

Proponent Testimony
HB 118 House Public Utilities Committee
Marlin Vangsness – Greene County
March 9, 2021

Chairman Hoops, Vice Chair Ray, Ranking Member Smith, and members of the Committee. My name is Marlin Vangsness. I reside near Yellow Springs, in Greene county OH. I am currently employed by The University of Dayton Research Institute as a Senior Research Physicist. I'm here today to testify in support of HB 118.

In the normal course of events I would spend my days between writing proposals and documenting research results. It has taken exposure to the proposed development of a 175MW solar project 100 feet from my home to convince me to become active in this legislative process. When completed this project will cover more than 1200 acres of prime farmland with foreign manufactured solar panels.

With our quality of life and the value of the home we built at risk, we have joined with a local group of concerned citizens to prevent future developments this type of from being thrust upon a community with no warning and little recourse. In our case Vesper Energy, developer of Kingwood Solar Farm, (owned by Magnetar Capital, a multiBILLION dollar investment company), has treated us to a litany of assurances and feel good intentions with no contractual basis. They refuse to discuss design plans and panel sources claiming plans were not finalized. How can a development of this magnitude and cost proceed with so little planning? Jobs promised would be largely menial, hardly 'high paying', wildflowers that can't compete with local weeds, a tree buffer too short to cast a shadow on solar panels, etc. The list of promises goes on and on. In truth Vesper and its predecessor company have no specified prior experience operating such a facility. Using a sports analogy, they will have no 'skin in the game'.

Without some astute and motivated neighbors we would have been blindsided by the first required public meeting, (we're still waiting), with little time or information to determine a course of action. One of our more gifted members has been tireless in helping to inform local government officials on plans that have moved forward with little or no publicity. Indeed, at the time our local group, 'Citizens for Greene Acres', came together, Vesper had acquired nearly all the leases necessary to complete development.

In brief, these are some of the benefits I see to passing HB 118.

Mandated inclusion of township officers and local resident groups would foster early discussion of proposed project plans as well as expected impact of construction.

Developer and concerned parties would be encouraged to identify points of concern or contention, perhaps even coming to mutual agreements before positions hardened in opposition or in favor.

Early participation by local township officers and residents should clarify the issues for OPSB consideration and reduce staff workload. With both sides aware of the other's

positions they could present a clear view to OPSB staff, who, in turn, would be better armed to make final recommendations.

Early and meaningful participation by local population in the state decision process has a better chance at reducing tensions and hard feelings toward developer and state regulators.

In closing I am continually impressed by the lengths people without any technical or system understanding will go to demand so-called 'green' changes to our lives. Our civilized existence depends on reliable electricity. Electricity pumps the fuel for our ambulances, the standby generators at our hospitals, the cooling pumps for nuclear reactors. While I support continued research and personal acceptance of solar and wind power, they must not displace uninterruptable power generation, as the California and Texas experience should teach us.

In the words of the "Ohio Township Association Legislative Priorities 124th GA|2021-2022".
"The Pilgrims brought the township form of government to America in 1620."

"In Ohio, the township predates our state government. The townships' size and shape were determined by Congressional Acts, which established the various land grants."

"As the Ohio territory became populated, it was only natural that the surveyed townships should become the basic unit of local government. Townships were responsible for caring for the poor, maintaining roads and preserving the peace."

Throughout their existence, townships haven provided grass roots government in addition to promoting local enterprise. I believe our legislature can find no better government entity to steward our limited resources and secure the best future for all Ohioans.