

Julie M. Wisma
191 E. Ottawa St.
Richwood, Ohio 43344
djwisma@aol.com
(937) 215-6585
June 26, 2024

Ohio Power Sitting Board (OPSB)
180 E. Broad Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Attention: Jenifer French, Chair
Gregory Slone, P.E.
Mary Mertz, Director
Bruce T. Vanderhoff, M.D., Director of Health
Anne Vogel, Director
Lydia Mihalik, Director
Brian Baldrige, Director

Re: Case Number: 23-930-EL-BGN
Project Name: Richwood Solar

Dear Ohio Power Sitting Board Voting Members,

Please accept this letter as a submission of informal written comments to be filed into the public comments section of the case record for Richwood Solar, Case Number 23-930-EL-BGN.

At the last moment, I was unable to attend the Public Hearing on June 25, 2024, in Richwood to present my testimony. I had spent two days writing and practicing what I wanted to say, so I was very disappointed that I could not be there.

On the following pages, I am submitting the words that I prepared to speak in testimony at the 6/25/2024 Public Hearing. I know that, as a public comment, my words do not carry the same weight as sworn testimony. However, I feel compelled to submit them to you as part of the case record for Richwood Solar.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie M. Wisma

Julie M. Wisma

Good evening. Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you & share my thoughts & opinions.

My name is Julie Wisma. I live at 191 E. Ottawa St., in Richwood, 43344.

I am not in favor of the Richwood Solar Project.

I own 150 acres of farmland next to the homestead where I grew up.

My farmland is located on the NW corner of Kinney Pike & Harmon Patrick Rd., in Leesburg township.

It is approximately ½ mile south & ½ mile east of the proposed Richwood Solar Project.

I was pleased to read in the PUCO's Ohio Weekly Digest Bulletin that, as of May 30th of this year, the Ohio Power Sitting Board adopted new rules for solar project applications.

For example, the new rules

- 1) Set a noise limit for the facilities,
- 2) Stipulate the type of perimeter fencing that is acceptable, &
- 3) Set requirements for minimum setbacks from residences, roads, & non-participants.

Of particular interest & importance to me, the new rules also

- 1) Require applicants to provide preliminary grading plans,
- 2) Require applicants to prevent establishment & spread of noxious weeds within the project area & setbacks, & provide annual proof of weed control for the first 4 years of operation, &
- 3) Require applicants to describe & map field drainage systems, describe how impacts to those systems will be avoided or mitigated, & how damaged drainage systems & field tile will be repaired.

I wish that these new rules had been in effect when Richwood Solar submitted their application.

I wrote a 5-page letter to the OPSB that was entered into the Public Comments of the Case Record on February 16th, 2024. I would be pleased if you have the opportunity to read it.

My letter touched on weed control, site grading, & drainage, with my primary concern being drainage.

Drainage is important to both farmers & homeowners, as flood waters & standing water can damage or destroy crops, yards, & barnyards, plus seep into homes, basements, barns, & equipment storage buildings.

Union County has been installing drainage ditches for the past century or longer, & farmers have been installing drainage tiles for many decades to improve drainage.

Several years ago, local property owners petitioned Union County for drainage improvements east of Kinney Pike & north of Langstaff Rd. in the Fulton Creek Watershed.

The project, known as the Morris-Beery Ditch Project, was approved, but delayed by the pandemic. It was completed in 2023.

It consists of an open ditch grass waterway, known as Beery Ditch, a connection of Beery Ditch to the existing Morris Ditch, plus reworking Morris Ditch & adding a subsurface drain.

According to the Union County Engineer's Annual Report for 2023, the construction cost of the project was \$408 thousand & 40 dollars.

2/3 of my farmland is in the Fulton Creek Watershed & will benefit from the Morris-Beery Ditch Project.

According to a letter from the Union County Commissioners dated April 21st, 2023, my assessment to pay for my fair share of the Morris-Beery Ditch Project is estimated to be \$16 thousand, 306 dollars.

I will also be charged an estimated \$818 annually for its maintenance.

The 1-time assessment & annual maintenance charges are a lot of money to me, but I will pay it because I know that it will benefit my farmland, as well as other local landowners & homeowners.

When I saw maps of the proposed Richwood Solar Project on the OPSB website, I was heartsick to see that a portion of it will be in the location of the recently completed Morris-Beery Ditch Project. Richwood Solar's maps indicate that there will be solar panel arrays & access roads on both sides of Morris Ditch & Beery Ditch.

That is when I became opposed to Richwood Solar.

I recently found the narrative portion of Richwood Solar's application on the OPSB website.

I was alarmed to read details of the installation process as described by Richwood Solar in their application, which include:

- 1) Removing the topsoil to stockpile it for site restoration,
- 2) Doing what they refer to as "limited" grading,
- 3) For construction, operation, & maintenance, they will bring in aggregate & construct temporary & permanent roads that will cover what they refer to as "several miles" within the project area,
- 4) To support the racks that hold the solar panel arrays, they will hydraulically drive piles (beams) 8' - 12' into the ground, and
- 5) They will bury collection lines 3' - 4' deep using a trencher or using horizontal directional drilling to run the collection lines underneath areas with surface water features, such as the Morris-Berry Ditch & Elliot Run.

All of those installation activities are disturbing the land at & below the surface.

It seems only logical to me that the installation & operation of Richwood Solar will not only change the terrain, but

- 1) It will also change the natural elevation levels,
- 2) Change or impede both natural & man-made water drainage flow, &
- 3) Is highly likely to damage existing drainage tiles systems that landowners have installed over the past decades.

Since I will be paying a \$16 thousand dollar assessment for the Morris-Berry Ditch improvements project, plus \$800 each year for its maintenance, I want it to work as intended to improve drainage for my farmland & for my neighbors' homes & farmland.

I believe that Richwood Solar will adversely affect the new Morris-Beery Ditch Project improvements, as well as adversely affecting existing drainage flow throughout the Richwood Solar Project site.

Because of drainage concerns, among other concerns, I am strongly opposed to the Richwood Solar Project.

Thank you for your attention, & for this forum to voice my concerns.

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

6/26/2024 3:17:47 PM

in

Case No(s). 23-0930-EL-BGN

Summary: Public Comment of Julie M. Wisma electronically filed by Docketing Staff
on behalf of Docketing.