

04/22/2024

Charlie Schilling, Washington County Commissioner
223 Putnam Street
Marietta, OH 45750

Ohio House of Representatives
77 S. High Street
Columbus, OH 43215

RE: In Person Proponent Testimony on HB 349

Chairman Swearingen, Vice Chair Santucci and Ranking Member Upchurch along with other members of the Economic and Workforce Development Committee,

As a Washington County resident my entire life I've seen and experienced the ups and downs of Economic Development. I have owned a real estate holdings company for the last 27 years. During that time I have developed residential real estate, including new homes and apartment complexes throughout our region. I have served as a Washington County Commissioner for 3 ½ years and before that was a member of the Fort Frye Local School Board for 8 years.

In my time as a Commissioner working with our Southeastern Ohio Port Authority I have witnessed where there's a lack of natural gas supply can prohibit development in many ways. The SeOPA is the owner of the Muskingum River Industrial Park (MRIP) – formerly the AEP Ohio Muskingum River generation facility – which sits less than a mile from 3 large interstate natural gas pipelines. This site encompasses 165 acres.

Shortly after acquiring the MRIP early in 2021 the port entered into conversations with a developer that was proposing a \$100MM methanol production facility. The 10-month development process ended with the project being located in Texas as opposed to Ohio. A primary factor in this decision: The cost of extending the gas line 5,000 feet to our site. The quoted transportation rates from the companies that reviewed the project, increased the cost of gas beyond the breakeven mark for the company. Many provisions in HB 349 would enhance our chances to secure a project like this in the future. As a result of that near miss, the SeOPA has begun negotiating an easement with the adjacent landowner

in an effort to enhance the preparedness for the next project requiring feedstock quantities of natural gas.

Recently, the Commissioners approved a proposal from our port approving the negotiation of a potential purchase of another brownfield site (former AMP/Gorsuch Generation Facility) here in Washington County as well. Having site acquisition in this area is key, considering it is on the Ohio River and borders State Route 7 between Marietta and Belpre which is our industrial corridor. The other key factor is, this site is connected to the Muskingum River Industrial Park via railroad. So the positive alignment of road/river/rail within our development sites makes Washington County that much more attractive. In reality, we are doing our part working with our Port Authority to make Development easier here in this entire SE region of Ohio. HB 349 has the ability to play a pivotal role moving forward.

In Washington County, we have many large industries and chemical companies along the Ohio River. These firms employ many of our residents. I've heard numerous times, in order to grow in our community these companies need access to more natural gas, without it they will be forced to grow elsewhere. HB 349 can help alleviate some of these concerns!

The brownfield sites we're discussing here today also has the ability to positively impact our school districts and our youth in general. As these plants were closing over the past 10-15 years the negative impact was well documented. Now is our time to remedy this for generations to come.

In closing, I'll say Washington County is seeking a "difference maker" when speaking of Economic Development. For Washington County to have a choice to designate as an Energize Ohio zone, we will be able to support our industry partners along the Ohio and Muskingum Rivers that's been so vital to us over the years. This is why I support HB 349 and hope the members of the Economic and Workforce Development Committee do their part to convert this bill into law.

Respectfully Yours,

Charlie Schilling, Washington County Commissioner