

Questions

1. How up to date is our information on solar issues?
 - We keep up to date on issues through multiple sources. County Commissioners Association of Ohio, Webinars sponsored by the PUCO, and through information from outside counsel with whom we have a relationship.
2. How have you been representatives to all property owners?
 - We believe we have. Highland County has 43,317 residents according to the latest census data and not all of them are opposed to solar projects. We acknowledge there is a large group of residents that are opposed to solar development, and we have heard their concerns. There are also thousands of people we haven't heard from. Over the years county residents have rejected the opportunities to adopt township zoning, we have heard many arguments against zoning. The one most often heard is "we don't want anyone telling us what we can do with our land". The power siting board can override those local zoning codes, however they must consider them while making their decision. While we respect the opinions of everyone on this issue, we also understand that property owners have rights under Ohio law. They have the right to buy, sell and lease their land. There are no restrictions that prohibit them from leasing or selling for energy production.
3. Will you use your authority granted by SB 52 to restrict solar development?
 - SB 52 has granted us some authority as it pertains to solar and wind development. We are in the process of outlining a procedure to authorize Restricted Zones as outlined in the Bill. We are committed to a fair process that involves all parties. We hope we are able to complete that work before SB 52 becomes law on October 11, 2021
4. How will you address decreased property values?
 - Property value increases and decreases are a common occurrence in Highland County from year to year. Many factors are responsible for these fluctuations. We will adjust our budget to reflect current trends.
5. Why should Highland County be responsible to provide solar power to Cincinnati?
 - Highland County has no responsibility to provide power to Cincinnati or any other community. Solar facilities are locating where there is line capacity and available land to site them. Highland County has both. Once the power is produced it is then introduced into the grid where it is consumed by anyone on the system. Communities purchase renewable energy credits and buy power through power purchase agreements and that's how they can claim they are using renewable energy.
6. Why are you holding this hearing?
 - Concerns have been raised that the Commissioners' office has not given a forum to those wishing to express their views. As a result, we have provided this opportunity for all to express their opinions and ask questions.
7. How will property value assessments be done. Will local appraisers be used etc.?
 - It was stated that the Palomino Project is doing a property value assessment. In conversation with representatives of that company, that assessment is being done by them to include in their project application.
 - County Commissioners have no authority in assessing property values.

8. Will you rescind resolution 11-96?
 - While Resolution 11-96 gives blanket authority to grant a PILOT, we have been approving them on a case-by-case basis. If it becomes in our opinion necessary to rescind the resolution we will do so.
9. Will you hire outside counsel?
 - If we need assistance outside of our county prosecutor, we have an agreement with Bricker and Eckler, a law firm that has an environmental division.
10. Concerns over water usage and local wells.
 - The Ohio Power Siting Board, through their project review, is charged with doing several different reviews that consider impacts of large electric generating facilities, including solar arrays. A list of the subjects that are to be reviewed in the process are outlined in Ohio Revised Code 4906.10., that review includes water usage issues. They also have agreements with other state agencies to assist with their review if indicated such as the Ohio Historical Society, US Fish and Wildlife, and Ohio Department of Transportation. You can read a staff report on the OPSB Boards website to understand the depth of review of an actual Highland County Project. Once on the website open case number 18-1334-EL-BGN, open the case review dated 5/16/2019 titled Opinion, Order and Certificate.
11. When have we gotten to a saturation point?
 - Line capacity, available land, and availability to reach the grid are the determining factor to solar development saturation.
12. Can pheasant and quail populations be introduced to these facilities?
 - In conversations with Ohio Department of Natural Resources field staff, they have informed us that Pheasants Forever and Quails Unlimited and others are working with department officials on studies that are designed to answer if those populations are able to use these facilities for cover and habitat. They are also studying to determine if it can be used for pollinator habitat as well. They will update us as the study is completed.
13. Will you file objections with the power siting board?
 - We are trying to develop a set of guidelines that we will require locally to allow a project to go forward without objection. Companies that do not adhere to the conditions can assume that our position before the Siting Board will be a no vote. We may or may not file objections based on the findings of the Power Siting Board. Many of these guidelines are issues that have been raised by non-participating property owners. If the solar companies do not comply, we will intervene in the process.
14. Why Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) vs. regular taxing methods?
 - Resolution 11-96 passed April 20, 2011, by the Board of County Commissioners allows the use of a PILOT as an alternative to the normal property tax and public utility tax method. As we were considering our options in today's environment, several issues were taken into consideration. A PILOT is more favorable to local school districts, as it does not affect their state foundation funding. A PILOT provides a predictable and consistent funding amount for the life of the project. Normal property and public utility taxes would provide more funding in current years but would see diminishing return in the out years of the project as the solar companies would depreciate the assets making long term financial decisions. This would make budgeting decisions by recipients of the

funding more difficult. It's also important to point out that the Ohio Department of Taxation was initially reluctant to place a value on the assets included in the projects, making it more difficult to analyze the differences in both methods of revenue. We had a comparison of the revenue received for farmland enrolled in CAUV to the revenue received from a PILOT in a project area. For this comparison we used the highest CAUV land value in the project area and the highest tax rate. According to PJM it takes 5 acres to site the panels necessary to produce 1 Megawatt of solar power. Therefore, the revenue received from this five acres of farmland is \$158.70 versus a PILOT amount of \$9,000.00.

- The following are comments from the Ohio Department of Education concerning PILOT funding and State support for schools. *If a community engages in payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT), the real property and the public utility tangible personal property values that are part of the project are not assessed. The property is exempt from traditional tax structures. As a result, they are not included in the assessed property values that are reported by county auditor to the Ohio Department of Taxation, and certified by Tax Department to the Ohio Department of Education. An increased investment through a PILOT project will have no impact on the amount of funding a school district generates from the State of Ohio through the state foundation formula. Conversely, if solar/wind projects are assessed as public utility, this will increase the assessed values and raise the local wealth of school district - lowering calculated state funding.*

15. General questions and concerns over solar as a viable energy source?

- We received many questions and opinions as to the effectiveness of Solar Power as a viable energy source. Those questions should be answered and debated by State and Federal officials as part of the nation's overall energy strategies.

16. When will you draw the line on the desecration of our county?

- There are many people that do not consider solar projects as a desecration of our county. We also have citizens that are for continued solar development. We recognize there are those that find these projects aesthetically objectionable, as well as many other things landowners choose to do.

17. Will you file an application with the Power Siting Board that permits the commissioners to reject a project?

- We will use the procedures to intervene on a project granted in SB 52 and the OPSB rules if we believe we have cause to do so.

18. Will you use your ability to consider declining a PILOT for future projects?

- We have currently been approving PILOTs on a project-by-project basis. We will consider not accepting a PILOT if we believe it's in the best interests of the county and its citizens.

19. Why were only Highland County residents allowed to speak at the hearing?

- That decision was made so we could hear from Highland County residents. We have received letters of support and opposition from all over the State. We were concerned that if we didn't limit the speaking to county residents, we would have people from solar companies and other interests taking time on the agenda. We wanted this hearing to be for Highland County residents.

20. How can we be assured the land will be useful after the project is over and decommissioning complete?

- The developers must post a bond that returns the land to its original condition after decommissioning. SB 52 requires that the bond posted must be updated every 5 years to reflect current costs. That decommissioning process will be monitored by the OPSB.