person to offer
24 testimony tonight is Andrew Murray. Let me also ask for
25 your forgiveness now in the event that I mispronounce

1 your name.

2

3 ANDREW MURRAY,

4 First having been duly sworn to testify to the truth,
5 testified as follows:

6

7 MS. SEE: Please state and spell your name
8 for the record.

9 MR. MURRAY: Andrew Murray. A-N-D-R-E-W,
10 M-U-R-R-A-Y.

11 MS. SEE: And do you live or work in the
12 project area?

13 MR. MURRAY: I work in the project area.

14 MS. SEE: Okay. Go ahead with your
15 testimony.

16 MR. MURRAY: My name is Andrew Murray from
17 Local 18 Operating Engineers. The hall is 1188 Dublin
18 Road, Columbus, Ohio, 43215. On behalf of the Operating
19 Engineers of Local 18, we are here to support and
20 approve the Blossom Solar project.

21 The operating engineers are the individuals
22 who operate heavy equipment such as dozers, excavators,
23 backhoes, forklifts, and so on. The roads and bridges
24 you drive on are most likely built by members of Local
25 18.

1 Although we do not have an agreement signed
2 with Open Roads Renewables, LLC to the project to
3 perform the work assisted with this project, we believe
4 our local signatory contractor will secure this work,
5 thus providing our membership and numerous employment
6 opportunities. In turn, high-paying wages, healthcare
7 benefits, apprenticeship programs can continue to grow
8 because of the solar industry.

9 If approved, the Blossom Solar project will
10 not only create jobs, but you can expect an economic
11 impact, additional tax money, and clean energy for Ohio
12 as a result from the project.

13 We encourage the Ohio Power Siting Board to
14 support the job and the men and women of Local 18 by
15 approving the Blossom Solar project. I appreciate
16 talking to you, and you taking the time to listen to me
17 today, and I've really enjoyed speaking to everyone.
18 Thank you.

19 MS. SEE: Thank you. Is there any cross
20 examination by counsel? Thank you, sir.

21 MR. MURRAY: Thank you.

22 MS. SEE: Next witness is Carol Holtrey.
23 Ms. Holtrey, if you'd raise your right hand?

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CAROL HOLTREY,
First having been duly sworn to testify to the truth,
testified as follows:

MS. SEE: Please state and spell your name
for the record.

MS. HOLTREY: Carol Holtrey. C-A-R-O-L,
H-O-L-T-R-E-Y.

MS. SEE: And your address, please?
MS. HOLTREY: 6480 County Road 76 in Mount
Gilead.

MS. SEE: And do you live or work in the
project area?

MS. HOLTREY: I live about eight miles from
here.

MS. SEE: Within the project area?
MS. HOLTREY: In Morrow County.
MS. SEE: Do you know what township?
MS. HOLTREY: Yes, Gilead.
MS. SEE: Go ahead with your testimony,
ma'am.

MS. HOLTREY: Good evening, everyone. I am
thankful for the opportunity to address the Ohio Power
Siting Board. I want to express that I support the
Blossom Solar project, and no matter how you feel about

1 it, renewable energy is the future. Solar projects like
2 Blossom allow landowners to participate in making clean,
3 American-made energy for Ohio.

4 This project is a wonderful opportunity for
5 stability. The income the landowners will receive gives
6 them greater stability in their finances. The energy
7 the solar panels will create will give our energy grid
8 greater stability.

9 And lastly, the tax money generated from the
10 project will create extra stability for the important
11 services that we need, like police, fire, road work, and
12 I think the biggest winners are the schools. You can
13 never put enough money in education, and as others may
14 know tonight, guaranteeing half a million dollars a year
15 to the kids at Northmor is an incredible opportunity.

16 This hearing tonight gives our community the
17 power to make an important choice in the future of our
18 county. So to the Ohio Power Siting Board, I hope you
19 make the right decision and listen to the community, and
20 please approve the Blossom Solar project. Thank you.

21 MS. SEE: Thank you. Any cross examination
22 for this witness? Thank you very much. Next witness is
23 Donald Holtrey.

24
25 (Remarks were made off the record.)

1 MS. SEE: Mr. Holtrey, if you could raise
2 your right hand, please?

3
4 DONALD HOLTREY,
5 First having been duly sworn, testified as follows:
6

7 MS. SEE: Thank you. Please state and spell
8 your name for the record.

9 MR. HOLTREY: Donald E. Holtrey, Junior.
10 D-O-N-A-L-D, E, H-O-L-T-R-E-Y, J-R.

11 MS. SEE: And sir, do you live or work in
12 the project area?

13 MR. HOLTREY: I do not.

14 MS. SEE: Okay.

15 MR. HOLTREY: My address is 6480 County Road
16 76, Mount Gilead, Ohio. I live in Mount Gilead
17 Township, Ohio. That was my wife previously. I've
18 lived here 66 years on the County Road.

19 MS. SEE: Okay. Go ahead with your
20 testimony.

21 MR. HOLTREY: All right. I want to say good
22 evening. I'd like to start off by thanking Ohio Power
23 Siting Board for hosting this hearing, and thank
24 everyone else here for showing up for something as
25 important as this.

1 I'm speaking tonight to show my full support
2 for the Blossom Solar project. Though I do not live in
3 the project, I am a resident of this county. I live
4 approximately seven miles that way right there.

5 The tax generated by this project is no
6 small sum. More than half of the money each year goes
7 toward the Northmor School District.

8 As someone who owns acreage in this county,
9 I cannot stress enough how important it is to protect
10 landowner's rights. This project will be an important
11 stream of income to the landowners who will be
12 participating. Projects like the Blossom Solar offer
13 landowners freedom to make the money off their land
14 without selling it all.

15 One of my good friends is a part of a solar
16 project in another county, and they have had a very
17 positive experience with these folks.

18 These projects create American energy for
19 Ohio's grid. Their projects provide large amounts of
20 tax dollars to services we need, like the EMS, road
21 construction -- money for schools has already been
22 mentioned.

23 Our county is going to change with the
24 times. Approving the Blossom Solar project allows us
25 the opportunity to choose how our county changes and

1 develops. Thank you.

2 MS. SEE: Thank you. Any cross for any
3 witness?

4 MS. SANYAL: No, your Honor.

5 MS. SEE: Thank you. John Eichler? Mr.
6 Eichler, if you'd raise your right hand?

7

8 JOHN EICHLER,

9 First having been duly sworn, testified as follows:
10

11 MS. SEE: State and spell your name for the
12 record.

13 MR. EICHLER: J-O-H-N, E-I-C-H-L-E-R.

14 MS. SEE: And your address, please?

15 MR. EICHLER: 3771 County Road 31, Galion,
16 Ohio.

17 MS. SEE: And do you live or work in the
18 project area?

19 MR. EICHLER: Yes.

20 MS. SEE: Go ahead with your testimony.

21 MR. EICHLER: Good evening. I wanted to
22 start off by thanking the Ohio Board for listening for
23 our community tonight. I come here tonight as a
24 neighbor to the Blossom Solar project to voice my
25 support.

1 I worked in accounting and consulting and
2 now enjoy being retired. I have been a resident of
3 Washington Township for 80 years. My wife Sarah and I
4 have lived in our home since 1968, where we raised our
5 three daughters. They graduated from Northmor, along
6 with two of our grandchildren. Sarah and I graduated
7 from Iberia in 1960.

8 Our school system is very dear to us, which
9 is why I am excited that the Blossom Solar project can
10 provide \$500,000 annually to the Northmor School System
11 and many other county systems.

12 With the panels being so close to my home, I
13 was worried how they would affect us. However, Open
14 Road Renewables was committed to providing good
15 information that swayed me in favor of the project.
16 They made sure the neighbors have a choice and are
17 considered in the process.

18 Their care for neighbors is shown by the
19 setbacks they put on the project. It's shown by how
20 they screen the project with trees planted around the
21 panels. They don't make noise. They don't smell.
22 Solar panels make a fine neighbor, especially when they
23 are hidden behind trees.

24 Sarah and I have seen many solar farms in
25 our travels. This includes trips to Florida, Iowa, and

1 Maryland. We have seen both solar farms and wind
2 turbines in every state. The solar farms are less
3 conspicuous than the huge wind turbines that we see.

4 Where would we be today if we did not build
5 Interstate 71 or other infrastructures where people were
6 required to give up their land? However, with the
7 Blossom Solar project, landowners had the option to
8 either say yes or no to the project. This is our
9 freedom in our country.

10 Thank you for your time. As a long-time
11 resident and as a neighbor to the project, I strongly
12 urge you to approve this Blossom Solar project.

13 MS. SEE: Thank you. Any cross examination?

14 MS. SANYAL: No.

15 MS. NORDSTROM: No.

16 MS. SEE: Next witness, Larry Layman? Sir,
17 if you'd please raise your right hand.

18

19 LARRY LAYMAN,

20 First having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

21

22 MS. SEE: State and spell your name for the
23 record.

24 MR. LAYMAN: Larry Layman. L-A-R-R-Y,

25 L-A-Y-M-A-N.

1 MS. SEE: And your address, please?

2 MR. LAYMAN: 8916 County Road 30, Galion,
3 Ohio.

4 MS. SEE: And do you live or work in the
5 project area?

6 MR. LAYMAN: I do.

7 MS. SEE: Go ahead with your testimony.

8 MR. LAYMAN: I thank you very much for being
9 here today. I'd like to say I have a very, very deep
10 appreciation of the value of farm land, being raised on
11 a farm in Union County. I served four years in the Air
12 Force, four years in college and four years as an
13 employee in manufacturing, and after that my wife and I
14 was able to purchase some land in the early '70s.

15 I continued to work off farm, farming at
16 night and on weekends, expanded the acreage, and raised
17 a daughter that does not live in the area and has no
18 interest in farming.

19 Going forward 50 years with both myself and
20 my wife in our 80s, I decided to leave a legacy for the
21 next generation. This decision did not come easy. I
22 spent many sleepless nights weighing the effects on the
23 neighbor's properties, our relationships, disturbance of
24 the farm land.

25 The landowner has every right to dispose of

1 their property within the boundaries of the law. The
2 decision to lease the land for solar production is my
3 way of giving some future heir a start in agriculture.

4 The solar farm will significantly help the
5 tax base in Morrow County, which currently has very
6 little manufacturing. This will lead, hopefully, to
7 better schools and better roads. I fully support the
8 Blossom Solar project.

9 MS. SEE: Thank you. Any cross examination?

10 MS. SANYAL: No, your Honor.

11 MS. SEE: Thank you. Next witness is
12 Jeanette Kincaid. Ms. Kincaid, if you could raise your
13 right hand?

14

15 JEANETTE KINCAID,

16 First having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

17

18 MS. SEE: State and spell your name for the
19 record.

20 MS. KINCAID: My name is Jeanette Kincaid.
21 J-E-A-N-E-T-T-E, K-I-N-C-A-I-D.

22 MS. SEE: Your address?

23 MS. KINCAID: 8376 County Road 30, Galion,
24 Ohio, 44833.

25 MS. SEE: Please go ahead with your

1 testimony.

2 MS. KINCAID: Thank you for the opportunity
3 to testify in support of Blossom Solar. My name is
4 Jeanette Kincaid, and my family owns land in the project
5 area.

6 My roots run deep in Morrow County, Ohio.
7 My maternal and paternal grandparents have all farmed in
8 this community, and I now enjoy the privilege of raising
9 my family in Morrow County.

10 We raise beef, chickens, and the standard
11 Ohio crops such as corn, soybeans, hay, and wheat. As
12 I'm sure you are aware, the cost of crop production has
13 dramatically increased in the last 12 months.

14 According to an article produced by the OSU
15 Extension office in May of this year, the cost of corn
16 production will be 44 percent higher in 2022 than in
17 2021. Likewise, soybean production cost has risen by 40
18 percent, and wheat production cost has increased by 50
19 percent. This has a significant impact on small farms
20 such as ours.

21 Open Road Renewables approached us in 2021
22 to lease our land as a solar farm. This project
23 provides numerous benefits to our land and our economy,
24 and Blossom Solar's investment in our youth and the
25 local community. Along with the much-needed upgrade to

1 our county and township roads, our school district will
2 receive over \$500,000 annually.

3 The Blossom Solar project would give an
4 immense amount of resources and opportunities that could
5 be given to future generations at no extra cost to
6 direct residents. Blossom Solar's support continues
7 through opportunities provided at vocational schools and
8 numerous jobs generated during the construction of the
9 solar project.

10 This project creates up to 400 direct jobs
11 during construction, along with the road use and
12 maintenance agreement with the county. This will
13 strengthen and upgrade roads to current or better
14 condition after construction.

15 While the benefits to my community are
16 important to me, being able to provide for my family
17 while preserving our land for future agricultural use
18 tops my list of pros. Having the peace of mind of a
19 guaranteed income to support the rest of our farming
20 endeavors is priceless.

21 For our small farm, the solar project will
22 not erase our entire agricultural footprint. Still, it
23 will improve it so we can upgrade our equipment and
24 facilities to continue providing quality beef for our
25 local consumers.

1 Our country, state, and community must
2 invest in sustainable power sources while maintaining
3 our rural land, culture, and family values. I
4 appreciate your consideration on this matter, and thank
5 you for allowing me to testify in support of this
6 project that will provide power for the future as we
7 preserve the past. Thank you.

8 MS. SEE: Any cross examination for the
9 witness?

10 MS. NORDSTROM: None, thank you.

11 MS. SEE: May I ask, did you also file
12 comments on the docket?

13 MS. KINCAID: Yes.

14 MS. SEE: Thank you. Nathan Kincaid?

15

16 NATHAN KINCAID,

17 First having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

18

19 MS. SEE: State and spell your name for the
20 record.

21 MR. KINCAID: Nathan Kincaid. N-A-T-H-A-N,
22 K-I-N-C-A-I-D.

23 MS. SEE: And your address?

24 MR. KINCAID: 8376 County Road 30, Galion,
25 Ohio, 44833.

1 MS. SEE: And do you live in the project
2 area?

3 MR. KINCAID: I own property.

4 MS. SEE: Go ahead with your testimony.

5 MR. KINCAID: Good evening. Thank you to
6 the Ohio Power Siting Board for being here tonight in
7 Morrow County to hear from the community. I am here to
8 offer my support of Blossom Solar and ask you to approve
9 this project.

10 My name is Nathan Kincaid and I am a
11 third-generation family farmer. We raise beef, chicken,
12 row crops such as corn, soybeans, hay, and wheat. Our
13 farm has been a part of our family since 1965. My
14 father became an active farmer while I was young, and I
15 added farm ownership to my main responsibilities many
16 years ago.

17 I've seen and felt firsthand the time,
18 dedication, and love it takes to keep a farm running.
19 Like many other small farmers, I have a full-time job,
20 as does my wife, my father, and we tend to farm
21 responsibilities with the remaining hours of the day.
22 Many of those hours are spent tending fields, which is
23 weather dependent, thus potentially limiting time to
24 plant or harvest crops. Often dinner and sleep are
25 sacrificed to ensure that the farm continues to

1 function.

2 Some may say, why do you do that to
3 yourselves when there is no guarantee of a good outcome?
4 I get to work side by side with my children and spend
5 time with my wife. I get to take care of the land that
6 I love.

7 When Open Roads Renewables proposed their
8 solar project to us, I recognized the opportunity to
9 preserve and improve my family's land so that it could
10 continue to provide for my children and my local
11 community.

12 The community benefits include road
13 maintenance and school and county funding, along with
14 providing township and county EMS with training and any
15 needed equipment, partnering with vocational schools,
16 and funding for training for scholarships.

17 There are many other advantages to having
18 solar in our community. It improves air quality by
19 having pollinator-friendly plants between the panels,
20 which also has health benefits and increases crop
21 yields. With solar panels, there is no odor or air
22 pollution, dust, discernible movement, quiet, not
23 operating at night, minor traffic, and a low profile
24 will also be screened with landscaping.

25 Providing jobs to our area is greatly

1 needed, as many cannot afford to travel to large cities
2 to find gainful employment. Open Roads Renewables is
3 also committed to maintaining and improving vegetation
4 habitats around its projects, so our community can
5 continue to enjoy the benefits of hunting and various
6 tree products.

7 Also, what is rarely shared but everyone
8 should know, is that solar projects leave the land in a
9 better place than pre-construction -- higher organic
10 matter and better tilth. There is little to no
11 long-term impact on the ground. Thirty years in solar
12 is similar to USDA's Conservation Reserve Program --
13 CRP.

14 In conclusion, I can literally and
15 figuratively breathe easier knowing that my lease land
16 will be well cared for as I focus on the remaining
17 aspects in our farm. I look forward to investing more
18 time in my children's academic and agricultural
19 education with the peace of mind that this solar project
20 will provide.

21 Thank you for the opportunity to share how
22 vital the Blossom Solar project is to my family and me.
23 We are all planning for the future as best as we can,
24 and this will be a step in the right direction for our
25 community. Thank you.

1 MS. SEE: Any cross?

2 MS. SANYAL: No, your Honor.

3 MS. NORDSTROM: No.

4 MS. SEE: Thank you, sir. Debbie Nightwine?
5 Could you raise your right hand, ma'am?

6

7 DEBBIE NIGHTWINE,

8 First having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

9

10 MS. SEE: State and spell your name for the
11 record.

12 MS. NIGHTWINE: Debbie Nightwine.

13 D-E-B-B-I-E, N-I-G-H-T-W-I-N-E.

14 MS. SEE: And your address?

15 MS. NIGHTWINE: 4611 Iberia-Bucyrus Road,
16 Galion, Ohio.

17 MS. SEE: And do you live or work in the
18 project area?

19 MS. NIGHTWINE: I live in the area.

20 MS. SEE: Go ahead with your testimony.

21 MS. NIGHTWINE: I appreciate the opportunity
22 to testify to support Blossom Solar. Our home has a
23 Galion address. The proposed Blossom project will be
24 northeast of my home and nearby. I will see these
25 panels every day.

1 I moved into the home in 1996 with my two
2 children and husband. We have 30 acres and I lease half
3 of this for farming. I favor the solar project mainly
4 due to providing a renewable, clean energy source and
5 not using more fossil fuels.

6 Right now, Ohio has three percent renewable
7 energy, whereas the county average is 20 percent
8 renewable. As a nurse, I know that fossil fuel sources
9 of energy create bad air quality. We need to rely on
10 more renewable energy for our energy needs.

11 And also, the project will make our
12 community healthy by reducing farming fertilizers and
13 other chemicals that impact our streams and water. In
14 the summers, when we moved here, we would have to run
15 into the house when they would spray the fields because
16 the wind in the area is constant, and so I feel like
17 reducing pesticides will help with our air quality and
18 the soil.

19 Another reason I support the Blossom Solar
20 is to use the limited herbicides that I already said.
21 The project's landscaping will enhance the area's air
22 and water quality and health, in contrast to farmers
23 working the fields season after season.

24 The Blossom will plant pollinator bee and
25 butterfly-friendly plants and trees and shrubs. We used

1 to have the field full of lightning bugs when we first
2 moved in the area, and in the past years they've gone 90
3 percent away. So you can see a real impact on our
4 pollution in the area.

5 MS. SEE: Any cross examination for this
6 witness?

7 MS. SANYAL: No, your Honor.

8 MS. NORDSTROM: No.

9 MS. SEE: Thank you. Heather Nightwine?
10 Ms. Nightwine, please raise your right hand.

11

12 HEATHER NIGHTWINE,

13 First having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

14

15 MS. SEE: State and spell your name for the
16 record, and provide us your address.

17 MS. NIGHTWINE: Heather Nightwine.

18 H-E-A-T-H-E-R, N-I-G-H-T-W-I-N-E. 4611 Iberia-Bucyrus
19 Road, Galion, Ohio, 44833, Tully Township, Marion
20 County. And we are -- I'm Debbie's daughter. We are
21 neighbors of the project. We are the southwestern
22 corner of the project.

23 My main thing -- well, I am in support of
24 the project, because renewables -- we really need to get
25 our feet wet. We really need to get moving on it, and

1 it seems, based on the maps, that there are considerable
2 amount of projects either started or running already,
3 and I have not heard any horrible news across the state
4 yet, so that's really good news.

5 And we need to get away from fossil fuels.
6 There are downsides to this, but I feel that the
7 positives outweigh the downs. My view will change, but
8 that's okay. The view changed for everybody when they
9 started putting electric poles across the country down
10 every street when electricity was invented and
11 implemented.

12 And that changed the landscape as well, and
13 there are giant electric poles off in the distance from
14 my view, and they're beautiful. They probably didn't
15 think that way back in the day, but I think it's homey.

16 I know this will be different, but it's
17 something that I can sacrifice my view for the better of
18 our local community, our country, our entire planet,
19 because we need to take drastic steps. And I can get
20 over the little flaws in anything that comes up as long
21 as we stop killing our planet. That's about all I have
22 to say.

23 MS. SEE: Okay. Any cross?

24 MS. SANYAL: No.

25 MS. SEE: Thank you very much, Ms.

1 Nightwine. Alexander Threadgill? Mr. Threadgill,
2 please raise your right hand.

3

4

ALEXANDER THREADGILL,

5

First having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

6

7

MS. SEE: Please state and spell your name
8 for the record, and provide your address.

9

MR. THREADGILL: Alexander Threadgill.
10 A-L-E-X-A-N-D-E-R, T-H-R-E-A-D-G-I-L-L.

11

MS. SEE: Your address, please, sir?

12

MR. THREADGILL: 8604 County Road 30,
13 Iberia, Ohio.

14

MS. SEE: And do you live or work in the
15 project area?

16

MR. THREADGILL: Yes, I do. I live here.

17

MS. SEE: Okay. Go ahead with your
18 testimony.

19

MR. THREADGILL: My name is Alexander
20 Threadgill. I have lived in Iberia for six years and I
21 attend Northmor Junior High. In school I am on the
22 academic challenge team, and I am in a cross country
23 runner. I also volunteer in the Sound the Alarm
24 campaign for Red Cross, and I have worked with the Keep
25 Morrow County Beautiful group and Green Crusaders. I

1 have actively participated in my 4-H club for four
2 years, and I am a beekeeper.

3 I am here speaking today because I am going
4 to grow up into an evolving world and I want to make
5 sure that it has a safe and reliable source of energy
6 that does not harm the future. I feel solar power is
7 the way to go.

8 When comparing coal and solar energy, coal
9 produces 59 percent of CO2 emissions for all of the
10 power generation in the U.S. Solar power, however, only
11 produces 50 grams of CO2 every time it was produced.
12 There are almost no emissions or pollutants, other than
13 the process of producing the panels themselves, that are
14 going to be recycled at the end of the project. The
15 metal rods they use, too, to place the panels can be
16 easily removed, so the land will be usable in the next
17 40 years.

18 Something else I personally enjoy is that
19 they use native plants under and around their panels.
20 Having large areas of native plants help our
21 pollinators. While bees are a primary pollinator,
22 secondary pollinators rely on a native and diverse
23 ecosystem.

24 This product will not only help us by making
25 clean energy with little emissions, but it can also help

1 the crops we grow to produce better by having healthier
2 pollinators.

3 I really hope this project gets full
4 approval and support from both the community and the
5 Siting Board. Thank you for your time.

6 MS. SEE: May I inquire how old you are,
7 sir? Mr. Threadgill, how old are you?

8 MR. THREADGILL: 13.

9 MS. SEE: Very well done.

10 MR. THREADGILL: Thank you.

11 MS. SEE: Very well done. Any cross
12 examination for this witness?

13 MS. SANYAL: No, your Honor.

14 MS. NORDSTROM: No.

15 MS. SEE: Next witness is Belladonna
16 Threadgill. Ms. Threadgill, please raise your right
17 hand.

18
19 BELLADONNA THREADGILL,
20 First having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

21
22 MS. SEE: Please state and spell your name.

23 MS. THREADGILL: Belladonna Threadgill.

24 B-E-L-L-A-D-O-N-N-A, T-H-R-E-A-D-G-I-L-L.

25 MS. SEE: And I'm going to need you to speak

1 up, okay? Your address the same as Alexander
2 Threadgill?

3 MS. THREADGILL: Yes.

4 MS. SEE: Okay. May I ask how old you are,
5 ma'am?

6 MS. THREADGILL: I'm 11.

7 MS. SEE: And do you live or work in the
8 project area?

9 MS. THREADGILL: Yes, I live here.

10 MS. SEE: Okay. Go ahead with your
11 testimony.

12 MS. THREADGILL: Hello. My name is
13 Belladonna Threadgill, and I'm 11 years old and in sixth
14 grade at Northmor Elementary. I am active in Morrow
15 County -- Keep Morrow County beautiful and Morrow County
16 Recycling for the last three years. I've helped the
17 community with clean-ups, recycling events, painting
18 community buildings, and landscaping projects here in
19 Morrow County.

20 I've also been in 4-H for three years and
21 also served as the environmental officer in my club. As
22 environmental officer, I have helped my club plan and do
23 clean-ups in the community and helped with
24 beautification projects at the Morrow County
25 fairgrounds.

1 There are so many things I can say about
2 what the Blossom power project can do for us, like how
3 jobs will help, or the fact that they maintain the
4 roads. But I would like to talk about how Blossom Solar
5 can help the environment.

6 Solar power has a very important role in
7 reducing greenhouse gas emissions and reducing climate
8 change, which is critical for protecting humans,
9 wildlife, and ecosystems. Solar power can improve air
10 quality because it doesn't cause as much pollution as
11 other power sources.

12 Blossom Solar can help us in the future by
13 reducing energy costs and giving my school the
14 opportunity to provide a better education from the money
15 that they will provide through the PILOT program.

16 Blossom Solar and projects like this have a
17 lot to offer for next generations to come. I know that
18 I want to live in a community that is safe and clean so
19 my kids have a nice place to grow up. Having a clean
20 source of power that gives back to the community will
21 make a better place for not only me, but for my kids,
22 too. I can't wait to see what happens in the future.
23 Thank you for your time and consideration.

24 MS. SEE: Any cross examination? Thank you
25 very much. Very well done. May I ask if you have a

1 copy of your statement?

2 MS. THREADGILL: Yes.

3 MS. SEE: You could leave it up here,
4 please.

5 Next witness is it Dixie Shinaberry. Ms.
6 Shinaberry, if you could raise your right hand?

7

8 DIXIE SHINABERRY,

9 First having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

10

11 MS. SEE: State and spell your name for the
12 record, and give us your address.

13 MS. SHINABERRY: Dixie Shinaberry.
14 D-I-X-I-E, S-H-I-N-A-B-E-R-R-Y. 694 Westview Drive,
15 Mount Gilead, Ohio.

16 MS. SEE: And do you live or work in the
17 project area?

18 MS. SHINABERRY: No.

19 MS. SEE: Okay. Go ahead with your
20 testimony.

21 MS. SHINABERRY: First of all, I want to
22 thank the Ohio Power Siting Board for allowing us this
23 opportunity to speak and coming to Washington Township.
24 My name is Dixie Shinaberry. I'm also the county
25 recorder.

1 I'm here to share my observations about Open
2 Roads Renewables and their presence in Morrow County.
3 As a life-long resident and elected official, I feel
4 that when companies want to do business within our
5 community, they need to be involved and present. Open
6 Roads Renewables has exceeded that standard, in my
7 opinion. They went way beyond the call.

8 Just one of the contributions -- some of the
9 contributions include opening an office locally means
10 they are available to the community. They have
11 volunteered at the Morrow County fair, sponsored the
12 fair, and supported our 4-H kids at the livestock sale.

13 They have not only sponsored local events
14 but also showed up for the entire event and engaged with
15 our residents to educate and answer questions. They
16 provided meals for our senior citizens.

17 And on a side note, I sponsor courthouse
18 lunches. They have even attended the lunches and
19 brought food for the lunches, and they got to
20 communicate with the employees at the courthouse.

21 They have provided -- they sponsored a kids
22 camp and participated in teaching our kids about solar
23 energy, drones, and the environment. This is only a
24 snapshot of how they have dug in here in Morrow County,
25 and it should be an example.

1 Working with Open Roads Renewables and its
2 outstanding staff has been very rewarding. Thank you
3 for allowing me to share these observations with you,
4 and I fully support this project.

5 MS. SEE: Any cross examination?

6 MS. SANYAL: No.

7 MS. SEE: Thank you very much. Susan
8 Tavenor? Ms. Tavenor, if you'd raise your right hand?

9
10 SUSAN TAVENOR,

11 First having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

12
13 MS. SEE: State and spell your name for the
14 record, and provide us your address.

15 MS. TAVENOR: Susan Tavenor. S-U-S-A-N,
16 T-A-V-E-N-O-R. 7326 State Route 19, Mount Gilead, Ohio.

17 MS. SEE: Go ahead with your testimony.

18 MS. TAVENOR: Thank you. I want to express
19 my support for the Blossom Solar project and for
20 renewable energy. My husband and I have lived in Morrow
21 County for almost 14 years now, and our youngest son
22 graduated from Northmor High School.

23 I've heard presentations from the Open Road
24 at the Morrow County chamber earlier this year, and I
25 was impressed with its plans and how a solar project

1 would be implemented in Morrow County.

2 The fact that the PILOT has been approved by
3 the Morrow County commissioners is a positive aspect of
4 this project. The fact that the PILOT word stands for
5 payment in lieu of taxes, I think, shows significant and
6 sustainable revenues for our county, and, as mentioned
7 by almost everyone who's come up here, for the schools,
8 including Northmor High School.

9 I live in the resident area that is Northmor
10 High School, and in looking at the brochures and the
11 information that's been passed out, the 41 conditions
12 that they've put together -- I think one of the most
13 impressive ones is that 80 percent of the workforce for
14 this project will be residents of Ohio.

15 So thank you very much for giving me a
16 chance to speak.

17 MS. SEE: Okay. Any cross?

18 MS. SANYAL: No, your Honor.

19 MS. NORDSTROM: No, your Honor.

20 MS. SEE: Thank you very much, Ms. Tavenor.

21 Next witness on the list is Heather Nightwine.

22 MS. NIGHTWINE: No. My mom -- she must have
23 signed my name under hers.

24 MS. SEE: Okay. Carl Neutzling? Clarify
25 the last name for me?

1 (Remarks were made off the record.)

2

3 MS. SEE: Sir, can you please raise your
4 right hand?

5

6 CARL NEUTZLING,
7 First having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

8

9 MS. SEE: State and spell your name for the
10 record, and provide us your address.

11 MR. NEUTZLING: Carl Neutzling. C-A-R-L,
12 N-E-U-T-Z-L-I-N-G.

13 MS. SEE: And your address?

14 MR. NEUTZLING: 2850 Alta West Road,
15 Mansfield, Ohio.

16 MS. SEE: Do you live or work in the project
17 area?

18 MR. NEUTZLING: I do not.

19 MS. SEE: Okay. Go ahead.

20 MR. NEUTZLING: Members of the Power Siting
21 Board, I appreciate you being here tonight to take the
22 feedback from the community.

23 My name is Carl Neutzling and I am the
24 business manager of IBEW Local 688, which represents
25 seven counties in Ohio, including Morrow County.

1 As the nation's largest union of energy
2 professionals in the nation, we have been a leader
3 electrifying our nation, whether it's coal, natural gas,
4 wind, or solar. Our energy supply should be diverse and
5 provide opportunities for our workforce. Utility-scale
6 solar meets that demand.

7 The payment in lieu of taxes, or PILOT, has
8 already been approved. The previous speaker spoke about
9 it also. It's been approved by the county commission,
10 which will guarantee 80 percent of the work will be done
11 by Ohioans.

12 As you undoubtedly know, utility-scale solar
13 is already putting Ohioans to work and building
14 utility-scale solar projects in Ohio. This is an
15 incredible opportunity for our members who seek
16 high-wage jobs to better our families and communities.

17 We are able to use our technical expertise
18 as electricians to build the best-in-class utility
19 infrastructure to meet the ever-increasing energy
20 demands. Our members work in coal plants, and now we
21 work in solar. We understand the need for additional
22 electric generation capacity.

23 We have an emphasis on re-training displaced
24 workers and opportunities for apprenticeships, both of
25 which are equally critical, so we don't leave workers

1 behind in this changing economy.

2 We appreciate the inclusive nature and
3 robust community engagement that Open Roads Renewables
4 employs in their project development. We believe that
5 they are a true community partner, and look forward to
6 making this project a reality.

7 We encourage the OPSB to approve this
8 project. Thank you for your time this evening.

9 MS. SEE: Thank you. Any cross?

10 MS. SANYAL: No.

11 MS. NORDSTROM: No.

12 MS. SEE: Thank you. Brian McPeak the
13 Second? Sir, if you could raise your right hand?

14

15 BRIAN McPEAK, II,

16 First having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

17

18 MS. SEE: State and spell your name for the
19 record, and give us your address.

20 MR. McPEAK: Brian McPeak. B-R-I-A-N,
21 M-C-P-E-A-K. 383 Apple Lane, Mansfield, Ohio.

22 MS. SEE: And are you the second?

23 MR. McPEAK: Yes.

24 MS. SEE: Go ahead with your testimony.

25 MR. McPEAK: Yeah. I'm the president of the

1 International Brotherhood of Electrician Workers, Local
2 688. We represent seven counties, Morrow being one of
3 them, around 250 electricians. I support the project.
4 This is, you know, good jobs -- good union jobs, good
5 paying jobs, good revenue for the area.

6 MS. SEE: Any cross?

7 MS. SANYAL: No, your Honor.

8 MS. SEE: Thank you, sir. John W. Cole.
9 Mr. Cole, if you could raise your right hand.

10

11 JOHN W. COLE,

12 First having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

13

14 MS. SEE: Please state and spell your name
15 for the record, and give us your complete address.

16 MR. COLE: John W. Cole. J-O-H-N, W,
17 C-O-L-E. My address is 1060 Poe Road, Bucyrus, Ohio,
18 44820.

19 MS. SEE: Okay. And do you live or work in
20 the project area?

21 MR. COLE: I work in.

22 MS. SEE: Okay.

23 MR. COLE: I just want to go on record that
24 I fully support this endeavor. I think that renewable
25 energy is very important for our country and our

1 economy. That's basically it.

2 MS. SEE: Okay. Any cross?

3 MS. SANYAL: No, your Honor.

4 MS. NORDSTROM: No.

5 MS. SEE: Thank you very much, Mr. Cole.

6 MR. COLE: Thank you.

7 MS. SEE: Tom Cole. If you could raise your
8 right hand, sir?

9

10 TOM COLE,

11 First having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

12

13 MS. SEE: State and spell your name for the
14 record, and state your address as well.

15 MR. COLE: James T. Cole. J-A-M-E-S, T --
16 Tom -- Cole, C-O-L-E. 720 Hess, H-E-S-S, Street,
17 Galion, Ohio, 44833.

18 MS. SEE: And do you work or reside in the
19 project area?

20 MR. COLE: I live three miles from the
21 project area. I'm a property owner of the project area.

22 MS. SEE: Go ahead with your testimony.

23 MR. COLE: Hello. My name is Tom Cole. I'm
24 here in support of the Blossom Solar project in Morrow
25 County. I'm a property owner with parts of my property

1 included in the proposed project.

2 My property has been farmed for many years.
3 Solar will allow a welcome break for the ground. The
4 ground will have 30 or so years to rest with solar power
5 in the terms of the lease. Also, Blossom will use
6 limited herbicides and have native turf grass and
7 pollinator cover.

8 The land can be placed back into agriculture
9 when the project is decommissioned, or used for whatever
10 the best option is at the time, and the land will be
11 better after the rest.

12 As a property owner, I should be able to
13 make choices on the use of my land. Having solar may
14 allow me to have the finances to invest in the equipment
15 to start farming the remaining ground with my sons soon,
16 and if I choose to, once the leases are up, be able to
17 expand into farming the entire property.

18 I'm thankful that Open Roads Renewables
19 takes measures to preserve and protect the land where
20 the solar will be put. I grew up in the solar project
21 area and was blessed with the opportunity to buy a few
22 properties over the years, but I have not been able to
23 farm the ground myself due to the cost associated with
24 farming after buying property. So I would not stand in
25 the way of other persons with an opportunity like this

1 to exercise their rights to use their property as they
2 see fit.

3 Beyond the individual rights and benefits
4 that influence my support, there are great benefits for
5 the local school district, the county finances, and many
6 departments as well. Benefits like a road use
7 maintenance agreement will be put in place with the
8 county to strengthen and upgrade roads to a current or
9 better condition during the project. Blossom will
10 provide 1.3 million dollars annually distributed through
11 the local schools, the county, and local services.

12 While this one solar project will not
13 fundamentally change Morrow County, the sum of this and
14 other investments in the county can significantly help
15 the county and future residents for years to come.

16 Please support this endeavor for the
17 individuals directly involved and the benefits of the
18 county and future residents. Thank you for your time
19 and consideration. I urge you to support Blossom Solar.

20 MS. SEE: Any cross examination?

21 MS. SANYAL: No, your Honor.

22 MS. SEE: Sir, may I ask, are you the same
23 Tom Cole that filed comments on the docket?

24 MR. COLE: I am.

25 MS. SEE: Okay. Thank you. Justin Cole?

1 Could you raise your right hand, sir?

2

3 JUSTIN COLE,

4 First having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

5

6 MS. SEE: State and spell your name for the
7 record.

8 MR. COLE: Justin Cole. J-U-S-T-I-N,

9 C-O-L-E.

10 MS. SEE: And your address?

11 MR. COLE: 720 Hess Street, H-E-S-S, Galion,
12 Ohio, 44833.

13 MS. SEE: Do you live or work in the project
14 area?

15 MR. COLE: I work in the project area, and I
16 am the son of Tom Cole.

17 MS. SEE: Go ahead with your testimony.

18 MR. COLE: Good evening. Thank you to the
19 Ohio Power Siting Board for being here tonight to hear
20 from the community. My name is Justin Cole. My dad is
21 Tom Cole. He has land in the proposed Blossom Solar
22 project.

23 When my dad told me about the project, I
24 just thought it made sense. Not only would the project
25 help our family financially, but it's also good for our

1 community. Building a solar farm would give jobs to our
2 hardworking Ohio construction workers, plus this project
3 would bring huge amounts of tax money to our area.

4 I'm a junior in high school. When I
5 graduate, my plan is to become a diesel tech. My
6 long-term goal for this is to farm our family's land.
7 The part of our land that would be in the project would
8 get a break from years of farming, and hopefully I could
9 take care of that land after deconstruction.

10 This is something special about the solar
11 project. If that land were to go to houses, then the
12 land would never be farmed again. Instead, Blossom
13 Solar project protects the land for my family.

14 This summer I helped get the word out about
15 Blossom Solar at events like Freedom Fest, a part of
16 Morrow County Citizens for Solar. I really want to show
17 the community that this project is a good thing.

18 As a young person, I believe in fighting
19 hard for my generation's future. Blossom Solar is a big
20 win for secure, clean, American-made energy. Please
21 approve the Blossom Solar project. Thank you for your
22 time.

23 MS. SEE: Any cross examination?

24 MS. SANYAL: No, your Honor.

25 MS. SEE: It's good to see so many young

1 people interested in the project, no matter what their
2 opinion.

3 Next witness is Linda Veil. Ms. Veil, could
4 you raise your right hand?

5
6 LINDA VEIL,
7 First having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

8
9 MS. SEE: State and spell your name for the
10 record, and also give us your address.

11 MS. VEIL: Linda Veil. L-I-N-D-A, V-E-I-L.
12 And it's 3662 County Road 31, Galion, Ohio, 44833.

13 MS. SEE: And do you live or work in the
14 project area?

15 MS. VEIL: Yes, I do. I live in it.

16 MS. SEE: Go ahead with your testimony.

17 MS. VEIL: I'm here to support Blossom Solar
18 and ask that you approve the project, from the
19 standpoint of someone who will be within the project
20 area -- the Blossom Solar project catty corner to the
21 back of my property. And Open Road Renewables team has
22 been helpful and always willing to communicate.

23 I have lived in my house since 1975 and I
24 love the peacefulness of our property and being able to
25 watch the birds. As a mother, I've raised two children

1 who went to Northmor Schools, and my husband was one of
2 the first classes to graduate from there.

3 Our history runs deep in this community, and
4 I would always like to see my community improve,
5 especially regarding education. This project will bring
6 resources that will improve the community. We will have
7 more funding for our fire department, our schools, and
8 roads.

9 The Blossom Solar project is an excellent
10 financial decision for Washington Township. With
11 Blossom Solar, this community will be up with the times.
12 Positive growth and change are always good. And as a
13 longstanding member of this community, I support the
14 Blossom Solar project. Thank you for the opportunity to
15 do this.

16 MS. SEE: Any cross examination? Ms. Veil,
17 may I inquire -- did you also file comments in this
18 docket?

19 MS. VEIL: I did.

20 MS. SEE: The very first one to file
21 comments.

22 MS. VEIL: Oh, I was?

23 MS. SEE: I believe. Thank you very much.

24 MS. VEIL: Thank you.

25 MS. SEE: Larry Veil. Did you wish to offer

1 testimony, sir?

2 MR. VEIL: I'll pass. She already said
3 everything I could have.

4 MS. SEE: Okay. I would remind you that if
5 your name is called and you no longer wish to offer
6 testimony, you can certainly pass. Gordon -- County
7 Road 30?

8 MR. McCOWEN: I'm going to pass.

9 MS. SEE: You're going to pass? And sir,
10 your last name?

11 MR. McCOWEN: McCowen, M-C-C-O-W-E-N.

12 MS. SEE: Bonnie Beiler? Hello, Ms. Beiler.
13 Could you raise your right hand, please?

14
15 BONNIE BEILER,
16 First having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

17
18 MS. SEE: State and spell your name for the
19 record, and provide us your address.

20 MS. BEILER: Bonnie Beiler. B-O-N-N-I-E,
21 B-E-I-L-E-R. 8005 Township Road 38, Galion, Ohio,
22 44833.

23 MS. SEE: Hope I'm forgiven for
24 mispronouncing your last name.

25 MS. BEILER: That's okay.

1 MS. SEE: And do you live or work in the
2 project area?

3 MS. BEILER: I own property in the project
4 area.

5 MS. SEE: Okay. And go ahead with your
6 testimony.

7 MS. BEILER: My name is Bonnie Beiler, and I
8 would like to thank the Ohio Power Siting Board for the
9 opportunity to testify in support of Blossom Solar.

10 I am a homeowner within the impacted project
11 area near the Blossom Solar site in Washington Township,
12 Morrow County. I am here today to express my support of
13 the project and share more about the benefits to our
14 area.

15 I will continue to own land in Washington
16 Township after the project is built. I believe the
17 Blossom Solar project will produce clean, renewable
18 energy and bring hundreds of jobs to our area during
19 construction. This will be valuable, as our community
20 is far from large city operations, and has the
21 opportunity for up to 400 jobs, such as electrical,
22 engineering, construction, and installation work.

23 I am also a retired Northmor Local School
24 District teacher and still tutor and substitute there.
25 Blossom Solar will provide 1.3 million annually for

1 local schools, county, and local services. The tax
2 dollars generated from this project will significantly
3 benefit our school, Morrow County, and Washington
4 Township.

5 I will live within the impacted area and
6 support the way Open Road Renewables works within our
7 community and landowners. This project will better our
8 townships and county for future generations.

9 Thank you for the opportunity to share my
10 thoughts and support for the Blossom Solar project, and
11 I encourage this Board to approve the project.

12 MS. SEE: Any cross?

13 MS. SANYAL: No, your Honor.

14 MS. SEE: Thank you, Ms. Beiler. Ms.
15 Beiler, you also submitted comments to the docket, did
16 you not?

17 MS. BEILER: Yes, ma'am.

18 MS. SEE: Thank you. Larry Strong? Mr.
19 Strong, if you could raise your right hand?

20
21 LARRY STRONG,

22 First having been duly sworn, testified as follows:
23

24 MS. SEE: State and spell your name for the
25 record, and also give your address.

1 MR. STRONG: Larry Strong. L-A-R-R-Y,
2 S-T-R-O-N-G. Address, 8005 Township Road 38, Galion,
3 Ohio. That is 44833 -- the old address, with the new
4 home purchase next to the solar project -- 4413, State
5 Road 309, Galion, Ohio, 44833 also.

6 My name is Larry Strong. I appreciate this
7 opportunity to testify in support of the Blossom Solar
8 project. I'm a retired CenturyLink employee of 40 years
9 of service. I presently live near the Blossom project,
10 and I stated that I purchased a house nearby. Closing
11 will be soon on that.

12 I know, based on studies done on the
13 property values of properties, the project will not
14 negatively impact the real estate value of homes in the
15 area. Open Roads Renewables states that they will use
16 limited herbicides and natural turf grasses and
17 pollinators for ground cover with the project. The land
18 will be placed back into agricultural use after the
19 project is decommissioned.

20 Blossom will provide 1.3 million annually to
21 the school, the county, and local services, not to
22 mention that Blossom will be partnering with local joint
23 vocational schools, providing ongoing support for
24 training.

25 I am in support of the approval of the

1 Blossom Solar project, and the tax dollars, new jobs,
2 and overall community support will be very much -- help
3 our community for years to come. I believe true
4 community is a partnership like this. It is
5 collaborative and supportive.

6 It is my hope the Open Roads Renewables
7 project can construct this project and continue to
8 provide and cooperate support for our community. Thank
9 you for the opportunity to share this vital Blossom
10 project, and its residents, and I hope to see the value
11 of approving this project.

12 MS. SEE: Any cross?

13 MS. SANYAL: No, your Honor.

14 MS. SEE: Thank you very much, Mr. Strong.
15 And Mr. Strong, may I ask -- I believe I saw comments
16 from you on the document as well?

17 MR. STRONG: Yes.

18 MS. SEE: Thank you. Steve Irwin? Mr.
19 Irwin, please raise your right hand.

20
21 STEVE IRWIN,

22 First having been duly sworn, testified as follows:
23

24 MS. SEE: State and spell your name for the
25 record.

1 MR. IRWIN: Steve Irwin. S-T-E-V-E, Irwin,
2 I-R-W-I-N.

3 MS. SEE: And your address, sir?

4 MR. IRWIN: 623 U.S. Highway 42, Mount
5 Gilead.

6 MS. SEE: And do you live or work in the
7 project area?

8 MR. IRWIN: I do not live within the project
9 area, but live within Northmor.

10 MS. SEE: And that is within what county and
11 township?

12 MR. IRWIN: Cardington Township, Morrow
13 County.

14 MS. SEE: Okay. Go ahead with your
15 testimony.

16 MR. IRWIN: Good evening. My name is Steve
17 Irwin. While I do not live within the project area, I
18 do live within the Northmor School District.

19 My understanding is that if this project is
20 approved, the school district will receive funding. My
21 hope is that these funds are allocated wisely for the
22 future.

23 I do not have a position on whether or not
24 this project should be approved by the Board, but wanted
25 to highlight an area of potential concern.

1 While I am speaking on my own behalf this
2 evening and not as a representative of any organization,
3 I do have applicable experience. I have worked on
4 renewable energy projects as a developer, was previously
5 employed by the Ohio Power Siting Board, and also worked
6 at the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, which is a
7 voting member of the Board.

8 Staff Recommendation Number 38 addresses the
9 potential existence but unknown location of a previously
10 plugged oil and gas well, identified as API number
11 34-117-2-3593-00-00. Recommendation Number 38 would
12 require the applicant to observe a minimum setback of 25
13 feet between all project infrastructure and the well.
14 In my experience, a 25-foot setback is woefully
15 inadequate and should be expanded.

16 The Division of Oil and Gas Resources
17 Management, which has sole and exclusive authority to
18 regulate oil and gas in Ohio, keeps record of all wells
19 drilled and plugged since the implementation of
20 regulation in the state of Ohio.

21 Notable for this discussion is that these
22 regulations were first put in place after the oil boom
23 that occurred in this county in the 1960s. The Division
24 records show that Well Number 3953 was drilled in 1985
25 and plugged in the same year by the Texas Gas

1 Exploration Corporation.

2 While there should be no issue with the
3 plugged well, if an issue were to arise -- and they
4 do -- a 25-foot setback would significantly limit
5 options to remedy the issue. Moreover, should the well
6 require maintenance work, the work would likely be
7 conducted by the Division of Oil and Gas's Orphan Well
8 Program.

9 Since the state may bear the financial
10 responsibility for any future work that could arise from
11 the now abandoned well, the state -- the same entity
12 that is considering the amount of the setback -- Would
13 be wise to increase the distance.

14 Although plugging rigs have been placed in
15 gymnasiums, on lake slopes next to nuclear power plants,
16 and in tight areas, a little prevention could save
17 headache and significant dollars down the road.

18 I would also note that the Ohio Farm Bureau
19 Federation and the Ohio Environmental Council, both who
20 have intervened in this case, are keenly aware of the
21 challenges that come when an abandoned oil well requires
22 work and is located in tight access.

23 It is in the state's own best interest to
24 observe a larger buffer. Thank you for allowing me to
25 provide this input.

1 MS. SEE: Any cross examination for this
2 witness?

3 MS. SANYAL: I may have a couple, your
4 Honor.

5 MS. SEE: Go ahead, Ms. Sanyal.

6 MS. SANYAL: Mr. Irwin, you're speaking as a
7 member of the public today, right?

8 MR. IRWIN: Correct.

9 MS. SANYAL: And you're not currently
10 employed by the Department of Natural Resources?

11 MR. IRWIN: That's correct.

12 MS. SANYAL: That's all, your Honor.

13 MS. NORDSTROM: Nothing further. No, your
14 Honor. We don't have cross.

15 MS. SEE: And just to be clear, Mr. Irwin,
16 you are no longer employed by the Ohio Power Siting
17 Board, are you?

18 MR. IRWIN: That is correct.

19 MS. SEE: And for a matter of transparency,
20 I worked with and do know Mr. Irwin. Thank you very
21 much.

22 MR. IRWIN: Thank you for the opportunity.

23 MS. SEE: Next witness is Matt Smith.
24
25

1 MATTHEW SMITH,

2 First having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

3
4 MS. SEE: You can have a seat if you like.
5 Please state and spell your name for the record, and
6 also give us your address.

7 MR. SMITH: My name is Matthew Smith.
8 M-A-T-T-H-E-W, S-M-I-T-H. Address would be 647 Ashwood
9 Drive, Mansfield, Ohio.

10 MS. SEE: And do you live or work in the
11 project area?

12 MR. SMITH: I am the manager of Firenze
13 Valley Farms. We are adjacent to the project area,
14 located at 6490 County Road 57, approximately 550 acres.

15 MS. SEE: Tell me the name of the farm
16 again?

17 MR. SMITH: Firenze, F-I-R-E-N-Z-E. I
18 didn't pick the name.

19 MS. SEE: Go ahead with your testimony, sir.

20 MR. SMITH: Thank you to the Ohio Power
21 Siting Board for the opportunity to talk to everyone
22 this evening. It's very important to get the input for
23 this.

24 Certainly -- again, my name is Matthew
25 Smith, landowner down the road. I also have a

1 background in renewable energy and the distribution of
2 renewable fuels, and I have worked with the city of
3 Shelby on their two-and-a-half megawatt field. And on
4 my family farm, I have a 25-kilowatt solar ray now in
5 its tenth year of operation. Ten years. I think the
6 payback is getting close.

7 In any event, in addition to that, I have
8 served as the chairman of Peco II Power Equipment
9 Company in Galion, Ohio. We were a power conversion for
10 the telecommunications industry. So again, part of that
11 background in electrification.

12 And I also serve as a trustee of the North
13 Central State Community College, and part of the work at
14 the Community College is workforce development, training
15 these new jobs for the future. So I'm trying to look
16 out over these new jobs, and how do we educate those
17 people? So that's a big part of what we're doing today.

18 Again, I'm working with, also, the Ohio
19 Environmental Council on their programs here to make the
20 pledge, the Ohio 30 by 30, so 30 percent reduction in
21 our carbon footprint by municipalities. And as I talk
22 to mayors about it, where they get their power from, and
23 sources like solar fields in the future could be part of
24 that mix -- so how about that? That's 30 percent by
25 2030. President Biden is 50 percent by 2030. These

1 projects will help.

2 I'm a big proponent, because I live here, of
3 landowner rights. Number one, landowner rights. And
4 this project offers the landowners their rights. And I
5 want to go on record, that's the most important to me as
6 a person here.

7 You've heard of the economic benefits.
8 They're impressive. They're impressive. We're learning
9 all about that.

10 Again, as we look forward to the future,
11 electrification is the future. I am training the
12 workforce for it. I just came from the Ohio Energy
13 Conference today. Again, learning about how we have to
14 change an entire grid is coming down.

15 When I was the Peco II guy, we made battery
16 chargers. I wish today I was making car chargers.
17 That's the future.

18 In any event, thank you for allowing me to
19 give my testimony in support of the Blossom Solar
20 project.

21 MS. SEE: Any cross examination?

22 MS. NORDSTROM: Just one, very quickly.
23 Sir, you mentioned Power Clean Future Ohio's 30 for 30
24 pledge, which is an affiliate of the Ohio Environmental
25 Council. You do not work for the Ohio Environmental

1 Council, correct?

2 MR. SMITH: No. I'm a volunteer.

3 MS. SEE: Sir, excuse me. Mr. Smith? You
4 have what appears to be there something about the 30
5 percent by 2030 in your hand? Could I ask that you
6 leave that, please? Would Counsel like to see?

7 MS. SANYAL: No, your Honor.

8 MS. NORDSTROM: No, thank you.

9 MS. SEE: All right. Thank you very much.

10 MR. SMITH: Thank you.

11 MS. SEE: I note that no one else has signed
12 up to offer testimony tonight. Is there someone who
13 would like to offer testimony that did not sign up?
14 Sir? I see two hands. Could you both step forward,
15 please? Your name, sir?

16 MR. GILLESPIE: Ray Gillespie.

17 MS. SEE: Mr. Gillespie, please raise your
18 right hand.

19

20 RAY GILLESPIE,

21 First having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

22

23 MS. SEE: State and spell your name for the
24 record, and also state your address.

25 MR. GILLESPIE: Ray Gillespie. R-A-Y,

1 G-I-L-L-E-S-P-I-E. 4017 Sassafras Drive, Galion, Ohio.

2 MS. SEE: Go ahead with your testimony.

3 MR. GILLESPIE: Good evening. Thank you to
4 the Ohio Power Siting Board for being here tonight in
5 Morrow County.

6 MS. SEE: Sir, do you live or work in the
7 project area, by chance?

8 MR. GILLESPIE: Live -- for being tonight in
9 Morrow County to hear from the community. I'm here to
10 offer my support of Blossom Solar and ask you to approve
11 this project. I am a neighbor of the project and will
12 be living right next to two solar fields.

13 We have experienced a lot of flooding in
14 this area due to existing drain tile issues. When Open
15 Road Renewables knocked on my door to introduce
16 themselves, they committed to fixing the flooding issue
17 for my neighbors and me. The fact that they came to my
18 door and are working to make a difference makes me want
19 to support this project.

20 The Blossom Solar project is a perfect
21 example of solar done right. The tax revenue generated
22 from this project provides much-needed support to our
23 schools, EMS, and fire department and roads.

24 By screening the project with trees and
25 native vegetation, neighbors to the project are

1 protected from seeing the panels. After construction,
2 the project is quiet, along with having no odor or air
3 pollution, no dust, not operated at night, minor
4 traffic, and no glare.

5 In addition, Open Road Renewables has proved
6 its commitment to helping neighbors of the project by
7 offering home solar.

8 This solar project is a step forward.
9 American energy needs are changing rapidly as we lose
10 many of our coal-fired power plants. We need new
11 sources of American energy.

12 Because solar input costs are falling yearly
13 and have decreased by 70 percent in the last decade.
14 Solar energy does not require any fuel input, and solar
15 is an economically desired power source. Overall there
16 is less reliance on out-of-state electric generation.

17 The Blossom Solar project helps to diversify
18 and secure our energy grid, and Open Road Renewables
19 does solar properly. I would love to see the Blossom
20 Solar project in Morrow County, and I urge you to
21 support the project.

22 MS. SEE: Any cross for this gentleman?
23 Thank you very much, Mr. Gillespie.

24 Sir, you indicated that you also want to
25 offer testimony?

1 MR. WILSON: Yeah.

2 MS. SEE: Your name, please?

3 MR. WILSON: Keith Wilson.

4

5 KEITH WILSON,

6 First having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

7

8 MS. SEE: Go ahead and have a seat. Please
9 state your name and your address, and let us know
10 whether or not you live or work in the project area.

11 MR. WILSON: My name is Keith Wilson. I
12 live at 12836 Roberts Road in Croton, Ohio, C-R-O-T-O-N,
13 43013. And I do not live or work in the project area.

14 MS. SEE: Okay. Go ahead with your
15 testimony.

16 MR. WILSON: I'm from Hartford Township, a
17 few miles down the road from here. I'm here to express
18 my support for the Blossom Solar project.

19 My family and I are part of the Hartford
20 solar project that is being developed by Open Roads in
21 Licking County. My family has been farming down in
22 Licking County for many generations. For the past 75
23 years we've been dairy farmers, in addition to growing
24 corn, soybeans, wheat, and hay.

25 I can tell you that inflation and operating

1 costs have made life difficult for every business and
2 individual, and farmers are no exception. With
3 increased operating costs, it's becoming increasingly
4 difficult to operate a farm.

5 Projects like Blossom Solar can preserve
6 family farms by providing a predictable income for
7 farmers. It allows farms to weather the ups and downs
8 of grain, livestock, and milk prices. Solar projects
9 allow small farms to continue farming to keep that land
10 in agriculture for future generations.

11 I know for us the solar project means we can
12 continue growing corn, soybeans, and hay on one part of
13 our farm, while the other part of our farm generates
14 clean energy from the sun for our community and region.

15 Solar projects like Blossom actually
16 preserve the farm land itself with a full
17 decommissioning process that allows the land to return
18 to its current state at the end of its operating life.
19 That means that land that has solar panels now can be
20 farmed in the future.

21 Solar can also improve soil quality by
22 reducing or eliminating chemicals that are used on
23 fields every year and reducing the runoff from those
24 chemicals.

25 It's my sincere belief as a farmer that

1 solar is an incredible use of farm land. If every
2 county in the state had just a few solar projects like
3 Blossom, we can make enough local energy to power the
4 majority of our homes and businesses.

5 Blossom Solar will provide over 100
6 megawatts of clean, local, renewable energy to the local
7 community and region, but equally important is the
8 investment in the communities that projects like this
9 can bring.

10 The PILOT program that's part of this
11 project allows the community to generate revenue every
12 year for the Northmor School District, Washington
13 Township, and Morrow County. These projects give back
14 to the community while they also create local jobs and
15 local energy.

16 Ohio is well behind many other states when
17 it comes to clean energy. We need cleaner, local energy
18 sources to supplement the energy we already produce as
19 our population grows. Without cleaner energy, our
20 environment will suffer, and our future generations will
21 not be as fortunate as we are. The sun can provide us
22 with unlimited energy and we have the technology and
23 know how to make that happen.

24 Solar projects like Blossom are good for
25 family farms, local communities, and the entire region.

1 I'm asking you at the Ohio Power Siting Board to please
2 approve Blossom Solar. Thank you.

3 MS. SEE: Any cross?

4 MS. SANYAL: No, your Honor.

5 MS. SEE: Thank you very much, sir. Anyone
6 else that has not had the opportunity to offer
7 testimony? Come forward please, ma'am. Your name,
8 please?

9 MS. STIRM: Dorene Stirm. D-O-R-E-N-E,
10 S-T-I-R-M.

11

12 DORENE STIRM,

13 First having been duly sworn, testified as follows:

14

15 MS. SEE: And I need you to state and spell
16 your name again for me, and give me your address.

17 MS. STIRM: Dorene Stirm. D-O-R-E-N-E,
18 Stirm, S-T-I-R-M. 9699 Hurr Road, which is H-U-R-R, and
19 it's Galion, 44833.

20 MS. SEE: Okay. Do you live or work in the
21 project area?

22 MS. STIRM: Both.

23 MS. SEE: Go ahead with your testimony.

24 MS. STIRM: This was not planned, so it's
25 very impromptu. I don't have anything wrote up, and

1 this is -- I am opposed to this.

2 What I am hearing tonight -- Blossom Solar
3 did their homework, and a lot of what I'm hearing from a
4 lot of these people are the rote answers that I heard
5 when they came and talked to our family. I'm hearing
6 what they want us to hear to make this happen. I do not
7 feel that all of these are truths.

8 I grew up in this area. I farm in this
9 area. My question to everybody is, do you eat? And
10 where is your food going to come from when that farm
11 ground is gone?

12 I am not opposed to solar. I do not have
13 anything against it. I do have a problem with it being
14 on farm ground. We rely on that for our food, and where
15 are we going to get our food from when that is gone?

16 We lose thousands of acres every year in
17 this country to different kinds of structures and
18 building things, and losing it to this is not acceptable
19 to me. Farm ground is precious. We need that to
20 provide our food for us.

21 To me, solar energy is unreliable at best.
22 It is not storable. Sunshine is limited. We have had
23 several days where there is none. When that sun is not
24 out and we cannot have that solar energy running, it's
25 not storable. So we have to kick in the fossil fuels,

1 and fossil fuels get kicked in and out a lot with that.
2 It's not a reliable source of energy. Maybe at some
3 point in the future it will be, but right now it is not,
4 and losing the farm ground around here is not worth
5 that.

6 Everybody is talking about the jobs that are
7 going to get lost -- or, the jobs that are going to get
8 made, but I am going to tell you about the jobs that are
9 going to get lost for the farmers. Farmers depend on
10 this ground. This is how they make their living.

11 Yes, farming costs are up. They are up
12 tremendously. But they depend on this ground to farm,
13 and they depend on this ground to have the money to keep
14 doing it, to keep food on the table for their families
15 and keep the lights on and bills paid.

16 The ground here is highly erodible. I hope
17 that you drive these roads and you check this ground
18 that they have signed up and that they have lined up.
19 These farms are hills, and they are highly erodible. We
20 fight with the erosion on these farms every year.

21 We have had to work with the ASC offices and
22 Soil and Water and all of those offices to get things so
23 that we can farm those grounds and keep the ground from
24 being eroded away. Farmers do their best to make sure
25 those things are done.

1 Tile is expensive. Taking care of washouts
2 and things like that -- it takes money. Sometimes it's
3 hard to get your landowners that you're renting off of
4 to help work with you to get that done. It's a group
5 effort. It's things that need to be addressed.
6 Unfortunately, it is expensive.

7 I have issues with Blossom Solar. They have
8 promised to restore the ground when they are done. We
9 are talking about long contracts here with them. A lot
10 of people that are signing up won't be around when those
11 are done. They won't be here to make sure that that
12 ground gets put back the way it was.

13 And once you tamper with that topsoil on
14 top, you can't put that back the way it was. This
15 ground will not go back the way it was when this is
16 done. The loss that we are going to take in the farming
17 community and the topsoil is not worth it.

18 That's pretty much all I have to say about
19 it, and I will type something up for you and send it to
20 you to the same effect, because I do not have anything
21 at the moment.

22 MS. SEE: And that's fine. I want you to
23 understand, the things you have said are being
24 transcribed by a court reporter and it will be part of
25 the record in the case.

1 MS. STIRM: Thank you.

2 MS. SEE: Any cross examination for this
3 witness?

4 MS. SANYAL: No, your Honor.

5 MS. NORDSTROM: No.

6 MS. SEE: Thank you very much. With that,
7 the hearing is closed. I want to remind you that the
8 next step in the process is an evidentiary hearing
9 scheduled at the Board's offices -- I'm sorry, Ms.
10 Sanyal?

11 MS. SANYAL: I do have one clarification
12 question, your Honor. I know we've been collecting the
13 written --

14 MS. SEE: Statements?

15 MS. SANYAL: Statements. How will we be
16 entering them into the record? Will they just be for
17 the court reporter's assistance for transcribing the
18 transcript?

19 MS. SEE: The statements that have been left
20 with me tonight are not part of the record. It is only
21 what you said while you were here speaking. These are
22 for reference.

23 Sometimes you may use an acronym that
24 everyone in the area knows, but it may not have been
25 clear as the court reporter was going through. Spelling

1 things correctly.

2 Anything that you did not say while you were
3 here but you may have in your statement will not be
4 added. Nothing will be taken away from what you
5 actually said, and nothing will be added. And they will
6 not be part of the -- they will not be part of the
7 docket -- I'm sorry -- the transcript, or attached
8 thereto, Ms. Sanyal.

9 MS. SANYAL: Thank you, your Honor.

10 MS. SEE: Yes?

11 AUDIENCE MEMBER: How long do you have to
12 submit statements online?

13 MS. SEE: Go ahead and submit your
14 statements to the case docket, and they will be
15 considered up until the point that the Board issues its
16 decision in the case.

17 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Okay. Thank you.

18 MS. SEE: Although I would encourage you to
19 go ahead and do it quickly.

20 Okay. If there is nothing else, I
21 appreciate you all coming out this evening, and we will
22 submit the transcript to the docket. Thank you all. We
23 are adjourned.

24

25 (Hearing concluded at 7:42 p.m.)

C-E-R-T-I-F-I-C-A-T-E

I do hereby certify that the foregoing is true, correct
and complete written transcript of the proceedings in
this matter, taken by me on the 15th day of November,
2022, and transcribed from my stenographic notes.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Emma J. Troyer", is written over a horizontal line.

EMMA JANE TROYER

Professional Reporter and
Notary Public in and for the
State of Ohio

My Commission Expires: 01-09-27

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behalf of Public Utilities Commission of Ohio