

BEFORE
THE OHIO POWER SITING BOARD

In the Matter of the Application of Oak)
Run Solar Project, LLC for a Certificate)
of Environmental Compatibility and) Case No. 22-549-EL-BGN
Public Need to Construct a Wind-Powered)
Electric Generation Facility)

In the Matter of the Application of Oak)
Run Solar Project, LLC for a Certificate)
of Environmental Compatibility and) Case No. 22-550-EL-BTX
Public Need to Construct a Transmission)
Line)

**DIRECT TESTIMONY OF ERNEST S. SPARKS ON BEHALF OF THE BOARD
OF TRUSTEES OF SOMERFORD TOWNSHIP, MADISON COUNTY, OHIO**

Q.1. Please state your name.

A.1. Ernest S. Sparks.

Q.2. On whose behalf are you offering testimony in this case?

A.2. The Board of Trustees of Somerford Township in Madison County, Ohio. My testimony
will refer to this Board as the "Board of Trustees."

Q.3. Is the Board of Trustees an intervenor in this case?

A.3. Yes.

Q.4. What, if any, position do you hold with the Board of Trustees?

Q.4. I am one of the township trustees.

Q.5. How long have you been a trustee for Somerford Township?

A.5. Approximately 24 years.

Q.6. What is your occupational background?

A.6. I have been a pharmacist for about 35 years.

1 **Q.7. Are you familiar with the location that has been proposed for the Oak Run Solar**
2 **project?**

3 A.7. Yes. I have become familiar with the locations of the proposed project area by reviewing
4 maps of the project area in the application filed with the Ohio Power Siting Board. In my
5 testimony, I will refer to the Oak Run Solar project as the “Project” and the land
6 proposed for the site of the Project as the “Project Area.”

7 **Q.8. Are you aware of any other solar projects in Madison County?**

8 A.8. Yes, I am aware of three solar projects that have been approved by the Ohio Power Siting
9 Board for Madison County and have started construction, which are Madison Fields
10 Solar, Big Plain Solar, and Fox Squirrel Solar Farm.

11 **Q.9. Have you seen construction activities at any of these solar projects?**

12 A.9. Yes, I have seen construction activities at Big Plain Solar.

13 **Q.10. Has the Board of Trustees taken a position on the Project and, if so, what is that**
14 **position?**

15 A.10. Yes, the Board of Trustees opposes this Project, as expressed in a Board resolution on
16 June 8, 2022. A true and accurate copy of that resolution is attached as Attachment A.
17 The Board of Trustees also voted for a resolution of the Madison County Township
18 Association at a meeting on September 12, 2022 opposing all current and future solar
19 projects in Madison County, a true and accurate copy of which is attached as Attachment
20 B. All of Madison County’s 14 townships voted to approve the resolution, except for
21 Paint Township and Stokes Township, which had no trustees present at the meeting.

22 **Q.11. What factors led the Board of Trustees to oppose this Project?**

1 A.11. The Board of Trustees has many concerns about the effects the Project may have on the
2 township and its residents. Somerford Township's residents oppose this Project, as I
3 have learned in conversations with many of them at the pharmacy and other places.

4 **Q.12. What if any concerns does the Board of Trustees have about the Project?**

5 A.12. Our main concerns are the Project's potential adverse effects on drainage, roads, views,
6 soil erosion, water quality, groundwater levels, fire protection, wildlife, land use,
7 agricultural land, and the area's businesses. The Board of Trustees has summarized some
8 of these concerns in the resolution opposing the Project passed by the Board on June 8
9 2022 marked as Attachment A.

10 **Q.13. Please summarize the concern the Board of Trustees has about the Project's**
11 **potential adverse impacts on drainage.**

12 A.13. The Board of Trustees is concerned that the Project may flood nearby roads and land by
13 damaging drainage tiles and surface waterways.

14 **Q.14. Please summarize the concern the Board of Trustees has about the Project's**
15 **potential adverse impacts on roads.**

16 A.14. The Board of Trustees is concerned that Project construction will damage the public
17 roads near the Project Area.

18 **Q.15. Please summarize the concern the Board of Trustees has about the Project's**
19 **potential adverse impacts on views.**

20 A.15. Our residents value the township's scenic beauty and rural setting, which are important
21 aspects of their quality of life. The Board of Trustees is concerned that the sight of solar
22 panels, substations, and other solar facilities in this very large Project will impair our

1 residents' enjoyment of the views they have from their homes, their yards, and the public
2 roads.

3 **Q.16. Please summarize the concern the Board of Trustees has about the Project's**
4 **potential adverse impacts on soil erosion and water quality.**

5 A.16. The Board of Trustees is concerned that soil will erode during construction of the Project
6 and run off into the area's streams.

7 **Q.17. Please summarize the concern the Board of Trustees has about the Project's**
8 **potential adverse impacts on groundwater levels.**

9 A.17. The township's residents rely on their wells to provide them with water. The Board of
10 Trustees is concerned that, if the Project uses groundwater to clean its solar panels, this
11 usage may lower the levels of the groundwater used in the wells of neighboring residents.

12 **Q.18. Please summarize the concern the Board of Trustees has about the Project's**
13 **potential adverse impacts on fire protection.**

14 A.18. The Board of Trustees is concerned about the possibility of fires in the solar panel arrays
15 and the battery energy storage system, because we understand that there is no effective
16 way to put out these fires and that a fire department's only option is to stop the fires from
17 spreading to other areas.

18 **Q.19. Please summarize the concern the Board of Trustees has about the Project's**
19 **potential adverse impacts on wildlife.**

20 A.19. The Board of Trustees is concerned that the Project's fences will keep deer out of this
21 large Project Area and increase the number of deer eating in the neighbors' crops,
22 gardens, and yards.

1 **Q.20. Please summarize the concern the Board of Trustees has about the Project's**
2 **potential adverse impacts on land use and agricultural land.**

3 A.20. The Board of Trustees opposes the Project's displacement of farmland with industrial
4 solar facilities. We are concerned that this land may not be suitable for growing crops
5 after the Project is decommissioned, especially seen I have seen the earthmoving
6 activities at Big Plain Solar that are leveling the ground.

7 **Q.21. Please summarize the concern the Board of Trustees has about the Project's**
8 **potential adverse impacts on the area's businesses.**

9 A.21. The Board of Trustees is concerned that the Project's displacement of farmland will
10 impose an economic disadvantage for local fuel companies, seed companies, fertilizer
11 suppliers, farm implement dealers, and other businesses that sell their goods and services
12 to farmers who otherwise would be farming land in the Project Area. Two examples of
13 these local businesses are a nearby John Deere dealer and a Beck's Hybrids store.

14 **Q.22. Does this conclude your direct testimony?**

15 A.22. Yes.

Somerford Township Resolution

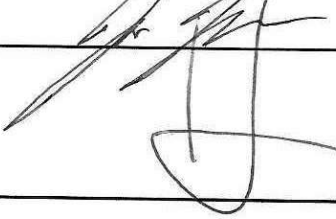


Amanda Knowles, Fiscal Officer
Office Location: 91 State Route 56 NW
Mailing Address: P. O. Box 861
London, OH 43140

Resolution Number 005-22
Resolution Date 06/08/2022

We, the Trustees of Somerford Township, OH, present this resolution with unanimous decision stating that we are formally against the Solar Farm Initiative in the township. We feel that some of the best, most fertile farm land in Madison County will be lost by this venture. Furthermore, roads and the rural way of life will be affected. Drainage will be damaged, which will have a far-reaching effect on residential septic systems, wells and potential pollution of long-established drainage ditches and waterways. Madison County has historically been known for it's agricultural standards. We the Trustees feel there are other methods for this type of alternative energy to be produced, other than using prime farm land.

Resolved that the authority of The Board of Trustee of Somerford Township, **Certify** the above resolution is a true and accurate copy or a resolutions passed by the Board of Trustees of Somerford Township, Madison County Ohio on June 8, 2022.

Trustees and Fiscal Officer of Somerford Township

James Moran		<u>06/08/2022</u>
Chairman		Date
Ernest Sparks		<u>06/08/2022</u>
Vice Chairman		Date
Keith O'Connor		<u>06/08/2022</u>
Trustee		Date
Amanda Knowles		<u>06/08/2022</u>
Fiscal Officer		Date

22-549-EL-B6N

FILE

Madison County Township Association

c/o Erin Morris, Secretary-Treasurer

1081 US Highway 42 SE

London, OH 43140

614-519-9822

RECEIVED

MAR 24 2023

DOCKETING DIVISION
Public Utilities Commission of Ohio

Resolution 2022-0912

The association formally opposes current and future solar projects in excess of 50 megawatts in Madison County.

At the regular meeting of the Madison County Township Association held September 12, 2022, the preceding resolution was unanimously passed, having been presented by Trustee Jim Moran of Somerford Township and seconded by Trustee Kelley Manns of Oak Run Township. It was noted that all townships except Paint and Stokes were represented at tonight's meeting.

Attested to by:

Erin Morris

Erin Morris
Secretary-Treasurer
Madison County Township Association
10/07/2022

This is to certify that the images appearing are an accurate and complete reproduction of a case file document delivered in the regular course of business.
Technician M Date Processed MAR 24 2023

1
2
3
4 **CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

5 The Ohio Power Siting Board's e-filing system will electronically serve notice of the
6 filing of this document on the parties referenced in the service list of the docket card who have
7 electronically subscribed to this case. In addition, I hereby certify that, on May 10, 2023, a
8 courtesy copy of the foregoing document also is being served by electronic mail on the
9 following:

10 Nicholas Adkins at Nick.Adkins@madison.oh.gov
11 Leah Curtis at lcurtis@ofbf.org
12 Trent Dougherty at trent@hubaydougherty.com
13 Robert Dove at rdove@keglerbrown.com
14 Matthew Eisenson at matthew.eisenson@law.columbia.edu
15 Chad Endsley at cendsley@ofbf.org
16 Michael Gerrard at michael.gerrard@arnoldporter.com
17 Leah Hetrick at lhetrick@ofbf.org
18 David Lockshaw, Jr. at dlockshaw@dickinsonwright.com
19 Daniel Loud at danielloud@quinnemanuel.com
20 Werner Margard at werner.margard@OhioAGO.gov
21 Matthew C. McDonnell at mmcdonnell@dickinsonwright.com
22 Karin Nordstrom at knordstrom@theoec.org
23 Terrence O'Donnell at todonnell@dickinsonwright.com
24 Christine M.T. Pirik at cpirik@dickinsonwright.com
25 Jonathan Secrest at jsecrest@dickinsonwright.com
26 Chris Tavenor at ctavenor@theoec.org
27 Ambrosia Wilson at ambrosia.wilson@OhioAGO.gov

28 /s/ Jack A. Van Kley
29 Jack A. Van Kley
30
31

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

5/10/2023 1:13:00 PM

in

Case No(s). 22-0549-EL-BGN, 22-0550-EL-BTX

Summary: Testimony of Ernest Sparks electronically filed by Jack A Van Kley on behalf of Deercreek, Monroe, and Somerford Boards of Township Trustees.