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EXHIBITS

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1 MR. WELBERS: That brings us to our next
2 application, which is Bureau Solar 2, LLC. The
3 Parcel Number is 10-16-100-001 and
4 10-16-100-002.

5 The common location is the southwest
6 corner of 2200 N Avenue and Illinois Route 2.

7 This property is presently zoned as
8 Agriculture.

9 This is a request for a Conditional Use to
10 build and operate a 5-megawatt A/C commercial
11 solar energy facility for the purpose of
12 generating electric power on a 29.3-acre portion
13 of the subject property. The project will
14 consist of solar panels, racking, foundation
15 piles, inverters, overhead poles and lines, and
16 will be enclosed by a perimeter fence.

17 The present use is cropland.

18 The certificate of publication is here.

19 Princeton Elementary School District
20 Number 115: Our School District has no
21 objection to the above application.

22 From the Bureau County Planning and
23 Zoning, from the Regional Planning Commission:

24 Based on information that was heard,

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1 the Bureau County Regional Planning
2 Commission found that the application for
3 a Conditional Use as listed above was
4 consistent with the applicable goals,
5 objectives and policies of the
6 Comprehensive Plan and was recommended for
7 approval with the attached stipulations to
8 the Bureau County Board of Appeals and the
9 Bureau County Board.

10 And I presume those will get read into the
11 record at some point, just not right now?

12 MS. DONARSKI: Yes.

13 MR. WELBERS: Okay. From the Bureau
14 County Soil and Water Conservation District, the
15 District Board of Directors:

16 It is the opinion of the District
17 Board of Directors that this report as
18 summarized on this page is pertinent to
19 the zoning request.

20 Cultural Resource Information. Upon
21 review of the Historic 1862 Plat Map, we
22 found no historic sites on the property.

23 Biological Resources. Historically
24 the site was of prairie landscape. We

1 recommend planting a pollinator mix for
2 ground cover around and underneath the
3 solar panel arrays to improve the
4 biological resources on the site and to
5 protect the soil. Common management of
6 pollinator plantings at solar sites is
7 routine mowing and occasional
8 inter-seeding. Our office can work -- can
9 provide seed mixes and a management
10 plan upon request.

11 Wetland and Floodplain Information.
12 The site is not within a hundred-year
13 floodplain or a wetland. Consultation
14 with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
15 should happen before finalization of work
16 plans if the project will be at or near
17 waters of the United States.

18 Erosion Control. The building site
19 is located on gently to moderate sloping
20 ground. Care should be taken to cover
21 bare soil during construction whenever
22 possible. Grading should be kept to a
23 minimum. The landowner and Bureau Solar 2
24 should agree upon a reasonable method to

1 control erosion on the landowner's
2 property.

3 Soils Information. Most of the soil
4 on the site is considered Prime Farmland
5 by the USDA. The soils on the site are
6 highly suitable for agricultural
7 production. Some soils are not suitable
8 for shallow excavation due to ponding and
9 shallow depth to the saturation zone.
10 Additional building and engineering
11 considerations may be needed in these
12 locations.

13 Soil Health Assessment. A site visit
14 was conducted on February 1st, 2024, to
15 further evaluate potential natural
16 resource concerns for the zoning -- of the
17 zoning request. Current soil health
18 conditions were not accessible due to the
19 wet conditions.

20 AIMA. Refer to the specifications
21 outlined in the Agricultural Impact
22 Mitigation Agreement with the Illinois
23 Department of Agriculture. AIMA standards
24 are for the minimum applied to all

1 construction or deconstruction activities.
2 We emphasize that the activities when
3 normal farming operations, such as plowing
4 disking, planting or harvesting, cannot
5 take place due to weather conditions, if
6 the AIMA is still needed, the appropriate
7 forms can be found at the Illinois
8 Department of Agriculture website.

9 Princeton High School District Number 500
10 has no objection to the above application.

11 And do I read this letter too?

12 MS. DONARSKI: (Nods head.)

13 MR. WELBERS: To Whom it May Concern:

14 HIRE360 is writing this letter to
15 express appreciation for Pivot Energy's
16 \$30,000 donation to our Barrier Reduction
17 Fund to support underrepresented
18 populations to start a career in the solar
19 construction industry.

20 HIRE360 is a 501(c)(3) with a mission
21 to expand employment opportunities for
22 recruiting, training and placement
23 assistance. Pivot Energy's projects
24 create opportunities for the individuals

1 that we train and serve to enter the solar
2 workforce and gain employment.

3 HIRE360 is equipped to serve all
4 equity eligible citizens in Illinois.
5 HIRE360 and its partners have training
6 centers in central Illinois, in Winnebago,
7 DeKalb, Peoria, Taswell, McLean and
8 Champaign Counties. Additional training
9 centers are located in southern Illinois,
10 in Sangamon, Macon, St. Clair and Madison
11 Counties.

12 Barrier Reduction Funds supports
13 apprentices from nearly a dozen community
14 and workforce agencies in Illinois. It
15 has been used to break down financial
16 barriers to careers in the trades. The
17 Fund covers costs that might have kept
18 eligible candidates from starting a new
19 career as a union apprentice.

20 With the support of committed donors
21 like Pivot Energy, we are able to continue
22 to increase diversity in a wide range of
23 construction trades while also making an
24 impact in the lives of individuals and

1 families through access to living wage
2 jobs.

3 We would like local authorities to
4 have jurisdiction to consider proposals
5 from Pivot Energy to develop solar
6 projects, given their unique commitment to
7 invest in local partners like HIRE360.
8 Their focus on land stewardship practices
9 and their sites and their approach to
10 reduce energy burden for low-income
11 families through their solar subscriptions
12 and donations.

13 We believe Pivot Energy's project
14 will provide local clean energy,
15 electrical savings and create construction
16 jobs. We specifically appreciate that
17 Pivot Energy is an Illinois Solar for All
18 approved vendor and is a certified B
19 corporation, observing the principles of
20 people, planet, profit when governing its
21 company. The donation to HIRE360 is great
22 representation for those values and the
23 unique purpose of driven solar development
24 approach Pivot follows.

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1 Your attention and consideration are
2 appreciated. Please contact me with any
3 questions, 312.575.2512, Jay Rowell,
4 Executive Director.

5 And then this one, it is from Crane and
6 Carolyn Schafer:

7 Dear Planning Commission and Zoning
8 Board of Appeals Members:

9 As landowners of the two parcels that
10 are proposed for the community solar
11 garden, Bureau Solar 2, LLC, we wanted to
12 convey our hopes for this project and what
13 it will mean to our family.

14 I was born in Bureau County on a farm
15 just down the road from these parcels. My
16 wife, Carolyn, and I moved back after
17 college to help my folks on the farm,
18 while also working for Country Financial.
19 My three children all attended Princeton
20 High School and still have ties to
21 Princeton.

22 My father grew up just west of
23 these parcels, as did his father. When my
24 grandparents passed away, each of their

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1 children, including my father, inherited
2 20 acres along 2200 North. When my
3 parents passed away, my sisters and I
4 inherited that same 20 acres. A few years
5 later, I bought my sisters' interests.
6 Later we purchased the 20 acres directly
7 west when a cousin decided to sell.

8 It's been my desire to continue our
9 investment in the farming community with
10 land owned by my grandparents and great-
11 grandparents. It is important to us that
12 this land remains in our family and that
13 our children benefit from it for years to
14 come.

15 Planning for the future for us, our
16 children, our grandchildren, and the land
17 itself, we decided to work with Pivot
18 Energy to build a solar project. Our
19 parcels have always been planted in beans
20 and corn, and this solar project will
21 diversify our farm's income.

22 Importantly, Pivot's assistance we'll
23 have come to an agreement to keep some of
24 the land in production. We plan to farm

1 the perimeter in corn and plant hay and
2 alfalfa under the panels. This project
3 will be well-maintained and taken care of.
4 Having dual use of the property, keeping
5 the traditional production while bringing
6 renewable energy to Bureau County, is
7 fantastic.

8 Leasing it to Pivot, a company who is
9 a leader in the solar energy field, has
10 many benefits. It will provide clean
11 energy to the community and a substantial
12 increase in real estate tax revenue to
13 Bureau County residents, while also
14 allowing lowering -- while also lowering
15 electricity costs.

16 This is an exciting opportunity for
17 us and our local community.

18 Crane and Carolyn Schafer.

19 From the Bureau County Highway Engineer,
20 John Gross: Our Road District has no objection.
21 And that's what I am to read.

22 Do we have an Applicant here? Would you
23 come forward, please.

24 MERRILL READ,

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1 being first duly sworn, testified as follows:

2 COURT REPORTER: If I could have you state
3 your name and address and spell your last name.

4 MS. READ: My name is Merrill Read. I
5 work with Pivot Energy. My address is 444 West
6 Lake Street, Chicago, Illinois, 60606. And Read
7 is spelled R-E-A-D.

8 First I'm going to hand out these packets
9 to you up here.

10 MS. DONARSKI: I'll mark it as an exhibit
11 then.

12 (Exhibit Number 1 marked for
13 identification.)

14 MS. READ: You can distribute the rest of
15 them.

16 So throughout this presentation, I'll just
17 say "next page" when I'm continuing on so that
18 you can follow along with me. I only printed
19 11, so sorry for everyone else that's here.

20 My name is Merrill Read --

21 MS. DONARSKI: Before you go, I do have
22 three. Is there anyone that would like to see
23 one of these three for this one?

24 AUDIENCE MEMBER: I do. Thank you.

1 MS. READ: All right. My name is Merrill
2 Read. I work with Pivot Energy.

3 Today I'll be telling you a little bit
4 about Bureau Solar 2, LLC, which is a 5-megawatt
5 solar system in Bureau County that we're
6 proposing.

7 Next page, please.

8 So first I'll talk a little bit about, why
9 community solar and why in Illinois? So as of
10 September 15th, 2021, the Clean Energy Jobs Act
11 implemented the Illinois Renewable Portfolio
12 Standard, which had a goal to achieve 50 percent
13 renewable energy by 2035, as well as increased
14 labor jobs for those in the area for local
15 citizens to contribute to this rising goal for
16 renewable energy.

17 A lot of people want to be able to
18 participate in renewable energy but don't have
19 the infrastructure to do so. So maybe they
20 can't put it on their roofs or in their
21 backyards or simply do not have the income to
22 support building their own solar facility. So a
23 great way to be a part of renewable energy and
24 to be able to subscribe to it is through a

1 community solar garden.

2 So for this garden specifically, you would
3 be able to subscribe for free. So there's no
4 cost to you. And you would automatically save
5 on your electricity bill, it's between 10 and
6 20 percent, depending on what your electricity
7 bill looks like. And I'll talk about that a
8 little bit more later. And it's a great way to
9 participate in renewable energy without having
10 to have it right there on your roof.

11 Anyone can participate, whether it's local
12 residents, the municipalities, your local
13 business. Anyone that's on Ameren lines can be
14 a part of this.

15 Next page, please.

16 So a little bit more about Bureau Solar 2,
17 which is the specific project I'm talking to you
18 about today. It's located just southwest of the
19 intersection of County Road 2200 North and
20 County Road 2040 East.

21 So these two parcels, they are right next
22 to each other, and they're zoned Agricultural.
23 So solar would be a Conditional Use for these
24 two properties.

1 And in total it's 40 acres that are the
2 two properties, but we would be using 29.3 acres
3 of that total land area.

4 The setbacks that we have included include
5 80-foot setbacks from both County roads, which
6 is what was in as part of the old Bureau County
7 Ordinance. It has since been updated to be a
8 shorter distance, but we wanted to stick with
9 what was originally in Bureau County's Ordinance
10 before the Illinois Siting Bill.

11 Then in addition, we'll also have 50-foot
12 setbacks from all other property lines and
13 150-foot setbacks from all residences.

14 We have decided to go with an 8-foot game
15 fence, an agricultural-style fence. We had a
16 community meeting back in February where the
17 landowners, as well as our district
18 representative from the County Board, Liz
19 Novotny, we talked about what might look best.
20 A game-style fence looks a little bit more
21 agricultural than a chain link, so we decided to
22 go ahead with that.

23 We also propose a 16-foot-wide gravel
24 access road off of County Route 2200 North.

1 As I mentioned before, this is a
2 5-megawatt AC system, which is a 6.67-megawatt
3 DC system. So this is estimated to produce
4 about 10.59 gigawatt hours per year, which would
5 be the equivalent of powering 1460 homes.

6 We do not require any utilities. So no
7 type of sewage, waste, irrigation, portable
8 water services, trash, recycling or natural gas.
9 The only thing that we need for utilities is the
10 existing infrastructure along County Road 2200
11 North. So we are able to just interconnect
12 right at the base of our access road, where
13 these two roads will meet.

14 Next page, please.

15 I provided just a close-up of the site
16 plan, should you want to look at details a
17 little closer.

18 We can go to the next page.

19 I'll tell you about the technology for
20 this project. So we're proposing Tier 1 panel
21 manufacturers, which includes 10,520 panels
22 designed to absorb the sunlight and not reflect
23 it.

24 Throughout the array, we'll have 40 string

1 inverters. So it's not one large central
2 inverter. So it's a little bit quieter, less
3 noticeable, and you wouldn't be able to hear the
4 project from outside the project fence.

5 We also have single-access trackers. So
6 throughout the day, and perspective slow,
7 they'll be tilting, following the sun to
8 maximize the efficiency of the panels.

9 The piles are driven directly into the
10 soil. So we don't have to do grading for this
11 site. It's pretty flat already, so there's no
12 grading needed. We put them directly in, no
13 concrete footing or anything like that.

14 And during operation, no pollution or
15 emissions will be produced by the project.

16 Next page, please.

17 Something that you may have heard in Crane
18 and Carolyn's letter that we're really excited
19 about is the dual use that we will have on the
20 site. So we will do crop production throughout
21 the array.

22 So this is something that's not really
23 been done that much in Illinois. All of our
24 projects usually have a dual use component,

1 which is usually sheep grazing so they take care
2 of the vegetation beneath the panels.

3 But in talking with the landowners during
4 our community in February -- community meeting,
5 we decided that we wanted to try something
6 different that we have done in other markets,
7 like Colorado. So this would include on the
8 outside of the fence we have about 10 acres that
9 we wouldn't be using inside the fence that would
10 remain corn. And then between the arrays, we
11 can actually plant hay or alfalfa. The
12 landowners would be the ones tending to that
13 farming.

14 So Pivot would be the ones that would
15 procure the smaller farming equipment. Because
16 you can't have, like, normal-size tractors
17 between the arrays. So they will be able to go
18 in and farm that hay or alfalfa.

19 And this is something that, as I
20 mentioned, we have done in Colorado. So I know
21 it's hard to see probably from back there. But
22 this is a project called Jack's Solar Farm in
23 Longmont, Colorado. So it's a little bit
24 different, but the same concept where they're

1 farming row crops between. And they have people
2 on site every day to manage that. So it would
3 be something similar with the hay or alfalfa.

4 Next page, please.

5 I'll talk a little bit about the economic
6 benefits from this project. So first, property
7 taxes. The State of Illinois has a higher
8 increased property tax for community solar
9 gardens. So I kind of drew that up, what that
10 might look like, from a year to a 20-year
11 lifespan.

12 So in one year, in 2021, the two
13 properties brought in \$1900 in property taxes.
14 With the solar project, in the first year of
15 production that will have a significant
16 increase, to \$26,000.

17 Over 20 years of not having a solar
18 project on the farm and just letting it be as it
19 is, that would bring in about \$38,000. But with
20 the solar farm after 20 years, it would have a
21 significant increase of just under \$321,000.

22 So I kind of drew up what that would look
23 like for the current taxing districts for these
24 parcels. So you can probably see it better over

1 there. I wish I had a projector. But you can
2 see that places like Bureau County, instead of
3 getting \$200, it would get \$2,800 in one year.
4 And then another one I can point out is
5 Princeton Fire Department. Instead of \$61 in a
6 year, it would be more like \$839 in the first
7 year of production.

8 Next page, please.

9 Then the goal of our community solar
10 garden is to, one, produce renewable energy, but
11 then also save people money. So I'll talk a
12 little bit about what you could save if you were
13 subscribing to this project and overall what it
14 could do for the community.

15 So the average Ameren customer will pay
16 about \$154 per month on their Ameren bill.
17 While subscribed to the project, they would save
18 about \$15.41 per bill which would be about \$138
19 per month. So over the year for that one
20 individual, they would save about \$185 over that
21 total year.

22 We're estimating to be able to serve 1460
23 different individuals or businesses, and that --
24 across all of those subscribers, one year they

1 would save \$270,000. So that would all be money
2 that wouldn't be going to Ameren and would be
3 staying in residents' pockets, staying in the
4 local community.

5 Over the 20-year lifespan of the project,
6 after 20 years, that number that I just
7 mentioned, the \$270,000, equals \$5.4 million
8 that is not going to Ameren and is staying in
9 the community.

10 Next page, please.

11 I'll talk a little bit about site design
12 and how construction operates. So it will take
13 about six months to construct this project,
14 during that time, we employ civil, fencing,
15 general labor and electrical contractors from
16 the local area to contribute to this project.

17 Then before we would go online, we would
18 have Ameren come check out the site, make sure
19 everything looks good and that we can
20 appropriately hook up to the grid.

21 Next page, please.

22 During operation, tell you a little bit
23 about that. So our string inverters operate at
24 less than 60 decibels, which is way quieter than

1 how I'm talking right now. So outside the
2 project fence you would not be able to hear the
3 project.

4 We also have a SCADA system, which does
5 24/7 remote modeling. So if something isn't
6 looking right on the back end, we can tell that
7 it's not producing the way that we want it to.
8 We can get our local contractors to go on site,
9 make sure everything is looking good, check in,
10 that kind of thing.

11 We'll do annual maintenance visits two to
12 four times per year, checking out the facility.
13 Also that would include farming and the seeding.
14 All of that would be a part of those maintenance
15 visits.

16 During construction, we'll actually bring
17 the fire department and EMTs on site to get
18 proper training on how to shut down the system
19 or what to do in case of an emergency.

20 We'll have a Knox Box on the gate that
21 they will have access to. So should they be
22 able to enter the site, they would be able to.

23 Then at the end of the lifecycle of the
24 project, we decommission our project. So we are

1 able to pull all of the equipment out of the
2 site and return it back to its original state
3 that it currently is. We can leave the access
4 road, if the landowners choose to, but we can
5 also remove that too.

6 We will put up money before we start
7 construction, so that no matter what happens we
8 would be able to get that site decommissioned.

9 Next page, please.

10 So lastly, I'll just cover the overall
11 benefits that I have summarized a bit here
12 today. So economic benefit is a big one.
13 Saving residents and businesses on their
14 electricity bills, while also providing property
15 tax increases to the County and the local
16 districts.

17 Also encouraging workforce draining and
18 development programs.

19 Also using local contractors and
20 supporting the local economy.

21 Something that Pivot is really heartfelt
22 about is investing in the communities that we
23 build our projects in. So for each project, per
24 each megawatt we donate \$5,000 to an agency or

1 nonprofit that works in energy burden reduction
2 or working in workforce development and
3 training. So this could look like helping an
4 organization that helps with utility bill
5 payments for those who can't afford it, or
6 paying for a scholarship for a group that's
7 already doing great work in helping people get
8 jobs.

9 A group that we have already identified is
10 ICC. They have a workforce training program for
11 renewable energy. So we're talking with them
12 about this \$25,000 donation that we are offering
13 and just want to make sure that we're really
14 supporting communities that we are building our
15 projects in.

16 We're also looking to preserve farmland
17 and agricultural practices by planting hay or
18 alfalfa between the rows, as well as continuing
19 to farm corn around the outside of the fence.

20 Bolstering the electricity grid for
21 further use in the future.

22 And also providing clean, renewable energy
23 to your neighbors, newcomers to the area, anyone
24 that's on Ameren lines that wants to

1 participate.

2 That's what I have prepared. Happy to
3 answer any questions that you may have.

4 MR. WELBERS: There will be some.

5 MS. READ: I can guess.

6 MR. WELBERS: We'll start with our Zoning
7 Enforcement Officer.

8 EXAMINATION

9 BY MS. DONARSKI:

10 Q. So, Merrill, how tall -- how far off the ground
11 is the bottom of the proposed racking system
12 when it's tilted up? How close is it to the
13 ground?

14 A. Yes, so it will track. So it will vary
15 throughout the day. But, like, the lowest it
16 will get is probably, like, right here
17 (indicating), because the apex of the post is,
18 like, right about at my head height. So it will
19 kind of track from that.

20 Q. When you say "right here," we're putting this
21 on the record.

22 A. So I am 5'6".

23 Q. And then "right here," is it, like, knee high?

24 A. Yes, knee high.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Just above probably.

3 Q. Okay. And so you had mentioned that -- how
4 were they going to plant and harvest hay or
5 alfalfa in between the rows of panels? Can you
6 explain how that would work?

7 A. Yes. So as opposed to, like, a regular system,
8 we'll have it spaced just a little bit further
9 apart so that there's more space for a small
10 tractor to get through with a tow behind. We
11 are actually able to manually stow the panels.
12 So they'll go in a cathedral stow, which means
13 they'll go up and down so he can go throughout
14 the arrays without worrying about hitting one or
15 something like that.

16 Because at the end of each row, there's
17 space so they can get around and throughout the
18 arrays, he'll be able to come down with the
19 tractor and kind of weave throughout the array
20 and between panels.

21 Q. Now, will there be a pollinator mix as well or
22 just the hay and alfalfa?

23 A. Yes, so that would be underneath the panel
24 itself. Because it will kind of be, like,

1 swaths or hay or alfalfa between the arrays,
2 where the most sun would be, and then underneath
3 would be the pollinator-friendly seed mix as
4 well.

5 Q. Okay. So can you tell me about the erosion
6 control measures? I know Soil and Water had
7 mentioned having an erosion control plan. Can
8 you expound on that a little bit?

9 A. Yeah. So during construction we'll put silt
10 fencing around the entirety of the portion that
11 we're building the array in. And first the
12 access road would be built so we all people
13 delivering anything or people coming to the
14 site, so they're off of the County road there
15 and on site.

16 From there, because we don't have to do
17 grading, it's mostly just putting panels into
18 the ground. That can be typically, like, the
19 loudest time. It takes a little bit of time to
20 just, like, pound them into the ground
21 hydraulically. Then after that, it's all pretty
22 simple, like, electrical contracting, which is
23 very quiet throughout the time. But during the
24 whole time, they're following best management

1 practices for erosion and sediment control.

2 Luckily, there's no wetlands or site --
3 onsite or a floodplain. So we're able to make
4 sure that we're not doing anything we shouldn't
5 be.

6 Q. Okay. So is it your testimony that this will
7 not increase the flooding -- or the -- not
8 flooding -- the runoff from the way that it
9 normally does?

10 A. Correct. We're not changing the drainage on
11 the site.

12 Q. Okay. Thank you.

13 So do you have an AIMA agreement with the
14 State?

15 A. We do.

16 Q. Okay. And does that address, like, broken
17 tiles or things like that during construction,
18 when you're saying they are pounded into the
19 ground? Can you tell us a little bit how that
20 is?

21 A. Yes. So we will get a local third party to
22 come on site and do a drain tile survey. So
23 we'll often use Huddleston McBride, as an
24 example. They'll come on site and do excavation

1 trenches to make sure what's there, describe
2 what type of tile it is, and they'll also put
3 flagging to show where each of these drain tiles
4 are so we can avoid them in pounding in our
5 poles -- or posts, rather.

6 Q. Okay. Then do you have, like, a location of,
7 like, pipelines or gas lines? Is all of that
8 scoped out ahead of time?

9 A. Right. We have already done title work for
10 this project, so that they're not on site. And
11 we'll also make sure we do a JULIE before we do
12 any type of construction, as well, to make sure
13 we are clear there.

14 Q. Okay. Is the electrical cabling installed
15 above ground or below ground with this one?

16 A. So right where it interconnects to the existing
17 grid, there will be a couple of poles that we
18 will install along our access road. From there,
19 it goes underground. So you won't see a lot of,
20 like, poles throughout the site that are coming
21 up 40 feet or anything like that.

22 Q. Okay. So then the substation you're going to
23 connect to is where from this?

24 A. It's right across 2040. So it's right next

1 door, across the street.

2 Q. So does that go above ground over the highway
3 or under? Is it --

4 A. So the existing line currently goes across, and
5 nothing on the roads would change. We just
6 interconnect right to the pole right next to our
7 access road. So we don't have to, like, put new
8 lines to the substation.

9 Q. Okay. Now, is there any lighting to be used at
10 the site?

11 A. No lighting is proposed.

12 Q. Do you have a roads agreement with Bureau
13 County?

14 A. Yes, we have an executed Road Use Agreement
15 that we worked with Cheryl and John Gross on to
16 make sure that we're liable should we need to
17 upgrade any roads after construction.

18 Q. Okay. Then do you have an approved entrance
19 then?

20 A. We do verbally. I think we'd have to go for
21 another access permit prior to construction.

22 Q. But you have identified that in your plan?

23 A. Oh. Yes.

24 Q. Okay. And then where -- can you tell us in

1 words where that will be located?

2 A. So it's on County Road 2200 North. So it's --
3 we have pretty big setbacks. I think it's
4 probably -- let's see, I can estimate that
5 distance. I'd say it's about, like, 250 feet
6 from that intersection.

7 Q. Okay. And do you plan to have any kind of a
8 BESS, or a battery energy storage system, on
9 site as part of this project?

10 A. No.

11 Q. Once the project is constructed, how is the
12 operation of this site monitored?

13 A. So we have 24/7 monitoring that's remote, so we
14 can tell if anything isn't producing the way it
15 should. So we will be able to send anyone,
16 should it not look the way it should look.

17 Then we'll also send people to the site
18 preemptively to check on the maintenance,
19 general upkeep, that kind of thing.

20 Q. And then was there someone local that will have
21 access in case of emergency or to access
22 complaints, address complaints?

23 A. Yes. So we'll also give access to the local
24 fire department and EMTs. So they will have

1 access to the Knox Box on the gate, with also
2 training that we'll give them during
3 construction. So, yes.

4 Q. Okay. Now, when you're entering and exiting
5 the property at the gate on 2200, will there be
6 room for the vehicles and the trailers to be off
7 the road right-of-way when the gate is being
8 opened and closed?

9 A. Yes. So the gate isn't right where the access
10 road meets that County road. It's further back,
11 past the 80-foot setback. So there would be
12 enough room for multiple trucks to pull off.

13 Q. Will there be any kind of noise or sound
14 emitted from the inverters or other electrical
15 equipment?

16 A. So as I mentioned, they do make a little bit
17 of, like, a hum, but it's quiet enough that
18 outside the project fence you wouldn't be able
19 to hear it. We are purposeful about using the
20 smaller inverters, rather than a centralized
21 inverter, to make that noise a little bit
22 quieter.

23 Q. Will there be any kind of electromagnetic
24 fields or EMFs emitted from those inverters or

1 anything that could pose a potential health
2 hazard to individuals, you know, living in close
3 proximity?

4 A. Yeah. So the transformers on site are, like,
5 the same transformer you would see at a school
6 or a local building. So they produce about the
7 same amount of EMF as that, which is very low,
8 and that would be within, like, 2 feet of
9 standing next to it. But your phone or a
10 microwave, a radio, produce, like, way more than
11 any of our equipment would.

12 Q. Okay. Now, is this -- do you have an agreement
13 with Ameren then to hook into the substation?

14 A. We're under study currently with Ameren. So
15 they are identifying our interconnection
16 agreement currently.

17 Q. Okay. What are the existing land uses on the
18 other properties around this field?

19 A. It's agriculture. So there's grain bins to the
20 south. That's the most nearby structure. Then
21 there's a couple homes that are about 700 feet
22 away to the north and probably over a thousand
23 feet to the west.

24 Q. Okay. And then if this project is approved,

1 what would be time frame for construction?

2 A. So we're looking kind of mostly at next spring,
3 is probably the earliest we can get on site.
4 But once we have everything in hand, we have our
5 own construction team -- because we're the
6 owner/operator for this project and all of our
7 projects. So we have our own team that we would
8 hand the project off to, and they would start
9 construction at that time. But procurement
10 takes a little bit.

11 Q. So that was going to be another question. You
12 develop it, you build it, and you own it and
13 operate it?

14 A. Correct.

15 Q. Okay. Then what is your plan for disposal of
16 construction debris during and after
17 construction?

18 A. Yeah, so during construction any debris, such
19 as, like, the boxes that the panels come in,
20 anything like that, would be hauled off site and
21 disposed of. We also bring our own portable
22 bathrooms to site for the labor that will be on
23 site. But we are very intentional about keeping
24 our sites clean. Our project managers would be

1 there to make sure all trash would be removed.

2 Q. Okay. Then did I hear you say that the local
3 farmer that owns the land will be the one that's
4 farming it?

5 A. That's correct. So you heard the letter from
6 Crane Schafer. He is one of the owners for one
7 of the two parcels. So he's very enthusiastic
8 about being able to farm this site and the dual
9 use that we're proposing, because it's very
10 different from a lot of projects across
11 Illinois.

12 MS. DONARSKI: Okay. That's all I have.
13 Thank you.

14 MR. WELBERS: Now we have to see if there
15 are people with us that have questions.

16 Are there folks here tonight that have
17 questions?

18 You. Are there others?

19 Okay. Right now is your opportunity to
20 ask this witness questions that she would
21 answer, if she can. And then after that's
22 completed, anyone who would like to come up and
23 testify can do that as well.

24 So go ahead and ask your question. First

1 state your name so the court reporter can put it
2 down, and then ask your question.

3 MS. SACK: Susan Sack.

4 EXAMINATION

5 BY MS. SACK:

6 Q. And could you further explain the
7 decommissioning bonding and how that's going to
8 play out?

9 A. Yeah. So within our lease agreement that we
10 have with the landowners, as well as with -- in
11 the AIMA, which is the Agricultural Impact
12 Mitigation Agreement that we have to execute
13 with the Department of Agriculture, it
14 stipulates that we have to put up a bond that
15 would not include salvage value for the project.

16 So if it were to go under, Pivot were to
17 go under, something like that, that money would
18 be in a bond that Bureau County could access so
19 that they could properly decommission the site.
20 Then every five years that amount, that cost
21 that's estimated, is revised to make sure that
22 it's accounted for inflation or any changes in,
23 like, recycling prices, all of that.

24 But all of the equipment will be removed

1 and it's still usable. So even after the
2 lifecycle of the project is over, those panels
3 still have life in them. So they can be
4 recycled or reused or donated.

5 Q. How about insurance on these panels? If the
6 landowner who was planting the crops were to
7 make a sharp turn or something goes wrong and
8 they be damaged, would they, the landowner, be
9 responsible for repairs of the facility?

10 A. They would not. So on all of our projects we
11 have a very high insurance policy, that we would
12 be able to cover that. And also Crane would be
13 our employee, so it would be covered under that.
14 Like, he wouldn't be liable for being on site
15 because we hired him.

16 Q. And if you were to have a tornado, hail damage,
17 who would do the cleanup and how would that play
18 out?

19 A. Yes, so first I'll talk a little bit about how,
20 like, durable these things are. Because even
21 though they're made of, like, glass and silicon
22 and things like that, they're very durable.

23 So the posts that are driven into the
24 ground can withstand 140-mile-an-hour winds. So

1 we have sites in Florida, and there was a crazy
2 hurricane two years ago, and all of our sites
3 stayed standing because they're so durable. So
4 they are pretty good to stick around.

5 And same with -- we have a lot of projects
6 in Colorado, so a lot of hail happens there too.
7 They can withstand, I think it's like
8 50-mile-an-hour hail at, like, an inch-wide hail
9 marks.

10 But if anything were to be damaged, which
11 we try to avoid, but if so, we would send
12 someone to the site to -- especially after a big
13 storm, survey, see how the site is doing. If a
14 panel were to, like, crack, it doesn't, like,
15 shatter like a window. It just stays in the
16 panel. Like how if you're at the airport and
17 you see those dividers are sometimes, like, hit,
18 it would look like that, and they're just able
19 to replace it immediately. We have local
20 contractors that do that too.

21 Q. And you have insurance that's going to cover in
22 case it were to be something that did impact the
23 environment?

24 A. Yes, we do.

1 MR. WELBERS: Are you good? She answered
2 your questions.

3 Connie, you have a question?

4 MS. STETSON: Yes, I do.

5 MR. WELBERS: Please state your name.

6 MS. STETSON: Connie Stetson.

7 EXAMINATION

8 BY MS. STETSON:

9 Q. You said you would put a bond down for these
10 before it starts? A hundred percent of
11 decommissioning? Or are you doing 10? 50?
12 100?

13 A. I think the stipulation is, like, it increases
14 as the project goes on. So I think you pay,
15 like, 50 percent. I would have to verify with
16 the Ordinance.

17 Q. The first anniversary is 10 percent, is how the
18 law goes.

19 A. Right.

20 Q. Then in six years, it goes to 50 percent of
21 decommissioning. Then the eleventh year is a
22 hundred percent.

23 You just told this lady you were going to
24 put a bond for all the decommissioning. That

1 means, to me, it would be a hundred percent of
2 the decommissioning, is what you're saying?

3 A. I mean, we'll do whatever the County requires
4 us to do. We're happy to do whatever makes
5 people comfortable. So we could do that.

6 Q. And are you going to build when you have
7 permission from Ameren? Is that when you start
8 to build?

9 A. No. So we would sign our executed agreement
10 with Ameren, and then it takes quite a bit of
11 time to procure materials and get ready for
12 construction, find the right contractor for us.
13 So that does take a bit of time.

14 Q. So you could build it and it could sit there,
15 not doing anything, until Ameren says, Okay?

16 A. Oh, no, we would never build without having --
17 we wouldn't build a project until we have
18 Ameren's permission and an executed agreement.

19 Q. And the permission means, We can now connect
20 you? It's not going to sit there idle?

21 A. No. So what I mentioned during my presentation
22 is that that's not the agreement. So we don't
23 have an interconnection agreement yet with
24 Ameren, but we would need that to start any type

1 of construction or even start funding for the
2 project. So once we've built the whole project,
3 Ameren would just come on site and make sure
4 it's connected properly. So it's not like they
5 would be, like, doing an agreement of sorts at
6 that time.

7 MS. STETSON: Okay. Thank you.

8 MR. WELBERS: Yes.

9 MS. SACK: Susan Sack.

10 EXAMINATION

11 BY MS. SACK:

12 Q. Could you further explain this? In case
13 batteries do become available that can store
14 this energy, do you have any agreement with the
15 landowner that they -- you can further expand
16 and use a battery system?

17 A. Yeah, so we are kind of using the max amount
18 that we could on site, with the setbacks that we
19 have included and the space that we are taking
20 up, with having a little bit wider rows. We're
21 at the max capacity that we could have, like, a
22 solar site.

23 If we were to do, like, a solar battery in
24 the future, which for this site we would not be

1 able to, we would have to come back for another
2 type of permit. We wouldn't just be able to
3 build something like that.

4 MR. WELBERS: Does anyone else have
5 questions of this witness?

6 Yes, sir, state your name.

7 MR. D. SCHAFER: Dan Schafer.

8 EXAMINATION

9 BY MR. D. SCHAFER:

10 Q. I live on the main farm. And they're talking,
11 this wind shear, it's going to be level. What's
12 the wind shear going to do coming off that on my
13 crops? Because I have got an 80 on the west
14 side, an 80 on the north side, and an 80 across
15 the road?

16 A. You're asking me that, right?

17 Q. Yes.

18 A. So after we had talked about that in February,
19 I looked into studies to see if that was a thing
20 that was happening with solar projects, and
21 there's no known study or report of wind shear
22 from panels. Because they're not just staying
23 stagnant throughout the day. They're moving.
24 And it's also not just barren underneath them.

1 There will be hay that will be underneath there,
2 as well as a pollinator seed mix.

3 So I don't see this project making any
4 type of wind shear.

5 Q. But if they're laying flat, they are going to
6 come across the top pretty hard.

7 A. I have not seen any evidence or study that says
8 so.

9 Q. Then I have got the one house that's within 600
10 feet of those panels. That house is actually
11 going to have no value to it because nobody's --

12 MR. WELBERS: Mr. Schafer, just one
13 second. Just let me caution you one thing.
14 Right now is an opportunity to ask the witness
15 questions that she would know an answer to. If
16 you have -- you want to start talking -- you
17 would like to talk about concerns for your
18 property values, you can trade places when the
19 time comes.

20 MR. D. SCHAFER: Okay. I didn't know when
21 that time was coming.

22 MR. WELBERS: We have to maintain a
23 certain order in order for our court reporter to
24 get it down and ultimately for our County Board

1 to understand what information we collected.

2 So it's really easy to get off on to doing
3 that. But questions that you would think she
4 could answer, that's the time now. But you
5 would be more than welcome to come up here and
6 express your concerns on the project.

7 Go ahead. Any further questions?

8 (No verbal response.)

9 MR. WELBERS: Yes?

10 EXAMINATION

11 BY MS. SACK:

12 Q. Can you cite some World Health Organization
13 data that shows that heat sinks don't affect the
14 surrounding agricultural land, and also, as he
15 expressed, the wind shear, that there's not a
16 physical environmental impact?

17 A. So I'll talk about your first question first.
18 So I think what you might be thinking about,
19 like for a heat sink, would be, like, a solar
20 tower, which concentrates solar on a single
21 tower.

22 Because these solar projects, community
23 solar gardens that are small 5-megawatt systems
24 do not increase, like, heat of the area. They

1 just absorb the sun that's naturally coming down
2 to the property.

3 Q. Okay. What about the glare?

4 A. So the panels are meant to absorb the sun. So
5 they don't have, like, a glaring effect. They
6 are, like, sprayed with a certain material that
7 doesn't make them glary. So they wouldn't
8 produce glare.

9 Q. So there is a study that says that they do not
10 produce heat? Is there a study you can quote
11 that?

12 A. I mean, not off the top of my head. I could
13 track one down for you to send one to you, if
14 you would like.

15 Q. I question that. So I just was looking for
16 proof.

17 A. Yeah, I mean, there definitely are studies that
18 do say they do not increase heat or anything
19 like that.

20 Q. So are you going to present that information at
21 a later date? Or how would I find that
22 information out?

23 A. You could Google it, or I can take your email
24 after this and send it to you.

1 Q. I have Googled a lot on heat sinks, and I know
2 they are a thing. Even flat panels, when you
3 have, you know, sunlight being absorbed, there's
4 going to be more radiant heat from off of the
5 panels.

6 A. I have seen studies that disprove that. So I'd
7 be happy to send those over to you.

8 Q. That would be helpful probably for everybody.

9 A. Okay.

10 MR. WELBERS: Other questions of this
11 witness?

12 Yes, please state your name.

13 MS. SUTTON: Colette Sutton.

14 EXAMINATION

15 BY MS. SUTTON:

16 Q. Have you discussed with this County or any
17 other counties that you have done business with
18 about dual purpose levies on solar farms?
19 Because obviously you are still a rural
20 agricultural producer and you're now moving to,
21 you know, a commercial solar farm. It should be
22 a dual purpose levy, I assume.

23 A. I'm not totally sure about that. We do do dual
24 purpose on all of our community solar sites, 98

1 percent of them. I haven't received that
2 question. So I'm sorry, I don't have a great
3 answer for you at this time.

4 Q. I would just assume that participating counties
5 would be capturing two levies or some adjusted
6 levy because this is so new and --

7 A. Well, they definitely would gain a lot of
8 property taxes just from the solar.

9 Q. From the solar, but you're also farming. And
10 whoever reaps the benefit of the farming or
11 whoever keeps control of the farming I assume
12 would be a separate levy?

13 A. Yeah, I'm not totally sure. I wonder if it
14 stays the same because it's farmland and it's
15 the solar on top of it. That would be the way
16 that I would assume it would work.

17 Q. Just wondering.

18 MR. WELBERS: Other questions of this
19 witness?

20 EXAMINATION

21 BY MS. SACK:

22 Q. Who maintains the pollinator strip then? Is
23 that the landowner, or do your people that come
24 out two to four times a year maintain that?

1 A. So we haven't, like, written out our agreement
2 fully yet what would be covered by who. I would
3 assume that he would do that. But if he didn't
4 have interest in doing that, we would send
5 someone to maintain that vegetation.

6 MR. WELBERS: Go ahead.

7 EXAMINATION

8 BY MS. SUTTON:

9 Q. In other projects that I've read about, there's
10 96-hour -- not your program, so I don't know --
11 a 96-hour time between maintenance breakdown and
12 adjusting that problem.

13 How much time do you allow?

14 A. I mean, Pivot would like to do it within 24
15 hours, if we can. That's why we get local
16 contractors, so we don't have to send someone
17 from Chicago or something like that down to make
18 sure that things are being taken care of.

19 But we have local contractors throughout
20 the United States that would be on site in a
21 short amount of time.

22 Q. Do you have a stated time that you report to
23 that site on a maintenance breakdown?

24 A. For that specific site?

1 Q. Or any of them.

2 A. I mean, 24 hours is what we strive for.

3 Q. No guarantees?

4 A. I would not have a guarantee, I don't think.

5 MS. SUTTON: Thank you.

6 MR. WELBERS: Any other questions?

7 (No verbal response.)

8 MR. WELBERS: Does our Board have any
9 questions?

10 MS. SMITH: Yes, I do.

11 MR. WELBERS: Go ahead.

12 EXAMINATION

13 BY MS. SMITH:

14 Q. First of all, I understand that you have
15 several completed projects in Illinois. Can you
16 tell me how many?

17 A. Yeah. So across the United States, we have
18 2,000 projects, and then specifically in
19 Illinois we have 78 megawatts in operation.

20 Q. You have what?

21 A. 78 megawatts.

22 Q. How many projects specifically?

23 A. It's about 15.

24 Q. 15, okay.

1 A. And then we also have a hundred in
2 development -- megawatts, not projects.

3 Q. Where are the 15 located?

4 A. So they are in multiple counties throughout
5 Illinois. So Marion County, Putnam, Clinton
6 County, LaSalle. I'm trying to think of --
7 Kankakee. Those are our main ones that we have
8 in Illinois.

9 Q. Okay. Are you a participant in the Illinois
10 Adjustable Block Program?

11 A. We are.

12 Q. Can you explain how that works for the folks?

13 A. Yes. So that is basically working with the
14 State to produce credits. So we would produce
15 the power, and then we'd have subscribers
16 subscribe to that project. Then in addition,
17 the credits would be going through the State and
18 we get a rebate for those costs.

19 Q. What happens to the electricity that is not
20 being utilized?

21 A. Well, optimally we would get a hundred percent
22 subscription. So that's always the goal. And
23 for all of our projects that we do have already,
24 we are at a hundred percent subscription. So I

1 don't think that would be a problem.

2 Q. Can it be stored?

3 A. It could if we had batteries, but we don't have
4 batteries. But we wouldn't interconnect more
5 than 5 megawatts. It goes to the grid and can
6 be used amongst the grid. So it's not like it
7 just stays around on the site.

8 Q. And you have no federal involvement?

9 A. No.

10 Q. Okay. I understand you're a certified B
11 corporation. Can you define that in simple
12 terms?

13 A. So it's a very high standard to reach. It's
14 only about, I think, 5,000 companies across the
15 United States that have that certification. To
16 reach that, you have to meet a lot of hurdles
17 that have pretty high bars.

18 So that means we're investing in the
19 communities that we are working with, that
20 we're, like, an active participant in making
21 sure that our communities are growing and that
22 we're doing things correctly so we are not doing
23 environmental hazards or overproducing CO2. All
24 of these things we're staying below the bar.

1 It's really difficult to meet those. As well as
2 having a workforce that is representative of
3 what they're looking for.

4 Q. And how large is your workforce?

5 A. So our company, we have 186 employees.

6 Q. Getting back to the tile situation. I
7 understand you're going to map that all out. So
8 let's say the project is up, and the next year
9 the farmer is out in the field surrounding, the
10 beans and corn and all, and there's a broken
11 tile. Are you responsible -- this is outside of
12 the project, that you already worked there and
13 you've -- equipment around there and you may
14 have broken it in the project and then down the
15 road.

16 A. Sure, I get your question.

17 Q. You understand where I'm -- okay.

18 A. So for this specific site, what we're planning
19 to do is a vegetative easement. So even outside
20 of the fence, like where the rest of our site
21 would be, we'll have, like, access to. Because
22 we're going to be paying them -- Crane to
23 maintain it and do the remaining corn farming.

24 So we would be liable for that, and it

1 would fall under our AIMA agreement.

2 Q. So you would go in there and fix the tile and
3 whatever needed to be done?

4 A. Correct.

5 Q. On the racking systems, where are the panels
6 built?

7 A. So there's a couple of different places.

8 Q. Where do you get them from?

9 A. Yeah, I was going to get there.

10 So India, China. There's a big push for
11 U.S. panels that we are looking into, but it's
12 pretty -- there's not a lot being produced in
13 the U.S. as of yet.

14 For this project, we haven't procured
15 panels yet. So I'm not sure exactly where, but
16 that's generally where we get.

17 Q. But there is some in the United States?

18 A. There are some, yes.

19 Q. Will you try to purchase them in the United
20 States if it's available?

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. Or is there a large expense differential?

23 A. I mean, there is, but we're -- we have a team
24 that is constantly looking at procurement and

1 how we can do procurement within local areas.
2 It's pretty new, so a lot of these companies
3 don't have the bandwidth or the amount needed to
4 do all of these projects.

5 So we work with different companies to
6 identify, like, who has supply at that time that
7 we're building and if they're available. So
8 definitely possible.

9 Q. When you're installing this racking system, the
10 posts that go down into the ground, how deep do
11 those posts go?

12 A. It can range, depending on the geotechnical
13 report.

14 Q. For this project?

15 A. For this project it would probably be 6 to
16 10 feet down.

17 Q. So 6 to 10 feet they're going to go down. Now,
18 in your project book that you gave each one of
19 us it says you will -- at decommissioning that
20 you will remove anything that's 5 feet. What
21 about those that goes between 5 and 10 feet?
22 Are they going to stay in the ground or are they
23 coming out?

24 A. So that more refers to, like, the electrical

1 equipment because it goes to, like -- not as
2 deep as 5 feet. But the posts would be removed
3 from the ground.

4 Q. They would be removed?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Okay. And where will your maintenance crews
7 travel from and your site techs? You mentioned
8 Chicago, but, you know, are you going to have
9 someone that is local, closer than Chicago, that
10 if you have an emergency like this young lady
11 spoke about?

12 A. Yeah, so Crane will be the one doing, like, the
13 vegetative maintenance on the site and doing,
14 like, the hay farming and whatnot, and he
15 obviously lives in Bureau County.

16 But then throughout the state we have
17 contractors that we use. So we have our own
18 operations and maintenance team that has, like,
19 identified different contractors in local
20 counties that we have projects in each of those
21 counties. So I don't know the exact contractor.

22 Q. But there are some that are closer than
23 Chicago?

24 A. Right, correct.

1 Q. And one last question. We talked about the
2 panels, and I know they move and whatnot.
3 There's a reflective coating on there so they
4 won't give a glare?

5 A. Uh-huh.

6 Q. Does that reflective coating wear off? Is it
7 repurposed in so many years? Or what's the
8 situation with that?

9 A. Not that I know. I think it's just good to go
10 throughout the entirety of its lifespan.

11 Q. What if they develop -- we have a lot of ice
12 and snow around this area. So what if they get
13 loaded with ice and snow? Is there someone that
14 comes -- I mean, hopefully they are going to
15 melt when the sun comes out, but there are days
16 when we don't have a lot of sun around here. So
17 what happens then?

18 A. So they naturally will be tilting throughout
19 the day. So for tilting, like, projects like
20 this, it does usually slide off throughout the
21 day. But if a little bit stays on, it's not the
22 end of the world for us.

23 Q. I have seen some on the homes that still stays
24 there.

1 A. Right.

2 Q. But this is different because of the movement?

3 A. Right, because it will be tracking, so it will,
4 like, slide off.

5 MS. SMITH: Thank you.

6 MR. WELBERS: Any other questions from our
7 Board?

8 (No verbal response.)

9 MR. WELBERS: Are you the sole witness for
10 this project? You have no one else?

11 MS. READ: So the landowners are both here
12 and my colleague. They signed the sheet, but
13 they'll speak if they feel inclined. But I'm
14 here to answer any questions.

15 MR. WELBERS: Are they inclined? I guess
16 that would be the next question. Are the
17 landowners or your colleague inclined to
18 testify? Anything you would like to put into
19 the record? If you do, you come up -- you come
20 forward and get sworn in.

21 Now you get to relax, if you would like
22 to.

23 MS. READ: Does he stand at the -- this?

24 MR. WELBERS: He'll take over and be sworn

1 in. You can take a chair, if you would like.

2 CRANE SCHAFFER,

3 being first duly sworn, testified as follows:

4 COURT REPORTER: And can I have you state
5 your name and address and spell your last name.

6 MR. C. SCHAFFER: Crane Schafer. Last name
7 is S-C-H-A-F-E-R, 609 East Peru Street,
8 Princeton.

9 MR. WELBERS: Okay. Mr. Schafer, what
10 would you like to add?

11 MR. C. SCHAFFER: Well, I think everything
12 has been pretty well covered. It's great to
13 hear all the questions and everything.

14 But what I wanted to add is, I just wanted
15 to convey what Merrill was staying. I will be
16 the one taking care of the fence rows, the
17 ditches, the hay and the corn. I take pride in
18 all that. So I would just like to say that's
19 not going to be an issue, any problem with it.

20 That's all I've got to say.

21 MR. WELBERS: Let's see if there's some
22 questions.

23 Kris, do you have anything?

24 MS. DONARSKI: I have none.

1 MS. SACK: I just wanted to say, make sure
2 you have a written agreement as to how it's
3 going to be maintained and what you will be
4 allowed to do and not allowed to do on the
5 property.

6 MR. C. SCHAFER: Thank you.

7 EXAMINATION

8 BY MS. STETSON:

9 Q. How many years is your contract for?

10 MS. SACK: Do they have the option to
11 renew, if they wish?

12 MS. READ: Can I come back up here?

13 MS. DONARSKI: This is -- we can't just --
14 we have a question for him, so Merrill is not
15 up. So he needs to answer. So if he doesn't
16 know --

17 MR. WELBERS: If he doesn't know, he
18 doesn't know.

19 MS. DONARSKI: He doesn't know, but then
20 she can --

21 MR. WELBERS: Come back.

22 MS. DONARSKI: -- come back and you can
23 ask her.

24 MR. WELBERS: If you don't know the

1 answer, you can just say that.

2 A. I better say I don't know. I think I know the
3 answer, but I'm not going to --

4 MR. WELBERS: If you don't know, you don't
5 know.

6 EXAMINATION

7 BY MS. SACK:

8 Q. Are they sharing with you where this bonding
9 money is going to be? Or does the County have
10 some requirement in place of bonding for solar?

11 MS. DONARSKI: You're asking Mr. Schafer?

12 MR. WELBERS: And he may not know the
13 answer to that.

14 A. I don't know the answer to that.

15 MS. SACK: Okay.

16 MR. WELBERS: Anything else for
17 Mr. Schafer?

18 MR. C. SCHAFFER: I will say that Merrill
19 has been fabulous, working with her. She's
20 guided Carolyn and I all along. So I'm
21 confident things will work out.

22 But that would be a question for her.

23 MR. WELBERS: Does the Board have any
24 questions of the landowner?

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(No verbal response.)

MR. WELBERS: Okay. I think you can relax.

MR. C. SCHAFER: Terrific.

MR. WELBERS: Would you like to come up and clarify the answer to the question?

Can you just answer your question again now? Merrill is back.

MS. SACK: Well, I think from him not knowing, it's obvious he doesn't know what kind of a bonding -- is there a bonding agreement with the landowner?

MS. READ: Yes. So as part of our stipulations in the lease, we say that we're going to be decommissioning the project. And then under the agreement with the AIMA, which as I mentioned before, as well as with the County, we'll have to put that money up with access to the County so that anybody can draw from it to decommission the project, most likely it would be Pivot, at the end of the lifecycle.

MR. WELBERS: Anything else with Merrill?

MERRILL READ,
having been previously duly sworn, was examined

1 and testified as follows:

2 EXAMINATION

3 BY MS. HOOS:

4 Q. What is the typical lifespan?

5 MS. WELBERS: Sandy Hoos.

6 COURT REPORTER: I am sorry, your name?

7 MS. HOOS: Sandy Hoos, H-O-O-S.

8 A. So they're warranted for 30 years, the panels
9 that we use, and they lose about 1 percent of
10 their production every year. So at that 30
11 years, they would still be very well-usable.
12 They will still produce at 70 percent. So
13 that's why they're reusable, donateable, but we
14 tend to use the highest production.

15 Q. They're donateable? To whom?

16 A. To a lot of people. So third world countries
17 will take them oftentimes to have better
18 electricity in their communities. Also people
19 want them on their roofs, in their backyards.
20 There's a big market for renewable energy reuse.

21 MS. STETSON: Connie Stetson.

22 EXAMINATION

23 BY MS. STETSON:

24 Q. So you sell the used ones to people who put

1 them on their roof. That sounds like you're --

2 A. I mean, we could.

3 Q. It just sounds like you're selling them the
4 end-of-the-life part of it, just sitting on the
5 roof. It's just the way you said that.

6 A. They're definitely cheaper at that price
7 locally, but that's also why we donate most of
8 our panels at the end of their life.

9 EXAMINATION

10 BY MS. SACK:

11 Q. So the company has had --

12 COURT REPORTER: Okay. I am going to stop
13 you.

14 MS. DONARSKI: She has to take that all
15 down. So just one at a time, and everybody will
16 get a turn. Thank you.

17 MS. SACK: Susan Sack.

18 Q. (By Ms. Sack:) So has your company
19 decommissioned any at this point and recycled
20 them to other --

21 A. No, we have not, because we have been around
22 since 2009. So all of our projects are still in
23 their lifecycle.

24 MR. WELBERS: Does that cover it for

1 Merrill?

2 (No verbal response.)

3 MR. WELBERS: Okay. I think you can relax
4 now.

5 Now comes for those that might want to
6 come up and express their thoughts, their
7 concerns or things like that.

8 Would you like to come up first, as a
9 neighboring landowner? You'll be sworn in and
10 all that.

11 DAN SCHAFER,
12 being first duly sworn, testified as follows:

13 COURT REPORTER: If I could have you state
14 your name, address, and spell your last name.

15 MR. SCHAFER: Dan Schafer, 19644 - 2200
16 North Avenue, Princeton, Illinois.

17 MR. WELBERS: Go ahead, tell us what your
18 thoughts are.

19 MR. SCHAFER: Okay. I live on the home
20 farm right there next to it and I farm the farm
21 north of the solar farm. I've redone the house
22 there and redone it. Nobody's going to want to
23 live in that house that's 600 feet from the
24 solar farm.

1 And right across the road, I have that 80,
2 and I'm concerned about wind shear. Because
3 when those panels flatten out, they come in the
4 heat of the day, that's when the storm is coming
5 across. Who's going to cover the down crops?

6 The home farm was named in 1915 to
7 Clearview Farms. So there's history there.

8 The wind shear is going to be major, and
9 the house value is going to be major. Because
10 nobody is going to want to live 600 feet from
11 it.

12 MR. WELBERS: Your home is not there?

13 MR. SCHAFER: My home is a half a mile
14 west, and then I have another home.

15 MR. WELBERS: Then you own that home
16 that's just to the north?

17 MR. SCHAFER: Yup, 600.

18 MR. WELBERS: And you've redone it.

19 MR. SCHAFER: It's all been redone.

20 MR. WELBERS: And you're concerned about
21 its property value?

22 MR. SCHAFER: And, in fact, there's a
23 young couple that moved in across the road, just
24 moved in, and they didn't know nothing about

1 this. So if the home values drop, they're
2 caught in a bad way.

3 MR. WELBERS: Anything else?

4 MR. SCHAFER: No.

5 MR. WELBERS: Any questions of this
6 witness, Chris?

7 MS. DONARSKI: I have none, thank you.

8 MR. WELBERS: Let's ask if anybody else
9 does.

10 Anyone else have questions of this
11 witness?

12 (No verbal response.)

13 MR. WELBERS: Does the Board?

14 (No verbal response.)

15 MR. WELBERS: Is there anyone else that
16 would like to express an opinion?

17 Would you come forward, please, as
18 Mr. Schafer did?

19 CAROLYN SCHAFER,
20 being first duly sworn, testified as follows:

21 COURT REPORTER: If I could have you state
22 your name, address, and spell your last name.

23 MS. SCHAFER: Carolyn Schafer, 609 East
24 Peru Street, Princeton. S-C-H-A-F-E-R.

1 Pardon me, I have a cold.

2 I just wanted to address a couple things
3 that Dan's concerns are. One is for the house
4 to the north that he just mentioned, but in -- I
5 believe if you're in that house, you actually
6 wouldn't even be able to see this field because
7 there's a big machine shed to the south of the
8 house.

9 And I know that you are a believer in
10 solar, right, because you have solar panels,
11 too, on your properties.

12 Obviously I can't -- I don't know anything
13 about wind shear. Merrill, you know, talked
14 about that and the studies. But I don't think,
15 having been a real estate agent, and I'm an
16 accountant, that you would see much decrease in
17 value, if any. A lot of people are really
18 supportive of solar panels here in Princeton.
19 You know, there's been discussion about in the
20 city.

21 I think that is maybe an open-ended
22 question, in all fairness. I don't think you
23 can just presume that any value would go down,
24 since they're not just literally across the

1 streets. It's a ways away.

2 EXAMINATION

3 BY MR. WELBERS:

4 Q. Can we visit that a little bit? You said a
5 real estate agent?

6 A. I was.

7 Q. You have a background in real estate?

8 A. Uh-huh, a long time ago.

9 Q. How long?

10 A. Probably about 20 years. I thought I would not
11 be -- I was going to go out -- I worked in
12 Mendota -- go out of the accounting. So I
13 started in residential. Not really farm,
14 although I could have sold it, but residential.

15 Q. And how long did you do this for?

16 A. Probably about eight years. And the accounting
17 didn't go away, so I stopped doing it.

18 Q. And so in order to get that, you had a real
19 estate salesman's license?

20 A. Correct.

21 Q. With the State of Illinois, you took whatever
22 training was required for that?

23 A. Correct.

24 MR. WELBERS: Is there anything else you

1 would like to visit or would like to say?

2 MS. SCHAFER: No. I'm excited about this
3 project. I think it -- there are a lot of
4 positives. We spoke with a number of solar
5 companies, and Pivot had the most information,
6 could answer any questions we asked.

7 Somebody had asked if the lease is
8 renewable. It is renewable upon agreement by
9 both parties. They were just very helpful, very
10 knowledgeable, lots of information, and trying
11 to do things step by step.

12 There's some things there's no reason to
13 attack yet, until we find out if we are granted
14 this Variance. So I think they are taking
15 things in a measured step, step by step, so to
16 not get ahead of ourselves in this. And that's
17 it.

18 MR. WELBERS: Questions of this witness?

19 MS. DONARSKI: I have none.

20 MR. WELBERS: Anyone?

21 MS. SACK: Just a personal question.

22 MR. WELBERS: Restate your name.

23 MS. SACK: Susan Sack.

24 EXAMINATION

1 BY MS. SACK:

2 Q. Have you talked with the Illinois Farm Bureau
3 and their attorneys about recommendations on
4 contracts for solar?

5 A. I have not, but we did -- right off the bat we
6 took the contract to our personal attorney, who
7 worked on windmills way back when and has seen
8 many solar contracts. So we did get an
9 attorney's advice, yes. Thank you.

10 MR. SACK: I do have one. Bruce Sack.

11 EXAMINATION

12 BY MR. SACK:

13 Q. You say you're in real estate?

14 A. I was. I'm not anymore.

15 Q. Does that really have any -- this is a whole
16 new market here, with something -- somebody
17 living next to some of this stuff. I getcha.
18 You know, I'm just trying to get that clear?

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. I getcha.

21 A. As I said, that was a long time ago. This is
22 all very new.

23 I think -- you know, I think any of us
24 could see a concern if there's, you know, a

1 field here of solar panels and a house here, as
2 opposed to a field of solar panels and a house
3 over here with farm buildings around.

4 You know, and, I mean, our goal is to do
5 something good. You know, it's good for Pivot,
6 it's good for us and our children and the
7 ability to keep this land for future
8 generations, but it's also good for the
9 community.

10 I didn't even realize this part about you
11 can go in and sign up with Ameren. And even
12 before it -- you know, presuming this is
13 approved, even before this particular field
14 would be built and online, you can go in and
15 sign up with Ameren and get a reduction in your
16 electricity based on other community solar
17 projects. Then you can always transfer it over
18 to, you know, a community project that is in
19 your area.

20 You know, we all pay high electricity
21 bills. So I think, you know, it's good for
22 different aspects, in different ways of this
23 county.

24 MR. WELBERS: Go ahead, Connie.

1 MS. STETSON: Connie Stetson.

2 EXAMINATION

3 BY MS. STETSON:

4 Q. Do you live anywhere next to this? Or are you
5 anywhere around it?

6 A. No.

7 Q. So your --

8 A. My husband grew up on --

9 Q. So you're considered an absentee landowner?

10 A. We live on Peru Street in Princeton.

11 Q. So you don't live next to this?

12 A. No, we do not.

13 Q. So you're considered an absentee landowner?

14 A. There's not a residence on this property, no.

15 MR. WELBERS: Any other questions?

16 (No verbal response.)

17 MR. WELBERS: Thank you, Mrs. Schafer.

18 MS. SCHAFER: Thank you.

19 MR. WELBERS: Anyone else that has
20 something they would like to testify to?

21 (No verbal response.)

22 MR. WELBERS: It looks like we're at the
23 end of our testifying.

24 MS. DONARSKI: Would you like me to read

1 the extra terms and conditions into the record?

2 MR. WELBERS: Let me discuss with you what
3 troubles me before you do that.

4 MS. DONARSKI: Okay.

5 MR. WELBERS: You know there's another
6 case tonight also where some unanswered
7 questions were unanswered, that we're -- got to
8 get to an answer. And what comes to mind here,
9 that's why I was so interested in Mrs. Schafer's
10 real estate background, a question by
11 Mr. Schafer over here that it would adversely
12 affect the property values.

13 And we really don't know if that's true or
14 if it's not. There isn't any expert testimony
15 to tell us. And I would be inclined --

16 Then there's also the question that you
17 asked, I think had to do with heat reflection,
18 that the Applicant said there are studies on.
19 That I think, you know, rather than mail it to
20 everybody later, we're supposed to create the
21 public record here. If there is some study, I
22 think it ought to be presented.

23 And then, of course, the third, which we
24 have done zoning for solar projects before. The

1 wind shear, as Mr. Schafer calls it, has never
2 come up. I don't know.

3 So those are three unanswered questions
4 that would make me want to incline to roll this
5 over for another month. Now, I'm only one
6 member of the Board. But if that's what was
7 going to happen, to come back and answer those
8 questions, then we could read that then and we
9 could get on with our next case.

10 MS. DONARSKI: That's fine.

11 MR. WELBERS: I'm only one member. My
12 other Board members may have a different opinion
13 on that.

14 What do you think?

15 MR. QUEST: I believe our job is to create
16 a record so that the County Board can make a
17 solid decision.

18 MR. WELBERS: Yes.

19 MR. QUEST: There's some big holes there
20 that we don't have answers to, I believe.

21 MS. SMITH: I agree.

22 MR. JENSEN: I agree.

23 MR. WELBERS: Merrill, we would like you
24 to come back, and we would like to answer

1 basically those three things, if you wouldn't
2 mind coming back in a month.

3 Now, you don't intend to build for a year,
4 so I think you probably have the time.

5 MS. DONARSKI: Can you say the three
6 things again so that everybody is clear?

7 MR. WELBERS: The three things have to do
8 with:

9 Is there or is there not an adverse effect
10 on neighboring properties? Mr. Schafer
11 testified he owns a dwelling, and it isn't that
12 far north, as he's testified. He said 600 feet.
13 Is there an adverse relationship? You know, we
14 need some real estate market studies.

15 If Mrs. Schafer, in the back, could
16 have -- was a real estate appraiser, I would
17 have grilled her right now. But she's truthful.
18 She said, It's been 20 years and I was only
19 selling real estate.

20 It's a concern and it's one that we're
21 trying to get to the bottom of on the next case
22 that we have, and hopefully we will, and we, as
23 a Board, can learn a little bit more. I mean, I
24 know what my hunch is, but that's not -- we're

1 not here about my hunch. We're looking for some
2 sort of a market analysis that says, Well, no,
3 it doesn't affect it. Or if it does, you know,
4 Here's the effects it would have. That's one.

5 The other -- again, this is new.

6 Mr. Schafer talks about what he calls wind
7 shear. Wind shear, I think, in aviation is a
8 very bad thing. Wondering if these -- the wind
9 is just going to blow over the top of these
10 things and lay his crops down across the road.
11 We don't know that. That's never been presented
12 to us before.

13 This third had to do with Mrs. Sack's
14 question on, you know, will these things
15 increase the heat in the region? You know, will
16 it be hotter because these things are there
17 absorbing the sun's energy?

18 Merrill, you said there are studies on it
19 that you would send to them. We would like you
20 to go ahead and bring them here and lay it
21 there, find out what it is.

22 You do have in your testimony that these
23 devices are intended to absorb the sun's energy
24 and not reflect it back. I suspect you will

1 probably be able to demonstrate with those
2 studies that raising the heat in the
3 neighborhood isn't likely to be an outcome.

4 But again, if you have those studies, we
5 would like to have them here.

6 MS. READ: Yes, so I'll start by saying,
7 first of all, that, no, it would not have an
8 impact on the neighboring properties. And I'll
9 get some more evidence for that.

10 We have also -- I have spoken with Dan in
11 the past, previously, when we were having our
12 community meeting, and I have offered him
13 budgeting for screening on his own property,
14 because that's usually more effective in, like,
15 visual screening, which I know some people just
16 don't like to look at solar panels. He has --
17 his residence is, like, a thousand feet away,
18 but we were offering that. He declined it.

19 So talking more about the questions that
20 you asked specifically, I'll start with the
21 property value reduction. So there are two
22 studies that I can talk about right now. First
23 is Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory
24 conducted a study of 956 solar projects across

1 the United States of similar size to what we're
2 proposing and consulted with 400-plus property
3 value assessors, and they came to a conclusion
4 that no impact to property value would result
5 from these solar projects, these small
6 5-megawatt community solar gardens that I'm
7 talking about today.

8 Another one, Pivot worked with a third
9 party that had no bias to conduct its own study
10 in Illinois itself. So that's CohnReznick did a
11 study on --

12 MS. DONARSKI: Can you spell that for
13 the --

14 MS. READ: So that's
15 C-O-H-N-R-E-Z-N-I-C-K.

16 And they did a study on projects that
17 were -- had solar from 2016 or before with,
18 like, houses that had solar next door to them
19 versus houses that did not of similar value in
20 area and agricultural areas. They said there's
21 no impact. If anything, it's a beneficial thing
22 that people want to be a part of, is what they
23 came out with.

24 So I can safely say, between those two

1 studies that I have named, that there's no value
2 impact. That it wouldn't go down.

3 Then the second one was wind shear. That
4 is something that I talked about with Dan
5 earlier. So solar panels are in the -- it's not
6 like a sheet of solar, where it's just, like,
7 blocking things and redirecting it in every
8 which direction. It's panels that are spread
9 out 22.5 feet, is what we're proposing here, and
10 they are actually considered an impervious
11 surface by the federal government. So that it's
12 not something that's going to be like a concrete
13 pad that's not letting water through or
14 something like that or any of the wind around
15 there changing that. Again, it's not like a
16 fixed building that's angling wind in any sort
17 of direction.

18 So there's no evidence of wind shear, nor
19 any studies that suggest that there would be.

20 Then what was the third thing?

21 MS. SACK: Heat sink.

22 MS. READ: Heat sink, yes. As I have
23 mentioned before, there are studies for the
24 tower solar, where it's directing solar and

1 reflecting it to a tower that collects solar.
2 And that could be found in, like, very rural
3 parts of Nevada, Arizona, not near places,
4 because it's literally reflecting light not near
5 airports.

6 So we also have sign-off from the FAA that
7 states, like, that we can be there, no hazards
8 determined by them. That includes not producing
9 wind shear, not increasing heat. All of these
10 would not be approved by the FAA if that was a
11 problem. We also have projects that are on
12 actual airports. So they're not able to do
13 those things if they are on the projects.

14 I hope that was helpful in answering some
15 of your questions.

16 MS. SMITH: I have a question.

17 Regarding the property values, in your
18 presentation book, on Page 12, you have a
19 paragraph at 8.35-2, the second paragraph, and
20 it states: In addition, studies performed in
21 LaSalle and Winnebago Counties in Illinois have
22 concluded that solar PV ground-mount arrays have
23 not affected property values when comparing the
24 analyzed sale price of single-family homes and

1 agricultural land that adjoins solar farms.
2 Overall, the project will not diminish the value
3 of land on the surrounding properties.

4 How about presenting those studies?

5 MS. READ: Yes, I mean, that's included, I
6 think, in the CohnReznick one I was mentioning.

7 MS. SMITH: You know, to the group.

8 MS. READ: I mean, I have the hard copy.
9 I have it on my computer, if you want me to read
10 the entire study into the record?

11 MS. SMITH: When you come back, I mean.

12 MS. READ: And we do meet -- we're not
13 asking for any Variance. We do meet all the
14 conditions in your Ordinance for a solar
15 project.

16 MR. WELBERS: I'm sure that you would like
17 to close the case tonight, and you have answered
18 some things that -- at least you have addressed
19 these things. I would like to carry it one
20 month and then come back and hear something
21 further, especially on property values. That
22 troubles us. You have talked about here. If
23 there's anything further that you can volunteer.

24 You have said -- the studies in LaSalle

1 County is the nearest?

2 MS. SMITH: LaSalle.

3 MR. WELBERS: That's fairly close. What
4 other counties?

5 MS. READ: It was LaSalle and Winnebago.

6 MS. SMITH: LaSalle and Winnebago County.

7 MR. WELBERS: Which is up near Rockford.
8 I would think still pertinent. Who did those
9 studies?

10 MS. READ: That was CohnReznick. They are
11 a firm that specializes in consultation and is
12 really well-renowned.

13 MR. WELBERS: Did they study that for your
14 project?

15 MS. READ: Not for our specific project.
16 We just wanted to have a study that actually got
17 into non-biased what property values look like,
18 because this is obviously a question that we get
19 a lot. So we had a third party go in and do
20 that, and they've worked with dozens of property
21 assessors, jurisdictions like Bureau County.
22 I'm not sure if they were part of that research,
23 but they reached out to a bunch of different
24 people, like real estate agents, who know that

1 jurisdiction a lot better than I personally do.
2 So that's why we --

3 MR. WELBERS: You had a third party that
4 did that?

5 MS. READ: Yes.

6 MR. WELBERS: Would a member of that third
7 party be able to come and testify to the results
8 of those studies? Would they be able to come
9 here?

10 MS. READ: I would have to ask them, but I
11 definitely have people -- all of their accolades
12 are listed throughout that report, the people
13 who did that report, and they are all very
14 well-known as people in Illinois for doing that
15 work.

16 MR. WELBERS: It would help to have some
17 expert testimony regarding that for us to
18 make -- our Zoning Ordinance says that we are
19 not to diminish neighboring property owners in
20 things that we do. As much as we want
21 landowners to be able to develop their property,
22 you know, that's what's zoning is about.

23 So, again, it's not up to me, it's up to
24 the Board, but I think we have another case to

1 hear where we thought it was incomplete and it
2 was sent back to us now to try to make it.
3 That's what we are going to do. We don't know
4 what we are going to learn because we haven't
5 heard from them yet.

6 Troy, you inspected it. Would you like to
7 carry this a month?

8 MR. QUEST: Should I make that motion?

9 MS. DONARSKI: You can make the motion.

10 MR. QUEST: So, yes, I guess I will make a
11 motion to table this to our next meeting.

12 Which will be?

13 MS. DONARSKI: May 16th.

14 MR. QUEST: May 16th at 7 o'clock.

15 MR. WELBERS: Here at the Bureau County
16 Courthouse.

17 MR. QUEST: Bureau County Courthouse.

18 MR. WELBERS: County Board Room.

19 Try to provide us some information on that
20 so we have completed our fact-finding.

21 MS. READ: Yeah, we'll submit studies to
22 the record prior to the hearing.

23 MR. WELBERS: That would be nice, yes.

24 So while our --

1 MS. DONARSKI: We have to have a second.

2 MR. JENSEN: I'll second that.

3 MR. WELBERS: Okay. We didn't second
4 that. I got distracted. I thought there was.

5 Do you want to call the roll or all in
6 favor?

7 MS. DONARSKI: We can do all in favor.

8 MR. WELBERS: All in favor of that.

9 (Jensen, Smith, Quest and Welbers
10 simultaneously responded.)

11 MR. WELBERS: Opposed.

12 MR. STUTZKE: Nay.

13 MR. WELBERS: That's what we are going to
14 do. We'll see you next month.

15 MS. READ: Thank you, everyone, for
16 listening to me today. I appreciate you taking
17 the time to hear more about our project.

18 MS. DONARSKI: So all the people here for
19 this project, that will be until next month.
20 It's May 16th, 2023, at 7 p.m., right here in
21 this room. Thank you. We won't be sending more
22 notices. This is your notice of the next
23 meeting. Thank you.

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(The hearing was concluded at
8:44 p.m.)

1 Now on this 18th day of April, A.D., 2024, I do
2 signify that the foregoing testimony was given
3 before the Bureau County Zoning Board of Appeals.
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8 Barry Welbers, Chairman
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12 Kristine Donarski,
13 Zoning Enforcement Officer
14

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16 -----
17 *Callie S. Bodmer*

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