STATE OF ILLINOIS)
)SS
COUNTY OF BUREAU)

In the Matter of the Petition

of

Bureau Solar 2, LLC

Dover Township
Bureau County, Illinois

Testimony of Witnesses
Produced, Sworn and
Examined on this 16th day
of May, A.D., 2024,
before the Bureau County
Zoning Board of Appeals

Present:

Jim Forristall
Shirley Ann Smith
Bill Jensen
Mike Stutzke
Barry Welbers, Chairman

Cecilia Nemeth, Secretary
Kristine Donarski, Zoning Enforcement Officer

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MR. WELBERS: That brings us to Bureau Solar 2. Which is tabled; is that correct?

I don't have to read all of this.

MS. DONARSKI: You'll need to untable.

MR. WELBERS: Did I table it? Was I the one to do it?

MS. DONARSKI: I'll have to double-check the minutes.

MR. WELBERS: I guess whether I did or not, I can make a motion to bring this application, Bureau Solar 2, off the table and back for consideration tonight.

Is there a second for that?

MR. JENSEN: I second that.

MR. WELBERS: Mr. Jensen is the second for that.

All in favor.

(All those simultaneously responded.)

MR. WELBERS: So we are back to continue some fact-finding information on this application.

MERRILL READ,

being first duly sworn, testified as follows:

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MS. NEMETH: State your name and address for the record, please.

MS. READ: I'm Merrill Read, with Pivot Energy. My address is 666 West Lake Street, Chicago, Illinois, 60606.

COURT REPORTER: I'll go ahead and swear you in, as well.

ELIZABETH REDDINGTON,

being first duly sworn, testified as follows:

MS. NEMETH: State your name and address for the record.

MS. REDDINGTON: Elizabeth Reddington, 444 West Lake, Suite 2300, Chicago, Illinois, 60606.

MS. READ: We have some handouts for the presentation.

MS. SMITH: Kris, can they speak up?

MS. DONARSKI: Yes, we need you to speak louder because they're not hearing what you're saying.

MS. READ: I am bringing some handouts over to you.

MS. NEMETH: Excuse me. Can you spell your last name, please?

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MS. REDDINGTON: Yes. It's R-E-D-D-I-N-G-T-O-N.

MS. NEMETH: Thank you.

MS. READ: We have extras.

MR. WELBERS: Do we have to mark these?

MS. DONARSKI: I'll mark them.

MR. WELBERS: Did we have any other exhibits?

MS. DONARSKI: We do, and I have a list. So I'm marking them.

MR. WELBERS: So this is -- you'll give it a number?

MS. DONARSKI: I'll give it a number.

MR. WELBERS: Thank you. Fair enough.

MS. READ: Okay. We are ready.

MR. WELBERS: Okay. Go ahead.

MS. READ: All right. So some of you may have seen me from last month's meeting. So what we'll do today is a recap of kind of the summary of the solar project called Bureau Solar 2, LLC, and then we have some experts here tonight to testify about a couple of questions that came up last time. So I'll bring them up as we go through the presentation.

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All right. So next page, please. And please note that it's double-sided. We printed a lot, so we tried to be good about that.

All right. So I'll tell you a little bit about what we're proposing. This is Bureau Solar 2, LLC. It is going to be on two pieces of land that are both Agriculturally zoned. Solar is a Conditional Use on agricultural fields.

So what we are proposing is 29.3 acres of a community solar garden of a 40-acre parcel total. The setbacks on this property will be 80 feet from both of the county roads, because it's on a corner, and then we'll be 50 feet from all other property lines to the south and to the east.

We'll have an 8-foot game fence surrounding the entirety of the project, as well as a 16-foot wide gravel access road that will access the site from County Road 2200 North.

This is a 5-megawatt community solar system that will generate approximately 10.59 gigawatt hours per year, which is the estimation of powering 1460 homes.

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These projects do not require utilities. So there's no sewage, waste, irrigation, potable water services or trash recycling or natural gas needs for these. The only utilities that we do use are the existing infrastructure along County Road 2200 North. It's the existing Ameren poles that are already there. So they interconnect right where we meet the road there.

Next page, please.

We just had a closer version of the site plan so you could see it a little bit better.

You can skip to the next page.

So something very unique about this site that has not been really done in Illinois is dual-use crop production. So we had a community meeting back in May, where we invited all of the neighbors within a thousand feet of the property to come and learn more about solar and this specific project and ask any questions that they might have.

Liz Novotny, the County Board rep for this District came, as well as the landowners. At that meeting we decided -- we had talked about how creativity can be a part of these projects,

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Because on 98 percent of all of our sites we do sheep grazing. That's how we take care of all of the vegetation onsite.

But for this project, what we're going to be proposing is crop production between the rows. So the picture that I have right here, some of you might be able to follow along in your packet, is an example of that.

What we're looking to do is have the wonderful landowners farm hay or alfalfa between the rows, as well as crop corn around the remaining 10 acres that are not fenced in. So we're very excited about this. It's only been done in a couple of other places. This is a way that we can preserve the agricultural land and continue to farm. We'll also have the dual use of producing energy.

We actually have piloted this on one of our projects in Colorado. Here, the picture I was showing before, is Jack's Solar Garden in Longmont, Colorado, where they're actually doing, like, legit row crops between the arrays. So there are people on the site every day doing the row crops. But in this case, it will be a

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little less intense because we'll have the hay or alfalfa rather than row crops.

You can go to the next page, please.

A little bit about property taxes, just because I know there's some newer folks in the room tonight. So this proposed project, without the -- like, the site without the array, brings in a current total of $1900 per year in property taxes. Over the 20-year span of just the parcels would be about $38,000 over 20 years. But with the increased property values brought in by the solar project, in one year alone the property taxes would increase to $26,000. And over the 20-year total of the lifespan of the project, that would be just under $321,000 over those 20 years. So a very significant increase.

Next page, please.

The goal of all these projects for community solar is to save people money. So we have here -- again, I can't present this -- but it's our subscriber statement estimation. So with a project like this, an average Ameren customer spends on average $154 per month to pay for their utility bill. An average subscriber

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to a community solar project would save about $15.50 per month. On an annual process for one customer that's subscribed to the project, they would save $184 in one year. Across the 100 -- or 1,460 customers that this project is estimated to serve, across all those customers, in one year we would save 2,000- -- $200,070 in one year, and over the 20 years of that lifespan of the project across those customers it would be just under $5.5 million saved.

So that's money not going into Ameren's pockets and staying in your community that you can spend at the local stores, save and build a garage. We saw a lot of those being proposed tonight.

So there's a lot of different options and open storage for a lot of people who are not able to pay for their utility bills and struggling to make that payment.

So that's a little bit about Bureau Solar 2. We will be happy to take questions after we have our experts come up.

So our first expert we'll have come up is from CohnReznick, and he can tell you a little

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bit about himself and his findings that he found for property values.

ANDREW LINES,

being first duly sworn, testified as follows:

MS. NEMETH: Please state your name and address for the record.

MR. LINES: Andrew Lines, L-I-N-E-S.

I have kind of a little bit of a longer deck, but I'll try to get through it somewhat briefly.

I am a principle with CohnReznick. I'm a certified general real estate commercial appraiser. I have been appraising here in the state of Illinois for almost 20 years.

I run a group of appraisers nationwide. We do a lot of different things. I have appraised everything from small homes to the Sears Tower and everything in between.

About eight years ago I was asked to prepare an impact study to see whether or not solar farms might injure adjacent property values. So a lot of what I am about to tell you is over the last eight years' gathering this information and this data.

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I have a -- I'm not only a certified general real estate appraiser, I'm also an MAI, which is a designation given by the Appraisal Institute, and I am also a counselor of real estate, which is more e-i-e-i-o's after my name.

When I first set out to figure this out, the first thing I wanted to know is what everybody else said. I thought, let's start there.

So on Page 1, 2, 3 -- 4 of my deck there is a brief summary of four important academic studies that are out there. One was an opinion survey of assessors done by some people at the University of Texas, Austin. Of 400 responses received, only 18 of those assessors had experience in valuing homes near solar, and 17 out of the 18 had found no impact.

The study noted that future research can conduct analysis on home sales data to collect empirical evidence of actual property value impacts. And so that's what I have done, and I'll get to that.

The University of Rhode Island was the next largest study, and that looked at about

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70,000 test sales in the New England marketplace. It found no negative impact to homes in rural locations. It defined rural as a place with less than 850 persons per square mile. Which is actually quite dense, when you think about it. But it found no evidence of differential property value impacts in rural areas or based on the solar installation size.

Next was a report done by the University of Georgia Institute of Technology. This looked at 450 solar farms in North Carolina. It found no direct negative or positive spillover effect of a solar farm construction on nearby agricultural land values.

And then finally, the largest study of its kind was the Berkeley National Lab study -- I call it the BNL study -- which was performed and released last year. It looked at 1.8 million sales in California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina and New Jersey. While it did find a very small impact of 1.7 percent across the entire study, three of the states had zero percent impact. And those three states were 70 percent of all the data.

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So that's what other academics said.

Then, if you go to the next slide, what I have done as a real estate appraiser -- the methodology comes from a specific textbook called Real Estate Damages. It was written by a PhD named Randy Bell, who's also an MAI like myself. So we studied test areas and control areas. I'm looking at homes that are immediately next to solar and I'm comparing them with very similar homes that are located away from solar. It definitely makes sense.

When we looked at their unit metrics, we compared them simply. There's no artificial adjustments made to any of the data. And we see whether it's positive or negative. We find if it was negative over and over again, that that could indicate there is a trend.

The textbook says if a legitimate detrimental condition exists, there will likely be a measurable and consistent difference between the two sets of market data. And if not, there will likely be no significant difference.

So we need to see this over and over again

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in order to clarify and confirm that there is some kind of negative trend.

So, again, test sales located -- this is the next slide -- located directly adjacent to the existing solar farm, we are predicating this on the theory that the closer you are to the solar farm, the more impact it will have.

We only look at homes that are sold after the construction of the solar farm is complete. Generally people aren't really happy about construction itself, but we want to make sure that we're thinking about what the long-term use is over the 20 years when construction is not occurring. We only look at arm's-length transactions. We don't look at distressed sales.

Our control sales data, the homes that we are comparing the test sales to, we make sure we bracket the subject test sales in terms of construction, age and size, including acreage, to the test sales. We make sure we try to keep it in the surrounding townships, so that the school districts are the same. We only look at properties that sold within 18 months of the

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test sale transaction. Again, arm's-length transactions and not distressed sales.

Next slide.

So we gathered very specific empirical data on 40 established solar farms all across the U.S., with several here in Illinois, as well as some in the adjacent Midwest states. We found no measurable and consistent difference in property values, no difference in unit sale prices, conditions of sale, overall marketability or rate of depreciation. We studied marketing times, as well as unit sale prices.

We also found that solar facilities don't deter new development. And we performed before and after construction property value analyses, where we tracked appreciation rates of these homes that are directly next to solar.

And we find, when we compare them with the Federal Housing Price Index, the FHFA index, that those appreciation rates are consistent with the ZIP code that that particular house is in.

I'll show you some examples. If you keep

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going, the first one we did in Stephenson County. This is a small community solar project. There was a row of homes that backed up to the solar facility. So it would be seen in several of the homes' backyards.

We found two that had sold after the construction of that community solar. When we compared them to a group of 14 homes in the general area, we found that there was no negative differential between their unit sale prices.

We also confirmed with the broker that sold the two homes, a woman named Julie Wenzell (phonetic), who indicated that the property of the solar farm did not impact the sale price of either properties.

Next slide.

We also looked at the Grand Ridge Solar Farm, which is a little closer to here, in LaSalle County. It's a larger utility-scale project than the one that's proposed for Bureau County.

Again, we looked at a home that is about 500 feet away from the solar farm. It looks

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directly at it. There's virtually no screening in between it. We felt, when we compared this house with other homes in the township, that there wasn't a negative inclination. So it had a sale price that was actually a higher unit sale price than the comparable data that we identified.

Next.

There's a couple examples of some larger, much larger utility-scale projects. We looked at one in Michigan called Assembly Solar Farm, which is 239 megawatts.

We looked at a home that is surrounded by solar on virtually all four sides. Not only did this home sell, but when we compared this homestead to other homesteads in that particular rural area, we did not find a negative differential.

The slide after that contains information about that test sale, as well as the control sale data that we used. You'll notice that the number of beds, the number of bathrooms, the year built and the acreage are all very consistent across the two data sets.

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If you go to the slide after that, we see a different home that also sold at the Assembly Solar Farm. This one backed up to the solar farm. It's a nice picture and aerial of the house and the solar farm that exists right by it during the winter when there's no trees. There's barely any screening in between this particular house that sold and the solar farm itself.

Again, we compared this house to 18 different sales in the same township and found that there was a 2 percent difference between the data sets, and that was positive in favor of the test sale.

We also did a before-and-after analysis, on the next slide, of this home. It sold in May 2021 for 215,000. It sold again in March 2023 for 250,000, indicating a 16 percent increase, or about a 0.7 percent per month increase, in one sale between the next, the house being exactly the same.

And the FHFA home price index for that ZIP code in that same time period was a monthly appreciation rate of 0.67 percent. So this home

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sells and is appreciating at the same rate as every other house within that ZIP code.

Next slide.

We do another example of a very large 200-megawatt project in Randolph County, Indiana, called Riverstart. Another example of a home that has solar in multiple directions but sold at a price that was consistent with the comparable data.

I have examples of what the home looked like, where it's located. You can see the solar in the background. Then I have another page which shows the homes in relationship to the home that sold, and you can see the homes that are very consistent with one another.

If you want to skip a little bit, I'll show some examples of some new development that occurred to solar that exists.

So a concern that some folks have is that you won't be able to develop a house once a solar farm is there, on acres that you might own next to it. We don't find that to be the case. We see individuals spending a lot of money and building really nice homes directly within

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eyesight of solar.

In this case, I have one in Marion County, which is south of Indianapolis. And this one was a $450,000 house that was built 150 feet from an existing solar farm.

A couple slides later we have an example of a subdivision that's going in next to an existing solar farm, with homes that are backing up with no screening and are generally within a hundred feet of the existing solar array. And those homes are selling at prices that are completely consistent with the other prices within the subdivision. And actually, all of the homes along the solar have all sold at this point. They went like hotcakes.

If you go to the next slide after that, we talked about some of our confirmations. So not only do we do all that empirical data search and evidence, but we also confirmed, ourselves, with county assessors who we know have solar in their backyards, who have them in their counties.

Assessors are great because they see these transactions sometimes a lot faster than we do as real estate appraisers or even brokers.

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So we had interviews with over 65 assessors in 17 states, and that includes a number of different assessors here in Illinois, and all of them say the same thing, which is that they don't see a negative trend. Not only that, we asked them if anybody in their districts have ever fought their assessment by the fact that they are now next to a solar farm, and no one is going to fight their assessments either.

Last slide.

Based on my examination, on my team's examination, and looking at other academic studies and examining all of the studies that we have done personally, and talking to assessors and market brokers, and looking at before-and-after sale conditions and studying all of these unit prices' marketability, we don't see any negative impact that you might see over and over again with relationship to the solar farms' proximity to adjacent homes.

That was a lot. Thank you for listening to me, and I'm happy to answer any questions after we wrap up everything.

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MR. WELBERS: The proper thing is to let people ask you on your expertise in your testimony.

MR. LINES: Will do.

MR. WELBERS: First, do you have any?

MS. DONARSKI: I have a question.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. DONARSKI:

Q. Have you been out to the site and seen the site where this is being proposed?

A. Yes, I have driven by the site.

Q. Okay. And is it your testimony that the character of the neighborhood there would be similar to the ones that you portrayed here in your presentation?

A. I think a couple of the ones, especially with regards to new development, are definitely in areas that are trending towards suburban and are in the path of development, but several of the other of the initial ones that I have discussed are clearly in rural areas.

Q. Okay. And when you have the solar or a more industrial use, does that cut down on the number of people looking to buy in that area? Or is

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that part of your study, like the number of possible buyers, potential buyers?

A. So I don't know if I would classify it as industrial the way that you have.

Q. Okay.

A. But I would say that markets are typically defined in terms of all of the demand generators that are happening in a particular area. And each market is different in how it attracts outside buyers, depending on how close they are to other things and the scarcity of homes in that general area.

I would say one thing that I do see is that there is an attraction to areas that have strong school districts. Most families try to go to really nice school districts. And a commonality of good, strong school districts is that they are typically well-funded.

So a solar facility has a really great way of being able to add a lot of money to a school system without putting any kind of pressure, in terms of the number of students that are going to school or the need for additional civil services.

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MS. DONARSKI: Okay. Thank you.
MR. WELBERS: You're good?
MS. DONARSKI: Uh-huh.
MR. WELBERS: Go ahead, Connie. Connie Stetson.
MS. STETSON: Connie Stetson.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. STETSON:

Q. You were here last month, correct, with GreenKey?
A. Yes, I was.
Q. You were in the audience when they came?
A. That's correct.
Q. Why didn't you stand up and give your presentation at that time?
A. I was not retained to do that.
Q. So you had to be paid to stand up and talk?
A. This is what I do for a living, as a --
Q. You were in the audience last month. Pivot asked for a property value. They asked, and you didn't stand up and say anything. But now you're here because they're paying you to be here. But you were here. You could have done that.

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A. Again, I was retained by a different solar developer and was here for them the last time I was here.
Q. So you have to be paid to speak.
MS. STETSON: That's all.
MR. WELBERS: Other questions of this witness?
State your name, please.
MS. SUTTON: Colette Sutton.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. SUTTON:
Q. Just some statistical questions. Is this a qualitative or a quantitative study?
A. So we do a paired sales research. So we're able to look at a number of different homes and look at their unit prices per square foot.
This isn't a hedonic model or a regression analysis in the way that some of the other academic studies that I mentioned earlier are.
Q. Can you describe for me in the -- did you personally do these studies or is this an analysis of prior studies done?
A. So the studies that I have talked about today I have done with my team.

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Q. Okay. So you did Freeport; is that correct?
A. That's correct.
Q. That's my -- my excuse -- no excuse, but my concern about that one is that your control area was 14 homes.
A. Okay.
Q. Those 14 homes -- I'll get the dates wrong, but you may remember. Those 14 homes ranged in age from 1959 to 1990-something. I don't have the study with me, but I read pieces of it --
A. Okay.
Q. -- that you were kind enough to give to me.

I just have some questions about the validity of the sampling. Because the sampling goes from two, in the study, and a control group of 14 that ranges in age from '59 to -- the dates are wrong, '90-something. Okay. And so I think -- and probably your statistician can probably look that over, but I think there's some errors in --

MR. WELBERS: Questions you have? Do you have some questions based on that? You laid groundwork.

Q. (By Ms. Sutton:) Yeah, control group, does he

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have a control group here that matches -- I guess what I'm asking, first of all, was this a statistical study that was quantitative in nature?

A. So this is a study that was done, it's a paired sales technique, which, again, is in the appraisal -- State appraisal book that I mentioned. This is appraisal theory. The statistical analysis can come from looking at all the data itself, but it is -- you're right, it is a -- it's not a quantitative analysis, in the way that you're asking, but it's not necessarily a regression study and not the -- the other way that you're thinking about this.

With regards to the median ages of the two controls' data sets, we make sure that the control group brackets the ages of the test sales themselves. So that's why there is that difference in terms of the entire control group.

MR. LINES: Can I have that report?

MR. WELBERS: Which one would you like?

MR. LINES: One on the top. Actually, you have it there.

Q. (By Ms. Sutton:) And that was the only one I

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could see the ages of the control group homes.

It was in their packet, not the one that --

A. It's a lot of information. It's a plus-hundred- page report.

So both of the test sales had year-builts, respectfully, of 1977 to 1979, and the control set had a range of 1957 to 1993, which is in between those two -- in between those two numbers. So 1977 to 1979 is not a new house.

So generally speaking, when you look at the MLS, you start looking at homes, you realize that new construction homes literally are the last five years of construction, sometimes only three, depending on where you're looking at. Then the ages of the homes start to increase in size. So when you're talking about a recently-built home, you might be considering about 10 or 15 years, but anything above that would be in a different cohort that's generally a larger age range.

Q. I have no question, except that my question is sampling validity, and I think there's a problem of sampling validity when I looked at the study.

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But I don't have a question at this point with regard to that.

My other question was, in this study what were the controls that were in place for extraneous features, such as interest rates, the 2020 pandemic? Were those controls in place when you made the analysis?

A. So again, our control properties tend to be in the same, exact township, in the same school districts. So they have the same underpinnings in terms of the marketplace. We don't make adjustments for any of the other extraneous things that you might think of: whether or not they have a small swimming pool or a larger swimming pool.

What we make sure that we do is that we adjust the properties back to the same transaction date using the FHFA price index. So that brings all of the control sales back to the same, exact date as the test sale. So if the test sale occurred in the middle of the pandemic and you had sales on both sides, we're using the index to bring those back to the same date.

Q. And the reason why I used the pandemic is

because, you know, you're talking about marketing. It was vastly different at that time. So that was my only question. Thank you.

MR. WELBERS: Other questions of this witness?

Way in the back. State your name for the court reporter.

MS. REEDER: Jeanette Reeder.

MR. WELBERS: Go ahead with your question.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. REEDER:

Q. Have you done any studies locally with any of the solar farms that are going, like, in Putnam County and --

A. I haven't looked at any in Putnam County to date.

Q. There's two or three of them just right down in Putnam County. There's a couple up here in Lee County. These are all older sales. I mean, you're going back to 2000 --

MR. WELBERS: Be careful not to testify. You can do that next. He answered your question that he didn't look at Putnam County.

You looked at LaSalle, you had a LaSalle

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County.

MR. LINES: That's correct.

Q. (By Ms. Reeder:) Do you have any more recent data?

A. So we look at solar farms all across the United States, not just here in the heartland of Illinois. We are left with looking at solar facilities that have transactional data right next to them. There are an increasing number of solar facilities that are being constructed, and we're aware of that, but we only have so many hands and we do other things, other than this, as well.

So, you know, we are still actively collecting data on a varied amount of solar farms across the country. We have looked at all of the larger utility-scale projects that have been completed over the last three years, and we haven't found any transactions yet in terms of those specific ones that have recently come online that are the larger solar farms in the state of Illinois.

Q. So no, there's no local data on what the trends are within, like, say 20 miles?

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A. I haven't looked at any of the solar farms within 20 miles.

MR. WELBERS: Any other questions of this witness?

Nanette.

MS. GILLAN: Nanette Gillan.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. GILLAN:

Q. So would you say the majority of your customers are renewable energy companies? That's who you work for primarily?

A. No.

Q. Do you work for down-home people like us?

A. I have worked for a variety number of companies and different people in different situations.

Q. Are you aware that the one property that you listed, the 2098 North 15th Road over by Grand Ridge, when it was originally listed May 13th of 2016 it was listed for 225,000, and yet five months later it sold for only 186,000?

A. I am aware that the listing price was very high, and we've spoken with the broker about that.

Q. And you don't think that had anything to do

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with the solar farm being by it?
A. Listing prices aren't the only informational data points that are out there. We make sure we look at sales.
Q. That's a lot of money. $40,000 drop. I mean, I wouldn't think a realtor would let them list it at that inflated price if it was truly inflated.
A. That's what the real estate broker told us.
MS. STETSON: Do you have that in writing? I'm sorry.
MR. LINES: I do not have that in writing on me, but it is in our notes.
MR. WELBERS: We have someone else in the back with a question.
MS. GIBALDI: Aubrey Gibaldi. We're over by the corner of that area right over in 2200 and 1950 E Street.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. GIBALDI:
Q. Markets obviously show an improvement over time with real estate properties, but we had a huge pandemic that surged the price of, like, homes across the country. So is it possible that your

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suggestion that these properties are still inflated in price could not be attributed to the fact that it has anything to do with your solar farm and that it is just overall because of the pandemic, and that the small growth that you actually are proposing is much smaller than it would be if there was no pandemic influence?

A. So the theory here is that no matter what the market is -- if all of the homes that we are looking at in the same time period are all equally being affected by the underlying market, interest rates, increase of people applying out of urban areas because of the pandemic -- so all of them have the same underlying market status, they are all being influenced the same way, then we would see some kind of negative trend with the homes that are right next to the solar if all of the homes are transferring at the same rate.

So we have looked at, now, homes that have sold in the mid-2000s, in the early-2010s, in the middle-2010s, right up until the pandemic, during the pandemic, after the pandemic, more recently, and we are not finding a trend that is

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negative based on the fact that the home is next to a solar facility.

MR. WELBERS: Any other questions for this witness?

(No verbal response.)

MR. WELBERS: Does our Board have any questions for this witness?

(No verbal response.)

MR. WELBERS: Yes, sir. State your name, too.

MR. DAVIS: My name is Oliver Davis. She's my wife, live at the same place.

EXAMINATION

BY MR. DAVIS:

Q. All the studies, for the exception of one -- or with the exception of one, had neutral data.

Are there any that you all did that had negative data that you didn't list?

A. So again, we found some that have a negative, if you look in the report. And you guys have the full report here.

So we do list some that are negative, to a degree, in terms of the differential and the unit sale prices. But what we don't see is that

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these are overwhelmingly negative. And you're talking about three or four in a group of 15 or 20, and not more than half.

Q. So there's none that were significantly different that you didn't list here?

A. Correct.

MR. WELBERS: Any other questions?

(No verbal response.)

MR. WELBERS: I think you're dismissed, sir.

MR. LINES: Thank you, sir.

MR. WELBERS: You can sit down.

Do you have another witness for us?

MS. READ: I do. Thank you.

All right. So while Liz is handing these out, what you'll be seeing is two different memos. So one is -- we have the expert who wrote, is the top one, and the other one is CPP Wind Engineering Consultants that also weighed in.

So we have an expert on wind that can come up here, and I'll give him a little introduction and then fill in any blanks that I missed, and we'll go from there.

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But Franklin Lombardo is our wind expert. He is an associate processor from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. He has a PhD in wind science and engineering, a BS in civil engineering, is a board member of the American Association for Wind Engineering from 2017 to 2021, and we retained him to produce a relevant literature review of wind-related solar studies, as well as studies of the specific effects of our project, Bureau Solar 2.

FRANKLIN LOMBARDO,

being first duly sworn, testified as follows:

MS. HENKEL: Please state your name and address for the record.

MR. LOMBARDO: Sure. Frank Lombardo, 3916 Rockdale Drive, Champaign, Illinois, 61822.

Okay. So, yeah, let me give you a little more background -- my own background.

So as Merrill mentioned, I'm a professor at the University of Illinois. My research background is wind engineering. So what that means is, I study wind characteristics, wind loading on structures, and I do a lot of studies on wind damage, I do a lot of work on extreme

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wind events, tornados, thunderstorms, hurricanes.

And so I was asked by Pivot to basically take a look at the literature view and see if there are any wind effects downstream of a large solar array.

So first, it's definitely a valid concern, right? I'll talk about in the report, we do see speedups in the vicinity of things like solar panels, of things like buildings. And really there hasn't been an in-depth study of what the wind effects look like far downstream from the array.

A lot of the work is on the wind loading of the solar panels and the flow right into the solar array because there's concerns about the wind loading, want to see how to design these panels.

But the literature shows that really there are speedups around sharp objects. If you go, like, around -- you know, you stand on the side of a building, you see the speedups around sharp edges and sharp corners, but those speedups are generally localized and really behind.

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And given, really, the large number of panels and the size of the panels it allows, the momentum of the wind is sort of taken away. And in the wake of those panels, the wind is actually slowed down quite a bit. Then eventually further downstream it will pick up momentum and will regain basically the original characteristics that it sees before it actually hits the solar array.

So if you have the slides -- I kind of put together basically just one slide that kind of shows what I'm talking about. Really the major takeaways of this, so here, the figure there on the right-hand side, basically shows sort of the wind flow around the solar panel. So the wind here is left to right.

And before the panel, basically the wind has a -- it basically increases with height, zero at the ground and then it picks up speed as you kind of move away from the effects of the surface. Then as the wind hits the panel, you see sort of some speedups basically around the edges and around the corners, both kind of above and below the panel. And then really kind of in

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the wake of the panel there, you see some slowdowns, and this basically increases downstream.

A lot of studies and literature basically, sort of, use a reference height to sort of normalize these findings. So for example, here, this is kind of downstream at five -- that's basically five times the panel height. So if the panel is 8 feet, basically that's 40 feet downstream, and you're still seeing a slowdown of the wind speed in the wake. That continues quite a ways downstream.

So basically I really focused on this 130-foot distance, which was basically from the last solar panel array to the next adjacent property. So that was kind of the distance that I focused on. So really it's likely that the wind speeds are going to be reduced at that 130-foot point, and especially at heights relevant to agriculture.

The base is as low as 15 feet, and we really didn't find that the speed or any wind shear, which is really how the wind changes with height, would increase at that distance

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downstream.

Again, there are speedups, there are ranges of high wind shear, but those are really limited to right near the solar panels themselves, and those effects sort of diminish as you move away.

Yeah, I think that's really all I had to say. Happy to take questions.

MR. WELBERS: Kris?

MS. DONARSKI: I have none.

MR. WELBERS: Go ahead, Connie.

MS. STETSON: Connie Stetson.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. STETSON:

Q. From my understanding, these are a pivot, right?

A. Yes.

Q. So you're showing this picture as it sits up here. What about if it goes like this?

A. Yeah, so we -- a lot of the research has been on -- hasn't looked at a flat panel. But really the worst-case scenario would be when it's tilted. So we focused on basically when the panels are tilted, basically at the maximum

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tilt, around 50 degree tilt.

Q. So when it goes flat it's -- you're talking it could do, like, a wind shear-type?

A. No, you wouldn't see -- you would see a wind shear close to the panel. So if you think about a flat -- if you think about a flat panel, think about it almost like the roof of your house, you can speed up immediately over the top, you would get it on the bottom as well. But again, those effects would be diminished downstream as you move away from panels themselves.

Q. So you have got a cornfield right next to it. What about the corn next to that?

A. Yeah, so we looked at that. We looked at basically the wind shear with height, and we found -- we did a -- it's in the report. We did a computational study, a computer study, basically simulation, and found that basically there's little or no change in the wind profile with height. We compared upstream of the solar array to at that 130-foot distance.

So immediately behind the solar array, within 20 to 30 feet, there's basically a huge reduction in wind speed, and then that slowly

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starts to pick up as you move downstream.

So there is -- generally, if you look at sort of the boundary there, there is a wind shear anyways because the wind fields the effects of friction near the ground and then it speeds up as you move up.

MR. WELBERS: State your name for the court reporter and then ask your questions.

MR. SCHAFER: What's that?

MR. WELBERS: State your name for the court reporter.

MR. SCHAFER: Dan Schafer.

EXAMINATION

BY MR. SCHAFER:

Q. Those panels laying flat, it's got to be almost like a parking lot. There's not going to be nothing to slow the flow of the air across when they're laying flat.

A. I mean, they have to -- the wind will make contact with the panels.

Q. But there will be no friction to really slow it down?

A. Well, the panel themselves, I mean, the wind will be significantly slowed in that array. I

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mean, there's way more friction in that array -- well, right over the top, sure. But within that whole array there's a lot of friction slowing the wind down.

MR. WELBERS: Good?

(No verbal response.)

MR. WELBERS: State your name for the court reporter.

MS. REEDER: Jeanette Reeder.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. REEDER:

Q. Has the study been done -- was this just on, like, one band of panels?

A. Yes. So, great question, and it's true. So the literature is limited on studies of -- most of the studies have focused on either a single solar panel or multiple rows, no more than about five rows of panels. And again, the focus has really been on the loading of the panels themselves and not what happens in the wake of the panels downstream.

So there hasn't been a -- basically a study on a solar array of this scale because it really hasn't been the focus. They are really

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looking at what's going on right near the panels, and you don't need a large-scale array to know what happens there.

Q. And how many are we talking about in this proposed -- because this is the first I have heard of them, coming in here. But how many are we talking about? How many rows?

A. Merrill may be able to answer that a little bit better than me.

MS. READ: Could I answer? Merrill Read.

MS. DONARSKI: Well. . .

MR. WELBERS: This witness doesn't know the answer, but Merrill will have a follow-up. We'll ask her that when she comes back.

Any other questions? Yes.

MR. GILLAN: Neil Gillan.

EXAMINATION

BY MR. GILLAN:

Q. Have you seen any of these -- have you seen any of these go through a storm? In other words, have you seen the solar panels where they have been blown away?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay.

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A. Not here, but in Puerto Rico there was a large-scale solar array after a hurricane that took significant damage where they have been.

But in anything else, I have not seen that. I have seen tornado damage of solar panels. They have not been blown away. They have been significantly damaged but still attached to the support.

Q. Okay. Would you want to live due west of a solar array?

A. I wouldn't be worried about west, given that the easterly winds are --

Q. I live east of it.

A. East, okay.

Q. My apologies.

MS. READ: This is a different project.

MR. WELBERS: This is a different project.

MR. GILLAN: I know, but I'm asking your --

Q. (By Mr. Gillan:) You study wind, and I'm asking, would you want to live to the west of that project --

A. I mean, I would be --

Q. -- or east, rather?

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A. No, I wouldn't be terribly concerned. I mean, I think -- you wouldn't see -- I mean, close to the ground you're going to be subjected to a lot of turbulence anyways, but I wouldn't be worried about it at all, especially at those distances.

If my house was butted up right against the solar array, yeah, I may have some concern, but further downstream I wouldn't be concerned.

MR. WELBERS: Lori. State your name too, please.

MS. FRY: Lori Fry.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. FRY:

Q. Neil just asked about wanting to live east. What about south? You stuttered a little bit. No, I wouldn't want to live there.

What about south?

A. South, yeah, again --

Q. On top of a hill, when it's already windy and right next to it.

A. I mean, I wouldn't be concerned about the array. I would be concerned about living on top of a hill, for sure, because there are speedups with wind flow over hills.

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Q. So with solar panels it would be worse?
A. No, because basically the solar panels allow wind to go through them. They have -- wind can pass underneath and wind gets slowed down underneath the panels as well. And the hills, there's really -- the wind can only go in one direction. It has to go up or around. So you get significant speedups with hills.

With, you know, solar panels, basically the wind is getting -- the momentum is getting taken away by the panels themselves, the supports, and so there's really a significant slowdown there.

MR. WELBERS: Connie, go ahead.

MS. STETSON: Connie Stetson.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. STETSON:
Q. So you're talking glass flying around, correct?
A. Uhm. . .
Q. On something like this, you're talking glass flying around next to these homes; is that correct?
A. No.
Q. Well, aren't they made out of glass?

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MS. READ: Sure.
A. Yeah, I mean --
Q. (By Ms. Stetson:) A high wind -- you just said, I wouldn't live next to them. I wouldn't live next to them because of the wind. You just said that; is that correct?
A. I don't think I said that.
Q. Did I hear that right?
MR. WELBERS: Clarify what you said. You said if you were extremely proximal, like if your home was here and the panel was here.
A. If my home was sitting right next to -- up against the fence, sure.
Q. (By Ms. Stetson:) You wouldn't live in a place like -- I just -- because you're talking -- you know, some places they are talking surrounding the house, and you're saying the wind could be a problem with this?
A. No, I mean, it would -- immediately downstream, if you're sitting next to -- if you're on the fence, basically, the wind is significantly reduced. It's just not an ideal place to be.
Q. When a storm -- a wind -- a high wind comes, you're saying, more or less, I don't think I

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would want to live there?
A. No, that's not true. I mean. . .
Q. I think that's what he said.
A. The solar panels are designed to withstand high wind.
Q. I have seen pictures on the internet with damage, like crazy.
A. Sure, sure. I don't know anything about how they were --
Q. The glass has to go somewhere.
A. I don't know how they were -- those particular panels were designed to be constructed. But, I mean, they are designed to withstand extreme winds.

I understand what you're saying, yes.

Q. So, you know, some people talk about the noise next door. I'm talking this wind is real.

MS. STETSON: Thank you.

MR. WELBERS: Other questions for this witness?

Nanette, go ahead.

MS. GILLAN: Nanette Gillan.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. GILLAN:

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Q. So you said you have only basically done testing on when there's five rows. So you really can't give an answer on, like -- I don't know how many rows this one is going to have. But, like, ours has a lot.

So that's going to make a big difference then, right? I mean, if you have only tested on five, you can't say --

A. I can't say, right. I have no idea if it's going to make a difference or not, yeah.

MS. GILLAN: Thank you.

MR. WELBERS: Other questions for this witness, the wind expert?

MR. DICKINSON: Brian Dickinson.

EXAMINATION

BY MR. DICKINSON:

Q. Have you guys had any studies with derechos? Our area saw one a few years ago. We're probably going to see more as global temperatures rise. It's a new area. Have you guys had any focus with that?

A. Me personally, no. So no focus on solar panels. Certainly on derechos and the damage they cause to buildings, for example, but

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nothing on solar panels, but certainly an area of research that I do it on.

MR. WELBERS: State your name one more time.

MS. REEDER: Jeanette Reeder.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. REEDER:

Q. Do you have any information on, like, winter conditions, snow? With the wind, is it going to act like a snow fence, where so far out from it the snow is going to pile more? Is that a factor because of the wind shear going through there?

A. Good question. I do not know the answer. I haven't done any studies on, for example, snow drifts in and around solar arrays.

MR. WELBERS: Are we good?

(No verbal response.)

MR. WELBERS: Board, any questions of the wind expert? I already asked that once, didn't I?

You can sit down.

Do you have another one?

MS. READ: One more.

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The last expert that we have today to testify is Lei Zhao. He's our heat island expert. He's an assistant professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Institute for Sustainability, Energy and Environment, and the National Center of Supercomputing Applications at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. He has a PhD degree in atmospheric physics from Yale University, and is the recipient of the U.S. NSF CAREER Award, the Timothy Oke Award (2023) from the International Association for Urban Climate, and the American Geophysical Union (AGU) Global Environmental Changer Early Career Award from 2023.

Bring him up.

LEI ZHAO,

being first duly sworn, testified as follows:

MS. NEMETH: Please state your name and address and spell your name for the record, please.

MR. ZHAO: Sure. First name is Lei, L-E-I, last name, Zhao, Z-H-A-O. Address, 311 Lake Falls Boulevard, Savoy, Illinois,

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61874.

All right. Hi, everyone. So my name is Lei. I'm an assistant professor in civil and environmental engineering at UIC, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

So my group research area is heat island, climate impacts, climate risks, climate adaptation. What that means is, we try to study and model, simulate, climate change and a variety of different engineering strategies, how that affects the local climate.

So I was asked to provide an impact assessment report on this proposed project, major focus on the heat island effects. So this is actually a very good question, because this is actually a hot research area in the past several years.

I do summarize a number of most-recent public peer-reviewed literature in my full assessment report. Although I only summarize the most recent one, but there's actually a majority of the published literature show a consensus, an agreement, on the temperature effects of solar farm or solar gardens.

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We did this assessment in two major ways. One is literature review. The second is our own modeling. So I will explain one by one.

The first one is, we conduct a studies-related review on the modeling studies of simulating the temperature effects after implementation of a solar farm across sales. What I mean by across sales, is the literature shows a very small scale, for example, just rooftop solar roof; or community or broader scale, like solar farm, solar garden; or even a global scale, so basically turn all the possible ceilings or roofs or land into solar or ways of renewable energy systems and their impacts.

So basically there's a great agreement that it's very unlikely the solar farm or solar roof can cause a local warming, or heat island, impact. Actually, the majority of our study finds that there is a slight cooling effect. The mechanism behind this is because the solar farm or the solar panels, solar PV, converts sunlight to electricity that would be otherwise absorbed by the ground to heat up the area.

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So that part of the solar heating was turned into electricity. This is especially the case when the electricity is not consumed right onsite, which applies to this proposed project.

And I -- what I show you in the slides here is a modeling study conducted in Phoenix and Tucson. Just very quickly to explain, the color bar, particularly the reddish color, shows the warming effect and the bluish color shows the cooling effect.

The color picture shows the impact area between the high temperature, or human perceived temperature, basically, that effects you can see is all -- almost all bluish color, so it means -- although it's very slight, there is a slight cooling effect.

We also used our own model to simulate the proposed project, and we also found this very consistent with the literature. The proposed project actually will have a slight cooling effect.

Another thing I want to mention is, this proposed project also proposed to have -- they propose to farm hay or vegetation between the

arrays. This will also have the cooling benefits by enhancing the evapotranspiration. The evapotranspiration is cooling. Basically you have more water from the soil, which evaporates, and causes an enhanced evaporative cooling effect.

By the way, the study that I -- the model they use is WRF, which is basically the -- WRF stands for Weather Research and Focus Model. It's basically, we are really to see the weather forecast every day. That's the model produced for predicting or forecasting the weather for people.

Yeah, so the conclusion is based on the literature review and our own modeling study analysis, our modeling analysis, we find the proposed project is very unlikely to cause any local warming or island effects. Actually, it will cause a slight cooling benefit.

I'm happy to address any questions. Thank you.

MR. WELBERS: Kris?

EXAMINATION

BY MS. DONARSKI:

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Q. I have one question for you.
A. Yes.
Q. On your presentation here, you had two -- Phoenix and Tucson. Those are desert or arid climates. Is the research different in more, like, Midwest farmland than in a dessert and arid lands?
A. Very good question.

Short answer, no. The reason is, the underlying physics, it's a subsurface end balance. Those physics apply in all locations. Actually, in my full report we have studies on all different areas. These slides we happen to show those two studies which, yeah, the scale matched more.

MS. DONARSKI: Okay.

MR. ZHAO: But very good question. Thank you.

MS. DONARSKI: Thank you.

MR. WELBERS: Questions? In the back, state your name.

MR. DAVIS: Oliver Davis.

EXAMINATION

BY MR. DAVIS:

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Q. So under the images, it says, in Figure 2, it's referencing solar roofs. So does this study only consider solar roofs or was it also in solar farms?
A. Yeah, very good question. This study, this particular study, only solar roofs. But in the full reports, we look at the studies across all kinds of solar panels. So rooftop solar farms, solar gardens, or even the solar arrays.
Q. So solar gardens of the same size?
A. Yes, exact, yeah.

MR. WELBERS: Next question.

MS. REEDER: Jeanette Reeder.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. REEDER:

Q. Do you have the studies on the different graphs and stuff that you prepared, where you were looking at different types of property, or is this it?
A. The property, you mean?
Q. Well, like the solar fields, instead of a roof, like how much condensation does --
A. Oh, I see.
Q. Do you have -- is there somewhere we can access

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that information?

A. Oh, yes. Actually, this is a very active study field. You actually can find hundreds of papers across even crop lands, land cover, urban ones, which is a built environment, cropland, which is, like, different types of cropland, also even forests, even a lake, even seashore. So there are all kinds of studies.

In my full report, I summarize all of them. This is really a very active research field actually. But yeah, we do -- I think online you can usually find the majority of the studies.

MR. WELBERS: Other questions?

(No verbal response.)

MR. WELBERS: No questions.

Questions from the Board?

(No verbal response.)

MR. WELBERS: You can sit down then.

MR. ZHAO: Thank you.

MR. WELBERS: Merrill, you can return and discuss a few questions.

MS. READ: All right. So we are on the last slide. All right. So just to kind of

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close everything up that you just heard.

Thank you to all of our experts for coming and answering everyone's questions.

I just want to summarize the overall benefits of this project. So first of all, it complies with the standards in Bureau County's Ordinance and will not negatively affect property values, create an increase in wind shear to neighbors, or produce a heat island effect.

Then also, the economic benefits that I mentioned earlier to the community. So that includes economic savings to the residents and the businesses in this area, which could be subscribers. We have a handout, if people are interested in learning more about subscribing to projects and how that works. But that's a great way to save money on your utility bills every year.

Property tax increase is significant.

Encourages workforce development training and development programs.

As I mentioned last time, but I'll bring it up now to, part of Pivot's culture is to

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donate to the communities that we're building projects in. So that includes a $5,000-per-megawatt donation that we will pay out to an organization or nonprofit that's doing great work in the community surrounding energy burden reduction, workforce development or agricultural development and saving different portions of land for agricultural. We know that's important here in Bureau County, thus why we're doing crops between the rows.

Then also, using local contractors to contribute to the local economy and have a job to work on.

Then also we're looking to preserve farmland and agricultural practices and will be a harmonious neighbor to the surrounding area and also bolster the existing distribution grid for further expansion and allowing different types of energy to be on the grid.

Now we're happy to answer any questions from Liz or I.

I know one of the questions earlier was about how many panels, I think, and so I have it on my site plan. Let me read it. 11,520, which

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would be about 50 rays -- 50 rows, which I think was one of the questions.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: 11,000 how many?

MS. REEDER: 11,500 individual panels. So, like, by row it would be about 50 rows going north-south.

MERRILL READ,

having been previously duly sworn, testified as follows:

EXAMINATION

BY MS. STETSON:

Q. You said expansion. You're possibly going to expand on this property?

A. No. So we're -- what we have proposed is all that we're building. It pretty much takes up all the land. With all the setbacks that we have, we wouldn't be able to build anymore. But we integrate and interconnect right to the existing infrastructure, but just basically making it a more reliable grid because you're adding more different types of energy reduction, so making it more reliable.

Q. So you're not going to expand to make it bigger?

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A. No.
Q. So you're not going to ask the neighbor next to them?
A. No.
MR. WELBERS: Lori?
EXAMINATION
BY MS. FRY:
Q. How many jobs is it going to give?
A. About 50 for a project this size.
Q. Okay. And how many businesses do you think that a farmer uses on that property?
A. For, like, just farming?
Q. Yeah.
A. I would have to guess, but I'm sure themselves, farming it, and then getting seed, and then they already have the equipment. I would have to ask -- the farmer is here.
Q. You have the fertilizer company, you have the small-town guy that's making some money, you have the seed guy, you have --
MR. WELBERS: Lori.
A. I do have the farmer right here. He can answer that question.
Q. (By Ms. Fry:) Yeah, there's a lot of people

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that get hurt too.

MR. WELBERS: Lori, when it gets to the case that you're interested in, or even this one, you can testify. I think this witness probably isn't an expert on agriculture. So you want to be careful that you're -- in order to testify, you would come up to the same stand, you know. We have to maintain some sort of order.

I think it's safe -- are you an expert on farming?

MS. REDDINGTON: I am not an expert on farming, but I am here as the Applicant and can expand on the job creation that the project brings, if that's okay.

MR. WELBERS: Go ahead, do that.

ELIZABETH REDDINGTON,

having been previously duly sworn, testified as follows:

MS. REDDINGTON: So we hire from the beginning of the project lifecycle all the way to the end. We're going to be hiring fencing laborers, electricians, mechanical and laborers. There's also going to be salespeople that are

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selling subscriptions to the local area. We are also increasing the need for more utility workers because of the increase of clean renewable energy in the state of Illinois.

Also, development work. So we have our civil firm here that will be doing the civil engineering work. Also the union laborers and prevailing wage requirements that we have, we have a local partner here that can speak on behalf of the project as well. So it's good-paying jobs that come on to the site for the construction.

And then upon the commissioning of the system and the commercial operations of the system, we will have ongoing maintenance at the site. So snow removal, there will be vegetative maintenance, in the event that there needs to be mowing, and we also employ people to come out to the site to clean the panels. There's going to be planned maintenance, unplanned maintenance, where we will deploy electricians on the site to ensure that they are working properly.

So there is certainly a benefit and people hired as a result of this project.

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MR. WELBERS: Question?

MS. SUTTON: Colette Sutton.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. SUTTON:

Q. So what you're saying about hiring is that post construction you will be incrementally using contract laborers? They are not full-time employees?

A. No, so we -- it's -- we all -- all of our labor is contracted, if that answers your question.

Q. Right. So contracted for the job and it's done, right? You have an electrical outage, they come in for a contracted period and then they're gone?

A. Yes, but this system, with the length of time it will be operating in, it will be annual and yearly maintenance that we contract with.

Q. So you have full-time employees for annual and yearly maintenance for what period of time?

A. So this system can operate up to 40 years. Right now it's contracted, or would be contracted, to operate for 20 to 25.

Q. Okay. But during that period of time, how many full-time employees do you have for maintenance?

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A. So roughly for two to four times a year maintenance call, and that's just the bare minimum. There could be more visits to the site. There's usually two people that would come to the site each time.
Q. Two people?
A. (Nods head.)
Q. Two to four times a year?
A. Uh-huh.
Q. Eight people.

MS. GIBALDI: Aubrey Gibaldi.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. GIBALDI:

Q. So I'm a little confused. So the proposed benefits that you have as far as savings go, those only apply to people that buy into a subscription for your energy. So all of the benefits, basically, you have to be kind of bought into this, correct, with a subscription?
A. People can choose to be a subscriber to the community solar garden.
Q. So if your --
A. So if you elect not to subscribe, then you wouldn't get the benefit of the electricity.

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Q. So what you're saying is, there is no benefit to any of the property adjacent to this area? If they are not subscribing to whatever this -- Pivot Energy, there's no benefit?
A. Only if you elect to be a subscriber. I think that the most localized residents would see an increase in property taxes, which helps different tax levies in your district, like school districts, your firehouse, road commissions. So that is where most localized folks would benefit.
Q. So no electricity savings unless you're in a subscription, but increased --
A. You have to be a subscriber.
Q. -- property taxes and potential property devaluation?
A. The trends have shown that there is no decrease in property values, but you have to --
Q. That's actually not what you have put on the thing.
A. In order to benefit from the community solar garden, you would have to choose. We don't force people to be a subscriber to the garden.
Q. Right.

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A. So you would have to elect to be a subscriber.
Q. I just want to go back to the materials that he provided for us to read. One of the studies did show an incremental decrease in valuation of the property because of the solar farms.

So you saying that there's no value decrease is incorrect, and I want that to be stated, because there is, due to your research in one of these studies, a decrease in value in some of these properties that you put forth in this study.

MR. WELBERS: If you're not totally familiar, you don't have to answer.

A. Yeah, and just to clarify questions about property taxes. It's not an increase in property taxes for you, as a Bureau County resident. We are the ones that bear an increase in property taxes. The landowner does not pay an increase in property taxes. We take on any additional assessed value for property taxes because of the use that we're proposing on this site.

So it's not an increase in property taxes for local residences. It's an increase in

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property tax revenue to the county.

MR. WELBERS: Any other questions for these witnesses?

(No verbal response.)

MR. WELBERS: Board?

(No verbal response.)

MR. WELBERS: Okay. You have completed what you need to do. Now you can relax a little bit.

Now the next part is for the Interested Parties to come up and testify what they want to, and we still have a little time but we are going to run out.

MS. DONARSKI: Right, and we'll continue.

MR. WELBERS: We still have the other case.

MS. DONARSKI: They are going to have to come back, because we are not going to get it started.

MR. WELBERS: All right. Okay. For those who would like to testify in this application, this application, Bureau Solar 1 (sic), now is your time to do that. You'll come up, be sworn in, be subject to questions by others as well.

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Who would like to go first?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Can I ask a question real quick, just about how everything works?

MR. WELBERS: Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: So if we are not going to go through the Cherry one tonight and it goes to next time again, is -- why do we always get put at the end of the agenda? If we're continuing every time, we get put at the end and then we get bumped and then we get bumped.

I have been to probably eight of these meetings now. I mean, I love seeing you guys, but at some point we'd like to be done. I just heard her mention that we will probably be continued, so I'm just wondering if we can be first at the next meeting.

MS. DONARSKI: I gave the Cherry the -- we have three ultimate dates, not until next month. Two of them are next week and the one is the following week. And they opted to come tonight rather than just to ask to come next week. So that was their choice.

So as we continue, there will be no other ones added. We have three more dates to finish

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these two up.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Okay. So we'll get through it.

MR. WELBERS: Okay. Would you like to testify?

MR. SCHAFER: No.

MR. WELBERS: Questions?

MR. SCHAFER: Comment.

MS. DONARSKI: He's got to --

MR. SCHAFER: Then that's all right.

MR. WELBERS: We don't bite. Just follow the procedure and make your comment. This is a public meeting. This is your chance to put it in here, whatever you would like the County Board to consider.

MR. SCHAFER: Can I make a comment from here?

MS. DONARSKI: Well. . .

CRANE SCHAFER,

being first duly sworn, testified as follows:

MS. NEMETH: Please state your name and address for the record.

MR. SCHAFER: Crane Schafer, 609 East Peru, here in Princeton.

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MR. WELBERS: Your comment, Mr. Schafer?

MR. SCHAFER: I'm wore out.

I'm the guy that's going to be planting the seeds, making certain that -- I mentioned this last meeting, making certain that everything is going properly.

I have a neighbor directly to the south of me that is really a super successful farmer. He's got a million dollar, at least, grain setup right across -- handshake across the fence row from me. I understand everybody's got concerns. This guy has not once called me up. I have lived out there all my life. He knows me. Or said, Crane, what are you thinking of? Or, You're going to destroy my grain setup. Not once has he said anything like that.

The other comment I want to make is, I just came back from visiting my grand- -- this doesn't have anything to do with any of you guys, but I'm going to tell you.

I just came back from visiting my six grandchildren. I got one on the way. The biggest -- I can't -- I can't think of a better way to leave the Schafer name on this property

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than to have this kind of operation after I'm gone, because it's a contract, to continue on.

And the other thing I was going to say, in fact, about that, I have already talked to the individual -- I'm going to be 71 here pretty quick. And I have already talked to the individual who I want to take -- who I am confident can take care of this property and maintain this for my grandchildren. I'm just not going to walk -- well, walk away is kind of strong.

When I'm gone, I want it to continue on as when I had it.

And I better quit with that.

MR. WELBERS: Is that all you would like to say?

MR. SCHAFER: That's not all I would like to say.

MR. WELBERS: Is that all you are going to say? It's your chance. And, unfortunately, you also can -- there will be some questions that they'll ask of you. So if you would like to just let that happen, we'll do that.

MR. SCHAFER: Well, I have received one

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objection in the community. One. And this particular individual is right across the road and has solar panels on their machine shed. Solar. And then there's this large sign right across the road, the ditch, from me, from my 40, advertising solar.

I'm not sure why that is creating, "I don't want you to do this." That's -- I don't know if you understand what I'm saying, but that's where I'm coming from.

If you have got a question, ask me. Ask away.

MR. WELBERS: Okay. One at a time. Any questions for Mr. Schafer?

Go ahead.

MR. DICKINSON: Brian Dickinson.

EXAMINATION

BY MR. DICKINSON:

Q. I heard what you said about the future. What is that to not inspire all the farmers to do what you're doing and it's now solar panel city and no more corn or vegetation in the next 50 years?

A. I'll answer that.

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Q. Okay.
A. Because I used to farm. I used to raise cattle. I was trying to raise cattle, farm, and I sold insurance for Country Financial for 45 years. I just retired last April. I can't -- I couldn't do it all, and I couldn't start farming right now. Farming has passed me by. I can plant hay seed. I can rent a corn planter to do that outside row. And it was my idea to keep this as farm related as I possibly could without farming 3,000 other acres.

So yeah, you know, other people can do it too. It's just the way I -- my life went on, you know, what I was trying to do anyway.

MR. WELBERS: Other questions of Mr. Schafer?

MS. SUTTON: Colette Sutton.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. SUTTON:
Q. I'm just wondering if your contract with the company will allow you to plant something other than hay or vegetation-type product? Will you be able to grow short-stature corn, for example, between your rows at some point?

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MS. REDDINGTON: Are we allowed to answer that?

MR. WELBERS: Go ahead.

MR. SCHAFER: I'll get out of the way here.

MS. REDDINGTON: The only limitation that we would see in a choice of seed mix would be to ensure that nothing would shade the panels. So as long as this species that you're talking about wouldn't shade our panels, we would definitely explore that option.

And then the only other limitation that we have would be anything from the County Ordinance. So if they have further height restrictions or anything like that, it would be imperative to follow the law.

MS. SUTTON: So hypothetically he could grow beans, soybeans?

MS. REDDINGTON: Yeah.

MS. SUTTON: Wheat?

MS. REDDINGTON: Yeah, because that is definitely shorter than -- nothing tall, like really, really high, tall corn.

MS. SUTTON: And that revenue would

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interplay to him?

MS. REDDINGTON: Yes. It's his land.

MS. SUTTON: Thank you.

MR. WELBERS: Technically it's Mr. Schafer on the plate here. Are there any other questions for him?

Technically the answer was that he wouldn't know, but anyway.

MR. SCHAFER: Yeah, sorry. I apologize.

MR. WELBERS: It's all right.

MR. SCHAFER: I wasn't going to talk this long.

MR. WELBERS: That's okay.

Any other questions? If not, we'll let him sit down and see who else would like to testify.

(No verbal response.)

MR. WELBERS: Thank you, Mr. Schafer.

MR. SCHAFER: Thank you.

MR. WELBERS: Do you have a question? You want to be the next to testify? Come on up.

AUBREY GIBALDI,

being first duly sworn, testified as follows:

MS. NEMETH: Please state your name and

address for the record.

MS. GIBALDI: Aubrey Gibaldi. We live at 22043 - 1950 E Street. So we're about, I would say, probably maybe 500 or 600 feet just west of where this proposed solar farm would be going.

We actually didn't know about this. We just moved in, in August of last year. So when you guys came in March, we didn't know that because we bought the house in August.

So going back to what this gentleman said about how it affects property and how it affects buyer interest, if me and my husband would have known that this was going here, we wouldn't have bought this house. And we are one of -- I don't know how many people, but I don't think there's been many people moving to Princeton, Illinois.

We moved from Orlando, Florida. The reason why we chose Princeton was because it's a really cute, quaint town, and we wanted somewhere to, like, raise a family with.

When we bought our beautiful 1850s farmhouse, we had a vision for that, and one of the things that we liked going to our farmhouse was the drive and we get to go underneath the

red bridge and go to our house every day, and then some idiot -- sorry -- hit the bridge and now we don't get that drive. So now we take this path, this road, every single day multiple times a day where this solar farm is going up. That's not something that we want to look at. We can see this from our house. I can see it from our porch. We literally look at this every day. When I go water my begonias, I will see this.

I don't want to see this. I don't want to live someplace that has a solar farm right there. It's not because I don't understand or don't agree with the benefit of having this kind of green energy, because I understand it. But I do think there are better areas for this energy to be applied to, places that don't necessarily jut up against multiple residences.

I think that the data, you know, you can skew data any way you want to get -- you know, when you sample size something, you can pretty much tell whatever story you want to with data. It's qualitative rationalization or something. I don't remember the right word.

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But where we are at in this area, we wouldn't have moved here. And I don't really want it. I'm not -- I would not be happy about living somewhere right next to this.

MR. WELBERS: Would you mind telling me your address one more time?

MS. GIBALDI: Yeah. 22043 - 1950 E Street. It's the Matson house, with the little monument. Right there.

MR. WELBERS: I'm just trying to get an idea of where it is in relation.

MS. GIBALDI: It's the next road, literally.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: 2200 and 1950, at the corner.

MS. READ: 1950?

MS. GIBALDI: That's the one street and then it's 2200. So that block right past that station. We're right here.

MS. READ: Up there, okay. So you're definitely -- I think you might be further than 500 feet, because the nearest residence is at least 600.

MS. GIBALDI: It's still in my eyesight.

I can still see it. I see Dan Schafer's cows and I can see the property right next to his, which is that solar farm.

MR. WELBERS: Okay. I understand where you are.

Okay. Anything else you would like to say?

MS. GIBALDI: No, that's it.

MR. WELBERS: Questions?

MS. DONARSKI: No questions.

MR. WELBERS: Connie.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. STETSON:

Q. So the realtor didn't know at the time that this was going on when you bought that house?

A. No.

Q. This is -- I'm just saying, this has happened a lot. I know two people, myself, other than you that different things -- I do know that, and it is wrong.

A. The Ollie's went up since we have been here, which is fine. Great. That's closer to town.

But one of the things we bought our house for is -- because I don't know if there's going

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to be any, like, sort of like, big lighting, lighting this thing up or anything like that -- but, I mean, like, we bought it for the dark sky. I mean, like, and we purposefully bought away from the town so that way we didn't have to be near anything industrial. We bought it for the views and the silence. We bought it for the quiet road that not many people drive on, because we want, you know, a family, and I don't want my kids running around with a busy road, with maintenance vehicles or anything, whether they come from that area or not. I don't want my kids wanting to go look at the solar panels. I just don't want to raise a family near that.

MR. WELBERS: Any other questions of this witness?

MR. DAVIS: This is more so a comment to answer the lady's question.

Sorry. Oliver Davis.

We specifically asked our realtor before purchasing the home if anything was going to be built up in that surrounding area, and he said no. Because otherwise we wouldn't have purchased the home, like she said.

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MR. WELBERS: So you're basically expanding on your wife's testimony. That wasn't a question, but that was an expansion of her testimony.

MS. STETSON: Connie Stetson.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. STETSON:

Q. You said that you -- they had a meeting in March and you bought the house in August. So there was a meeting. To me, the realtor probably -- somebody in that area had to have known that that was happening. Somebody had to have known.

MR. WELBERS: Is that a question?

Q. (By Ms. Stetson:) Nobody told you?

A. Nobody told us anything.

Q. So the meeting was held in March and you bought the house in August?

A. And the first we heard of this was last week.

MR. WELBERS: Does our Board have any questions?

(No verbal response.)

MR. WELBERS: You have a question?

MS. REDDINGTON: I just had an answer,

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because she had questions about lighting and noise.

MR. WELBERS: Go ahead.

MS. DONARSKI: Well. . .

MR. WELBERS: Lay it in.

MS. REDDINGTON: Well, are we --

MR. WELBERS: You can talk about -- she brought up lighting and noise. Go ahead and talk about lighting and noise.

ELIZABETH REDDINGTON,

having been previously duly sworn, testified as follows:

MS. REDDINGTON: So there's no proposed lighting. We do not need lighting. So there won't be lighting.

And noise cannot be heard from outside of the property fence. All of our equipment is located centrally in the array, and so there is no decibel increase outside of the array. So nothing can be heard outside of the fence line.

MR. WELBERS: Okay. Thank you.

Would someone else like to testify in this case?

(No verbal response.)

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MR. WELBERS: Really?

Do you?

MS. STETSON: No. I have a question for her. She just mentioned noise. We had someone from the other -- GreenKey mention something about the noise. I just have a couple questions for her.

MR. WELBERS: Come on back up.

MS. REDDINGTON: Okay.

EXAMINATION

BY MS. STETSON:

Q. So is it with the string inverters, is that what you have on that?

A. Yes, we are proposing string inverters.

Q. Okay. So it says it's 60 decibels?

A. Yes.

Q. Is that correct? That means it has to be -- it's 40 foot from Class A and 80 foot Class A -- 80 foot at night.

So is it 80 feet from all the houses that you are --

A. We are more than 80 feet from houses.

Q. What did you just say to the lady that was just up there? That there was no noise outside the

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fence?
A. Uh-huh.
Q. Which is 50 feet?
A. I guess if you were -- I'll try to answer it this way: if you were to stand at our fence, you would not hear anything from the inverters, the string inverters.
Q. Okay. Because with the engineer that did the noise last meeting, it was 80 feet at least.
A. So if you think of a normal conversation that we're having right now, if the microphone would be off, our inverters are quieter than a normal human conversation.

MR. WELBERS: Are you done with questions?

MS. STETSON: Uh-huh.

MR. WELBERS: Is everyone done with questions? We can close this case out tonight.

Is there something we needed to read into the record or anything?

MS. DONARSKI: I have all of the conditions. I need to read that aloud into the record.

MR. WELBERS: Let's do that right now. We have got time. We can close this one out and

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then we can go to the next one when we schedule the next date.

MS. DONARSKI: These are the standard conditions for Bureau Solar 2 that were placed by the Planning Commission. I'll read them out loud.

Number 1, The Conditional Uses, including the placement of all components of the proposed Bureau Solar 2, LLC, (BS2) electric generating facility approved by Bureau County, shall be constructed as set forth in the applications filed with Bureau County on March 11, 2024, and shall comply with all requirements of the Bureau County Zoning Ordinance.

2, All conservation practices, (such as grassed waterways, filter strips, terraces, grasslands) which are damaged by construction of the proposed solar power facility, including but not limited to access road construction, underground transmission cable installation, and heavy equipment shall be restored by the owner of the solar power facility to their pre-construction condition using original design specifications and vegetative cover. Care

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should be taken to try to maintain the integrity of these practices for erosion control, flood control, and water quality.

3, The owner of the solar power facility shall implement erosion control standards for all excavation activities to maintain water quality and minimize erosion impacts.

4, The owner of the solar power facility shall enter into a Road Use Agreement with the governing road authority, unless the road authority provides a written waiver of this requirement.

5, The owner of the solar power facility shall enter into a decommissioning plan with the County to ensure that the facility is properly decommissioned upon end of project life or facility abandonment.

6, The solar power facility shall be in compliance with all applicable County, state, and federal regulatory standards (including applicable building codes and electrical codes), FAA requirements, EPA regulations (hazardous waste, construction, stormwater, et cetera).

7, The location of all proposed access

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points shall be identified and approved by the governing road authority prior to the granting of a building permit to accommodate road and/or drainage improvements within the existing and/or future right-of-way.

8, The Petitioner, Owner and/or Operator of the solar power facility shall construct said solar power facility in substantial accordance with submitted Conditional Use Permit applications and all accompanying documents.

Nothing contained herein shall be deemed to preclude the agricultural use of the balance of the subject property not occupied by the solar power facility. Said agricultural use will be considered as being the principal use of the subject property notwithstanding adoption of a Conditional Use Ordinance and the construction and operation of a solar power facility on a given lot or parcel of land, at locations approved by the County Board pursuant to Conditional Use approval on a Site Plan Map.

9, Solid Waste. All solid waste, whether generated from supplies, equipment, parts, packaging, or operation or maintenance of the

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facility, including old parts and equipment, shall be removed from the site immediately and disposed of in accordance with all federal, state and local laws.

10, The owner of the solar power facility shall submit to the Bureau County Zoning Enforcement Officer, the jurisdictional fire district and the jurisdictional ambulance service, a copy of the solar power facility's site plan, Standard Operating Procedures and Standard Operating Guidelines for the solar power facility so that the local fire protection district and rescue units that have jurisdiction over the site may evaluate and coordinate their emergency response plans with the owner and/or operator of the solar power facility. In addition, the owner of the solar power facility shall provide training for, and the necessary equipment to, local emergency response authorities and their personnel so that they can properly respond to a potential emergency at the solar project. Nothing in this section shall alleviate the need to comply with all other applicable fire, life safety and/or emergency

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response laws and regulations.

11, Additional Terms and Conditions.

A, Technical submissions as defined in the Professional Engineering Practice Act of 1989 and contained in the application filed for Conditional Use shall bear the seal of an Illinois professional engineer for the relevant discipline.

B, The Conditional Use Permit granted to the Applicant shall bind and inure to the benefit of the Applicant, its successors and assigns. If any provision of this Ordinance is held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect any other provision of this Ordinance that can be given effect without the invalid provision and, to this end, the provisions in this Ordinance are severable.

C, A violation of the terms and conditions herein shall constitute a violation of the Conditional Use granted herein and shall be grounds for revocation of the Conditional Use by the Zoning Enforcement Officer.

D, The owner of the solar power facility shall supply written proof of an approved

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entrance, from the appropriate governing road authority to the Zoning Enforcement Officer prior to the issuance of any building permits for the proposed solar power facility.

E, The owner of the solar power facility shall, at the owner's expense and in coordination with the County, develop a system for logging and investigating complaints related to the solar power facility. The owner of the solar power facility shall resolve such complaints on a case-by-case basis and shall provide written confirmation to the Bureau County Zoning Office.

12, Floodplain Ordinance Compliance. All parts of the solar power facility shall be in compliance with all requirements of the Bureau County Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance (Floodplain Ordinance).

13, All components of the proposed solar facility, including the perimeter fencing, shall meet the setback requirements as stated in Article 3.41-4 v.3 of the Bureau County Zoning Ordinance.

Number 14, After the solar power facility

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is completed and operational, the owner of the solar power facility shall, at their expense, hire a third party, qualified professional, to complete a sound pressure analysis of the existing conditions to demonstrate compliance with Illinois Pollution Control Board Regulations. This analysis will be completed and returned to the Zoning Enforcement Officer within 60 days. All analyses and studies are subject to approval of the Zoning Enforcing Officer and are a matter of public record.

MR. WELBERS: So those are the stipulations.

MS. DONARSKI: Correct.

MR. WELBERS: Now, the member who was -- inspected this was Troy Quest, who is not with us tonight. Traditionally the inspecting member is the one that would be the first option to introduce a motion. There's a very serious illness for one of his children.

So Jim stood in for us, but -- and I know you got brought up to speed, but you may not necessarily be prepared to make a motion.

Does any member care to make a motion

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regarding this?

Keep in mind, this is a Conditional Use, and this is a public hearing to gather information and everyone's feelings on it, which has been done, Callie's recorded, for the benefit of the County Board, who ultimately decides the future of this.

But we either -- here on our Board, either recommend it or non-recommend it or something to close the case out and send this information to the County Board.

Any member care to make a motion?

(No verbal response.)

MR. WELBERS: I will stand in for Troy. Because I did go up and take a look at the project and -- the area of the project on my own. I wasn't asked to.

And I would move to recommend this to the County Board to let them build and operate this 5-megawatt AC commercial solar energy facility for the purpose of generating electric power on a 29.3-acre portion of the adjacent property. And with the stipulations that have just been read into the record.

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So that's a motion. Is there a second?
MR. STUTZKE: Second.
MR. WELBERS: Michael is the second.
Go ahead and call the roll.
MS. NEMETH: Mr. Jensen?
MR. JENSEN: Yes.
MS. NEMETH: Mr. Stutzke?
MR. STUTZKE: Yes.
MS. NEMETH: Mrs. Smith?
MS. SMITH: Yes.
MS. NEMETH: Mr. Forristall?
MR. FORRISTALL: Yes.
MS. NEMETH: Mr. Welbers?
MR. WELBERS: Yes.
(By voice vote five ayes.)
MR. WELBERS: So this goes to the County Board recommended. Again, it's ultimately their decision, not ours. And that will take place -- we just did earlier -- the 11th of June, right here, at 6:30 p.m. is when their meeting starts.
So with that said, I need to introduce a motion to table Cherry Solar 1. Until when?
MS. DONARSKI: I just want to double-check with them.

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Thursday, May 23rd?

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Yes.

MS. DONARSKI: Okay. Thursday, May 23rd, at 6:00 p.m.

MR. WELBERS: 6:00 p.m.

MS. DONARSKI: 6:00 p.m.

MR. WELBERS: I introduced a motion to table Cherry Solar 1 until Thursday, May 23rd, at 6:00 p.m., right here in this room at the Bureau County Courthouse.

Is there a second to that motion?

MS. SMITH: I'll second that motion.

MR. WELBERS: Shirley Ann Smith is the second.

All in favor.

(All those simultaneously responded.)

MR. WELBERS: Any opposed.

(No verbal response.)

MR. WELBERS: Is there a motion to adjourn?

MR. STUTZKE: So moved.

MR. WELBERS: Michael Stutzke is the second.

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All in favor of that.

(All those simultaneously responded.)

(The hearing was concluded at 9:51 p.m.)

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Now on this 16th day of May, A.D., 2024, I do signify that the foregoing testimony was given before the Bureau County Zoning Board of Appeals.

Barry Welbers, Chairman

Kristine Donarski,
Zoning Enforcement Officer

Callie S. Bodmer
Certified Shorthand Reporter
Registered Professional Reporter
IL License No. 084-004489
P.O. Box 381
Dixon, Illinois 61021

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