

## Minutes

July 13, 2021

Commissioners Present: Michael Pepple and William Bateson. Timothy Bechtol absent.

Also Present: Sarah Mutchler, Lucinda Land, Philip Johnson, Doug Cade, Dennis Holman, Richard Noel, John Grossman, Rachelle Harmon, Pam Bibler, Alan Bannister, Darl Schilt, Ruthann Schilt, Don Moses, Tom Moses, Megan Greu, Lyle Kller, Mary Jo Boes, Lanny Boes, and Steve Wilson.

Commissioner Pepple opened the meeting at 9:30 a.m. in the Commissioners' 1st floor conference room. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. The minutes from the July 8, 2021 meeting will be presented on July 20, 2021.

The Clerk presented the following resolutions for consideration:

Resolution #458-21 – Authorizing payment of the listed and/or attached purchase orders. William Bateson made the motion to approve, Michael Pepple seconded. Motion passed 2-0.

Resolution #459-21 – Additional appropriation within the Auditor's certification-Commissioners to appropriate to Felony Delinquent Care & Custody. William Bateson made the motion to approve, Michael Pepple seconded. Motion passed 2-0.

Resolution #460-21 – Transfer of funds within the appropriation-Veterans Services. William Bateson made the motion to approve, Michael Pepple seconded. Motion passed 2-0.

Resolution #461-21 – Transfer of funds within the appropriation-Board of Elections. William Bateson made the motion to approve, Michael Pepple seconded. Motion passed 2-0.

The Commissioners approved a travel request from the Engineer's office.

Doug Cade had nothing to report.

Lucinda Land had nothing to report.

Don Moses stated his staff has received several questions regarding Rumpke purchasing the Hancock County Landfill. He asked the Commissioners to clarify the rumor. Michael and Bill stated the Landfill is owned by Hancock County and they have no intention of selling the property.

Philip Johnson requested an executive session regarding potential real estate acquisition and potential litigation.

Pam Bibler stated the group was here to speak with the Commissioners regarding the proposed solar field in Washington Township. The Washington Township Trustees, Arcadia Village Council, and Washington Fire Department all had representatives present. Each of the representatives stated their opposition to the solar field. There were also citizens from Cass Township present that stated their opposition to the solar field project in Cass Township. Don Moses presented the Commissioners with a letter of opposition from the Arcadia Village

Council. Rachelle Harmon proposed the Commissioners file a complaint with the Power Siting Board and file to be an intervening party. She was unsure of the process to complete those tasks. Pam Bibler will email a copy of the Seneca County denial to the Commissioners for their review. Seneca County's project was a wind farm. The citizens agreed there would be no benefit to the community and would take away from valuable agricultural property. They were very concerned about the maintenance of the property. Michael Pepple thanked the group for their input and will take it under advisement. William Bateson said this needs to be handled properly as to not interrupt property rights, especially for livestock owners. The Commissioners have engaged an attorney that specializes in this topic and the Prosecutor's office is reviewing all information.

**Meetings/Reports**

William Bateson attended a wraparound meeting.

Michael Pepple attended the Ag Council meeting with William Bateson.

Steve Wilson gave an update on authorizing demolition of the Nichol's building. He also said the north end of the MLK Parkway project is complete.

At 10:18 a.m. Michael Pepple made a motion to enter into executive session regarding potential real estate acquisition and potential litigation, William Bateson seconded. A roll call vote resulted as follows: Michael Pepple, yes; William Bateson, yes. At 10:57 a.m. Michael Pepple made the motion to come out of executive session with no action taken, William Bateson seconded. Motion passed 2-0.

Respectfully submitted,



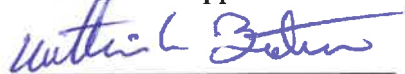
Sarah Mutchler, Clerk

Reviewed and approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Timothy K. Bechtol



Michael W. Pepple



William L. Bateson

***Village of Arcadia***  
***PO Box 235 / 104 Gibson St.***  
***Arcadia, Ohio 44804***  
***419-894-6315***


Chester Balderson  
Mayor of Arcadia

Brian Dingelstedt  
Village Administrator

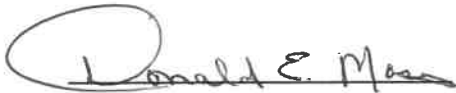
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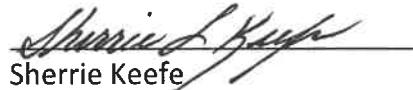
Honorable Hancock County Commissioners Office

The Village of Arcadia has received many complaints and concerns regarding the solar project that is planned to be located just north of the Village in the Washington Township. Residents have expressed concern about the impact on the local environment, the drainage, the long-term plan of this site and property value. The Village of Arcadia Council is opposed to this project being completed.

  
Chester Balderson

  
Stephanie Balderson

  
Donald E. Moses

  
Sherrie Keefe

  
Rhonda Dingelstedt

## Promote Wise Land Use Important Information

We are a positive group (not against wind/solar) who wants to preserve our agricultural land from being taken over by outside companies coming in for their own profit on our land. We want to leave the land in a better shape than how we found it and want our next generation to be able to farm the land like we are doing now. We also want God's given beautiful land to be a source for other people to have a home and raise their family in the country to enjoy this beautiful scenery. Our land is zoned agricultural and needs to stay that way. Any companies can go where it's zoned industrial. We welcome anyone who supports our mission. According to the Farm Land Trust, our land is being taken away by development- 3 acres every minute. Please help support our group.

We need people to volunteer to help us out by doing different things. First we need everyone we can get to send in a letter to Matt Butler (information is on other side) at the Ohio Power Siting Board (who approves or disapproves these projects) to state your concerns about the Leeward Renewable Energy coming in and taking up our land and causing problems for the neighboring land owners. Our goal could be 1000 letters!! Please be passionate, factual, graphic, use pictures and paint a gloomy picture of how it'll adversely affect you. Name everything you can think of. Advise the OPSB to come and see what they will be doing to our community before they make their decision. They have no clue what our nice community will be transferred into. Everyone, let's make a lot of noise! Throw the book at them, name everything possible that could go wrong, but have facts to back up your claims. Drainage, wildlife problems, God's country scenery will be gone. More deer killed and maybe even human lives. How about our water wells, the noxious weeds, dead birds, rabbit population explosion, more deer eating the farmer's crops due to farmland taken out of commission. The ecosystems will be changed for 40 years. Think how it's affecting the farming operations, our next generation of farmers, and will there be any land to farm? What about feeding our people with 2 million illegal immigrants estimated to be coming into our country by the end of 2021? There's 1 out of 4 children hungry in the US now. What will happen with more people to feed and less land to produce crops? People will be starving and civil war will break out to get food for themselves. No land, no food production, and hungry starving people. Think about that & who will be the first people to starve? I bet it won't be anyone on this Ohio Power Siting Board.

Also Rachelle says that we need to be a Citizen Scientist. A member of the general public who collects and analyzes data relating to the natural world, typically as part of a collaborative project with professional scientists. We all need to be a citizen scientist and look for bald eagles, Indiana bats, and other protected wildlife. The wildlife study conducted by Leewards has identified 4 bat species and 2 grassland bird species. They claim no eagles were found. They are still federally protected. Please keep a log of all species found. Every little bit will help.

From Matt Butler: Put Case#21-0669-EL-BGN (Cass Twp. Case#21-0277-EL-BGN) in letters. We can use pictures, studies, facts from credible people, your own concerns and be wordy on our OPSB letters. No letters with foul language. Anyone can put a letter in for our cause. The more the better like 1000 letters!! Leeward Solar has 90 days from June 24<sup>th</sup> to get their application into OPSB. (So far they don't have easements to connect Swartz farm & the Brenner farm to the rest of the acquired land or they will need road right a-way to do that from our trustees and maybe our commissioners.) When our governor signs the SB52 bill, then 90 days after that the grandfather clause goes into affect. Two hearings, one in Arcadia area (no lawyer needed) and the other hearing in Columbus (group will need a lawyer for their legal representation). I wrote to a pro bono lawyer but he never responded to my request.

Directions: Call Matt Butler at Ohio Power Siting Board at 866-270-6772.

Email your letters to Matt Butler: [matthew.butler@puco.ohio.gov](mailto:matthew.butler@puco.ohio.gov) with the case number on it.

South Branch Solar. OPSB Case No. 21-0669-EL-BGN

You can write as many letters as you want, but you can't say the same things as you did before. Matt prefers you write everything in one letter, but if you remember something you didn't write about then send in another letter with the new items.

Ohio Power Siting Board address: Ohio Power Siting Board, 180 E. Broad St., Columbus, Ohio 43215  
[www.OPSB.ohio.gov](http://www.OPSB.ohio.gov)

Attend Washington Twp. Trustees meetings, the second Thursday of the month, at 7:30 p.m. at Township Building, 106 Gibson St. Arcadia, OH. Dennis Holman 894-6539, John Grossman 435-9652 and Richard Noel 894-6349 are the trustees.

Attend Hancock County Commissioners meetings, Tuesday/Thursday at 9:30 a.m. meeting in the 1<sup>st</sup> floor conference room at 514 S. Main St. Findlay, OH. Their offices are on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. William Bateson, Michael Pepple, and Timothy Bechtol are the commissioners. Call them at 419-424-7044. They are involved with preserving farmland. Their Website: [commissioners@co.hancock.oh.us](mailto:commissioners@co.hancock.oh.us)

Ohio Representative Jon Cross (614) 466-3819

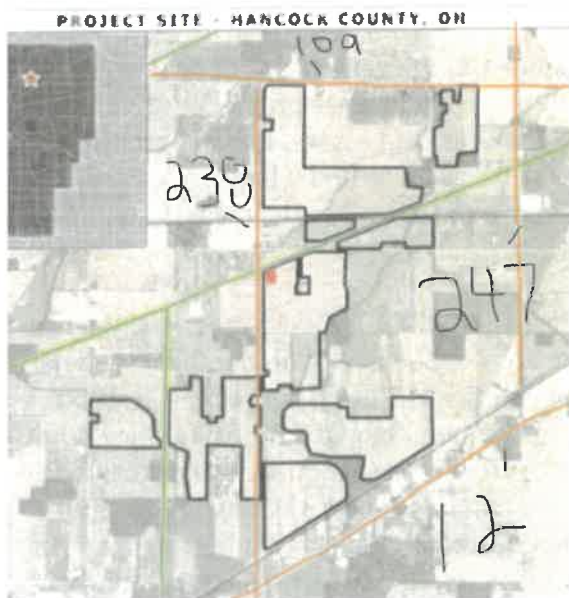
Ohio Senator Rob McColley (614) 466-8150

I hear the commissioners look at the Letters to the Editor. Write your 350 word letters and send them to [letterstotheditor@thecourier.com](mailto:letterstotheditor@thecourier.com)

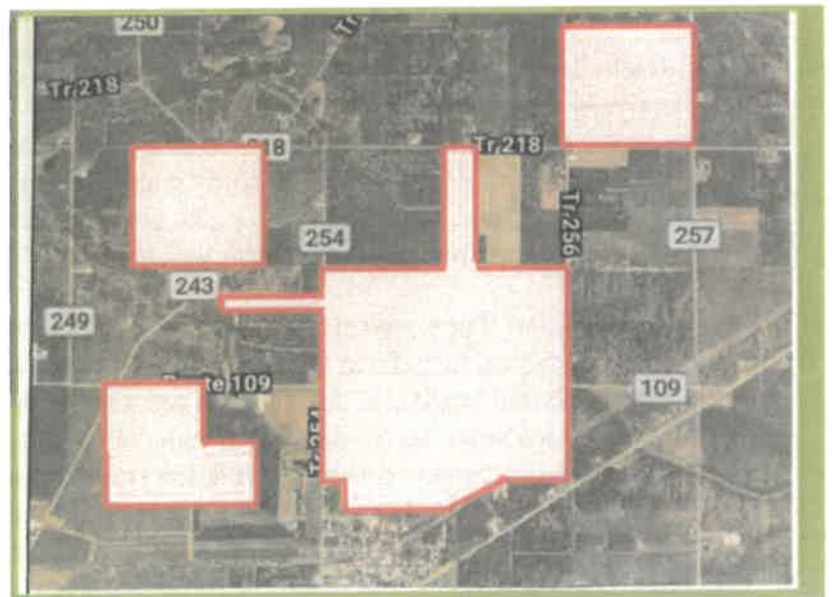
Can call The Courier at 419-422-5151 and ask for Jeremy Speers.

Our Facebook page is called Promote Wise Land Use Hancock County.

Our Email address is [promotewiselanduse@gmail.com](mailto:promotewiselanduse@gmail.com)



Cass Township Border Basin Solar



Washington Township South Branch Solar

# Allen County Ohio

204 North Main St. P.O. Box 1243 Lima, Ohio 45802-1243 . 419-228-3700 Ext 8725 . [www.allencountyohio.com](http://www.allencountyohio.com)

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June 30, 2021

Ohio Power Siting Board  
180 E. Broad Street  
Columbus, OH 43215

Re: Comment on Birch Solar 1 Pending Case Number 20-1605-EL-BGN

Dear Ohio Power Siting Board:

Imagine that you just walked out of your beautiful home, situated in the country, on a property of your dreams that you invested a significant amount of your hard earned dollars, surrounded by fields, farms, woods and wildlife. You come to the end of your driveway, look out over the fields, reach into your mailbox and receive a letter that states a solar project by Birch Solar 1 will encompass approximately 2,345 acres of land, with the area needed for Project infrastructure including solar modules, trackers, inverters, internal access roads, and a Project substation totaling approximately 1,410 acres.

Up until information was released on this proposed solar project, 217 rural family homes, surrounded by fields, farms, woods, and wildlife were primarily concerned with when the surrounding fields may be harvested or when manure may be applied. This is a densely populated area that attracts families who want to live in a rural, agricultural setting and see strong home values, one of the highest valued communities within Allen County. Residents of this area have told the Board of Allen County Commissioners that they reject 1,410 acres of solar panels, as being marketed to them as continued agricultural on the basis that pollinators will be planted and sheep may be grazing.

To put the expansive footprint of this proposed project in perspective, two examples are offered:

- The *Walt Disney World Resort* (Florida) is made up of 47 square miles of land.... or about 30,000 acres. Only about 1,100 acres of that land is devoted to the 4 theme parks.  
Source - <https://www.wdwradio.com/2005/02/wdw-history-101>
- The Ohio State University, Columbus Campus covers 1,674 total acres (Autumn 2020)  
Source - [https://www.osu.edu/osutoday/stuinfo.php/historical\\_osu\\_statistical\\_summary](https://www.osu.edu/osutoday/stuinfo.php/historical_osu_statistical_summary)

Of the many issues residents have expressed to our office, the Board of Allen County Commissioners would like to provide eight specific concerns regarding the pending Birch Solar 1 project. There are 1,278 residences, 4 schools and 6 churches within one mile of the project area. Over the last six plus months, we have viewed or listened to presentations, received emails, phone calls and met personally with many residents who have shared numerous questions and concerns regarding the Birch Solar Project. To our constituents who shared questions and concerns, we committed to review Lightsource BP's application once submitted to the OPSB. Through that

**1. The energy from this project is not available for local development, as it has been sold to an out-of-state entity.**

The energy produced from this large project is not benefitting local economic growth and development. One understands that most energy projects that come before the OPSB, first and foremost, tout the increase of energy resources to support local development. It is important to point out that this \$330 million investment is by a company, Lightsource BP, that is NOT a local business and that the recipient of all the power generated is located in New Jersey. Therefore, the electricity provided by this project will be sold to the grid and outsourced from our area, thus not supporting current nor future economic development.

**2. Local zoning regulations and the Shawnee Township Comprehensive Plan were deemed irrelevant to the process, which is unacceptable considering the 1,410 acre footprint of the project.**

Lightsource BP would like one to believe that the true intent behind the Shawnee Township's Comprehensive Plan is being taken into consideration as:

“The Applicant maintained the agricultural aesthetic of the Project by incorporating cedar farm fencing and allowed for grazing within the Project to further the increase the agricultural use of the Facility area. The life of the Project corresponds with the long-term goals of the Comprehensive Plan, maintaining long-term agricultural use rather than industrial or residential zoning.” (Page 72)

Residents of Shawnee Township view this as an assault on the township's zoning regulations and their comprehensive plan that these land management rules have been bypassed and that once the solar panels go up, 1.62 square miles in Allen County will no longer be classified as agricultural, but as commercial/utility.

**3. The timing of 2021 property sexennial full valuation updates could unfairly be used to the advantage of the Birch Solar 1 project, as increases in property values would incorrectly have the appearance to have occurred after the project start.**

One of the top concerns expressed is to what effect this proposed project will have on the value of the 1,278 residences within a mile and the 217 homes in close vicinity. During LightsourceBP public meeting on November 23, 2020, when addressing concerns about property values, Ms. Shanelle Montana stated “each location is different.” The property owners near the proposed project have serious concerns as to the negative effects the proposal will have on their land values. In an October, 30, 2020 Carolina Journal publication, “Are Counties Taking the Lead in Solar Plant Pushback” it is explained,

“Property owners have seen their land values drop when a solar plant is installed adjacent to their land.”

The only assurance the landowners surrounding the proposed project receive from the Birch Solar is that:

“Additionally, the proposed Project will not significantly impact schools, housing, and transportation...” (Page 73)

Property values are primarily set using sales from similar properties. Like most rural settings in northwest Ohio over the last couple of years, the area of the proposed project has been highly

desired for families. Homes receive an updated valuation based on sales every three years and for Allen County, the sexennial full valuation will occur during this tax year (2021) to be paid in 2022. While the "Home Value Agreement" offered for homes in closest proximity of the project has not been reviewed, there are concerns as to what may be offered. As explained, the desire to live in this rural setting undoubtedly has an increased effect on the values of the properties. It is estimated the average home value for residences within Allen County will increase. The average increase for tax year 2021Pay2022 for residences within this project area are likely to be significantly higher than the average within Allen County. The real concern is that property owners may not be truly informed as to the current value of their homes, as the state will not release those approved increased rates until later in the summer of 2021. If owners are asked to sign the contracts prior to receiving their new values from the County Auditor, they will not be fully informed in their assent and the consequences of that assent.

**4. The decommissioning plan is inadequate and needs to be bonded based on the number of modules and disposal.**

It is estimated that approximately 635,584 modules will be utilized to generate the 300-MW nameplate capacity Project during its 30 plus years. In the Deseret News article "The Dark Side of 'Green Energy' and its Threat to the Nations Environment" it is explained that there are long term consequences of how to dispose of solar systems. The current growth of solar waste already straining recycling and disposal capabilities with some ending up in municipal landfills and stocking up in warehouses. In said article, a Solid Waste Manager for the Utah Department of Environmental Quality explained that he "is hopeful that research being done by the US Department of Energy and US Environmental Protection Agency will provide an environmentally safe pathway for proper disposal." He further states, "**The capacity issue is one we hope is answered before the need arrives.**" For the health and safety of Allen County residents, it is imperative that we have an answer to this important question before our community is inundated with 635,584 modules.

The applicant states that it is "committed to recycling all solar panels from the Project, which includes any panels damaged during construction, operations, and all panels at the end of life/decommissioning," they also explain that their panels "have passed TCLP testing to ensure the modules are categorized as non-hazardous under federal law and could be disposed of in regular landfills just like household garbage." (Page 42). After reading the above referenced article, this is not the assurance our community is seeking.

Just as much of this application is looking into a crystal ball and our community being asked to trust an entity for over 30 years, there is great concern with the decommissioning plan outlined in the application:

"Decommissioning costs for the Project, based on the final site design and selected equipment, will be recalculated prior to commencing construction. If the decommissioning costs exceeds the salvage value of the solar components and therefore, the Net Decommissioning Cost is a positive value, then the Applicant will post decommissioning funds in the form of a performance bond." (Page 32)

Just as the aforementioned Solid Waste Manager for the Utah Department of Environmental Quality is "hopeful that research being done by the US Department of Energy and US Environmental Protection Agency will provide an environmentally safe pathway for proper disposal" it seems unrealistic to trust a number placed on projected salvage cost. For our community, it seems more appropriate for a performance bond in the amount of the total



estimated cost of decommissioning to be held by a third party. The salvage cost would be available to cover any additional cost above the bonded amount for the cost of decommissioning decades down the road. Any salvage funds remaining after FULL decommissioning of the site would be available for the Applicant.

**5. Annual drinking water assessment of private wells needs to be provided to the 338 homes surrounding the project due to serious concerns about groundwater impacts.**

Our community has serious concerns over groundwater as a nonrenewable natural resource that supplies drinking water to the entire project area through private wells.

“Because the Project is not expected to require excavation for construction, the posts for the trackers will only be installed to a depth of approximately 7.5 feet, it is not expected that groundwater resources will be impacted.” (Page 49)

This is in conflict with the findings found a few pages back in the application:

“Groundwater was observed in 14 geotechnical soil test borings and two of ten test pit explorations conducted by Kleinfelder as part of the geotechnical investigations for the Project. The depth of the groundwater was approximately 3.5 to 18 feet below ground surface.” (Page 39)

Further, the USDA, Soil Survey for Allen County, Ohio identifies the seasonal high water table for the predominant soils map units over the entire project area to be at 0-12 inches.

With the 338 water wells and three drinking water source protection areas located within a one-mile radius of the Project area (page 50 of the application), it is imperative for Lightsource BP to work with the OEPA’s Division of Drinking and Groundwater to identify measures to be implemented to protect our groundwater. Locally, it has been discussed that an annual assessment of heavy metals should be conducted for each of these wells over the life of the project. A plan should further prompt specific actions based on any results with levels of concern.

Lightsource BP does not have to look far to find an accredited drinking water testing facility. Located in Allen County, *Alloway is a full-service environmental laboratory specializing in analyses on drinking water, wastewater, and solid and hazardous waste. Alloway has more than 30 years of experience as being the resource for defensible data (www.alloway.com).*

**6. A road use and maintenance agreement is not defined in the OPSB application and does not exist between the applicant and Allen County, Ohio as of the date of this letter.**

On March 9, 2021 which was after the application was submitted to the OPSB, Lightsource BP representative Shanelle Montana reported in a virtual meeting conducted by the Auglaize County Commissioners that a “baseline road agreement has not been delved into yet, but will be in place before construction”. On April 13, 2021 the Allen County Engineer, Brion Rhodes reported to the Allen County Commissioners that no such agreement is yet being worked on between his office and Lightsource BP. Based on his research of the topic, the Allen County Engineer is inclined to require a RUMA (Road Use Maintenance Agreement) and bonding during construction and through disassembly. Typical concerns are not overweight trucks, but rather the number of loaded trucks damaging the local roads. He is working on a draft RUMA, which will specify the routes to which the companies plan to use and requires the developer to maintain them in their current state. This RUMA will specify how this is to be done through

bonding both during construction and through disassembly. The pressures placed on this County and Township infrastructure by the Birch Solar 1 project will be repeated at the end of the project life and should be addressed at the project start. And the OPSB application consideration should not omit this important agreement.

7. **Existing drainage issues to be exacerbated with the addition of solar panels.** The County Engineer is concerned with the impacts this project will have to our local drainage systems and our petition projects under maintenance. Since we currently experience areas of flash flooding during bigger rain events, the County Engineer is concerned that the installation of 635,584 panels (1,410 acres) and 22.46 miles of service roads will create additional hard surface runoff, more concentrated flows and exacerbate any existing flooding, erosion and water quality issues. At this point, there has not been enough information presented to address these concerns.

8. **Alternative Energy Tax Exemption (Preferential Tax Treatment)**

There are concerns with how Lightsource BP mislead the public at their November 18, 2020 public information meeting regarding the status of a PILOT request. During the meeting, Ms. Montana stated that the "PILOT is still being discussed and negotiated." At the time of the above mentioned meeting, the only information received by Allen County from Lightsource BP was that the company would be applying for a PILOT and a general table that showed the company's prepared breakdown of how \$81 Million would be distributed. This misleading statement is very concerning as the county had not been and to this day, have not negotiated a PILOT agreement with Lightsource BP. After the November 18<sup>th</sup> statement made by Ms. Montana, the county had to answer questions regarding the integrity of the Allen County Board of Commissioners. For example, a November 19<sup>th</sup> email from a constituent opens with:

"I am a bit confused and hoping you can provide clarity as comments which were made last night by Lightsource BP seem to be in direct conflict from the messaging you have been relaying to the public and in private correspondence with constituents.

Last night, Shanelle Montana stated that Lightsource BP (or Birch Solar 1, LLC) is in current negotiations with county commissioners regarding a PILOT agreement for this specific project (to paraphrase her, yes, we are 100% in negotiations with county commissioners). Publicly, I understood each of your positions to be that you were waiting until an official application was made to the OSPB and then begin evaluating this project to reach a position either in favor or in opposition.

It appears that one of the two parties involved are being less than truthful and I am hoping you can help me better understand who."

Contained on page 28 of the application it is expressly stated:

**"The Applicant anticipates entering into a PILOT in Allen and Auglaize Counties..."**

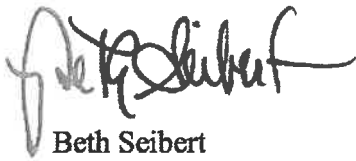
Anticipate is defined as: regard as probable; expected or predicted.

Questions have arisen regarding the tactics being used by LightsourceBP as they seem to be in conflict with their stated approach on page viii of the application's Executive Summary.

“Birch Solar’s approach is to work with the local community and neighbors to ensure that it develops and constructs the Project as a good neighbor and long-term member of the local community.”

We understand that the authority regarding the issuance of a permit resides with the Ohio Power Siting Board. We would request that the Ohio Power Siting Board considers these concerns expressed by constituents in your review of the application for the Birch Solar 1 project. We believe that if these concerns are not properly addressed prior to the permitting of the project by Ohio Power Siting Board, they will never be addressed to the satisfaction of Allen County.

Respectfully Submitted,



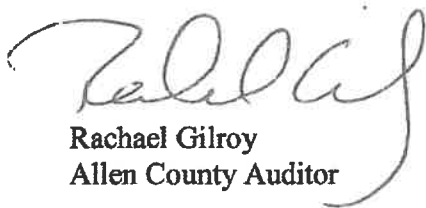
Beth Seibert  
Allen County Commissioner



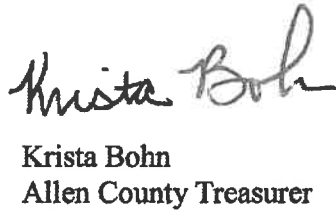
Brian Winegardner  
Allen County Commissioner



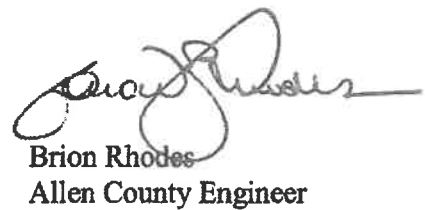
Cory Noonan  
Allen County Commissioner



Rachael Gilroy  
Allen County Auditor



Krista Bohn  
Allen County Treasurer



Brion Rhodes  
Allen County Engineer