Planning

From: [redacted] <[redacted]>
Sent: Tuesday, October 10, 2023 6:41 PM
To: Robert Crawford <rcrawford@fortgratiot.us>
Subject: New Message (sent by contact form at Fort Gratiot)

First Name: Katherine
Last Name: Czubak
E-Mail: [redacted]
Subject: Unequivocally Against Industrial Solar Farm

Message: Although I cannot attend the Zoning Commission meeting tonight, I want it on record that I against the proposed Solar Farm.
I am a home owner at [redacted]. I would have appreciated some sort of communication that a project this massive was even being considered, especially one that will impact my property value.

First Name

Ken

Last Name

Kobberstad

Email

[redacted]

City

Burtchville

Message

Dear Township Officials, I'm writing in support of the Portside Solar Project. This project will boost local tax revenue while creating hundreds of local in demand construction jobs and providing income for local farmers and community members. Additionally, the Portside Solar project will promote cleaner air and water for future generations.

Planning

From: Edmund Waddell <[redacted]>
Sent: Monday, October 16, 2023 10:47 AM
To: Planning
Subject: RE: Proposed Solar Farm

Fort Gratiot, Michigan
October 16, 2023

Dear Fort Gratiot County Planning Commission and Township Board:

I wish to state my rationale and strong support and for the solar farm proposed by Portside Solar, LLC, and for Township approval of the Special Land Use and Site Plan.

Compatibility with Zoning: The proposed land use will collect sunlight and convert it to energy for use by local residents and others. That is precisely what any agricultural use does, so the proposed use is very compatible with existing agricultural zoning.

Benefits: The ongoing national expansion of electric vehicles will require additional electrical system capacity here and across the US, so the proposal serves a crucial emerging community need. The facility would also generate valuable local employment in that emerging technology. Everyone uses electricity.

Impacts: The proposed use would not create noxious emissions, odors, or noise. There is no significant increase in impervious surface and the land is still vegetated, so there would be no increase in stormwater runoff. The proposed use does not produce animal waste or apply chemical fertilizers or pesticides, so there is no potential impact on Lake Huron water quality – even less than other agricultural uses. Impacts are therefore negligible.

Traffic: Crucially, unlike any higher intensity land uses, *a solar facility generates no traffic*. In comparison, an alternative of new housing construction would generate about 10 new daily vehicle trips per dwelling unit, adding to the existing traffic loads on M-25, State Road, Metcalf, and other local roads. Neighborhood residential development of the same size would generate tens of thousands of vehicle trips per day. As long as the solar farm is in operation, no other development could occur on the parcels, and this would help constrain traffic growth in our area.

Mitigation: While almost everyone would like the world to stay the same, that is just not realistic. The only legitimate objection I have heard from other Township residents is that they do not want to look at the solar facility. That concern would be easily mitigated by planting a buffer strip (evergreen and deciduous trees) between the facility and adjacent homes. The solar farm would then look like any typical Michigan woodland.

Thank you for considering my comments and for your service to our community. I urge the Township to approve the proposed solar farm.

Sincerely,

Edmund Waddell
[redacted]
Fort Gratiot, MI, 48059
[redacted]

October 16, 2023

Dear Township Officials:

Representing the economic development organization serving Shiawassee County, I am writing this letter to discuss the economic impact that the 239 MW Assembly Solar project (the largest in the State of Michigan) has had on our county to date. I support the local economic gain resulting from the Portside Solar project and urge you to vote to approve it.

The benefits from the $250 million project were and continue to be significant, including:

- Annual land lease payments that provide money that is spent in the community and also creates an income stream to strengthen farmers
- 400 workers were hired (mostly from the local area) as well as a few long-term employees to maintain the site
- Construction skills developed for many individuals that help them be more employable for future job opportunities
- Local business vendors were utilized (e.g. subcontracting work on-site, restaurants, hotels)
- Long-term property tax revenue for local governments and schools – Shiawassee County alone is collecting $800k annually

I would also like to note the positive experience we had in working with the Ranger Power team. They demonstrated a strong commitment to engagement with local stakeholders and a desire to be a good neighbor and community partner, and I am grateful for that.

If you have any questions on this information, please feel free to contact me at [redacted] or [redacted]

Sincerely,

Justin Horvath

Justin Horvath
President/CEO
Shiawassee Economic Development Partnership

Web Contact to Jorja Baldwin

[redacted]

Wed 10/18/2023 11:02 PM

To:Baldwin, Jorja <[redacted]>;

Recipient:[redacted]

Sender: [redacted]

Message: Please see the letter below regarding the proposed installation of solar panels in Fort Gratiot Township. Aubree Mayhew [redacted] Fort Gratiot, MI 48059 [redacted] October 18, 2023 St. Clair County Board of Commissioners 200 Grand River Ave., Suite 206 Port Huron, MI 48060 Subject: Support for Proposed Solar Panel Installation in Fort Gratiot Township Dear St. Clair County Board of Commissioners: I strongly support the proposed 900-acre solar panel installation in Fort Gratiot Township under Portside Solar, LLC. This project, initiated by Ranger Power, has the potential to bring numerous benefits to our community and the environment. First and foremost, installing solar panels will contribute to producing renewable energy. As we face the challenges of climate change and the need to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, projects like this are crucial in transitioning to a more sustainable future. Additionally, the proposed solar panel installation will create job opportunities for residents during the construction phase and potentially, in the long term, for maintenance and operation. This can have a positive impact on our local economy and provide a boost to the community. I know that the Fort Gratiot Township Planning Commission is currently reviewing this project's site plans and land use permission. I urge the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners to support the township in its decision-making process and consider the long-term benefits this solar panel installation can bring our county. Furthermore, I would like to bring to your attention the recent resolution adopted by the St. Clair County Board of Commissioners opposing any legislation preempting local control for solar and wind developments. I commend the board for taking this stance and encourage you to continue supporting local control over such projects. In conclusion, the proposed solar panel installation in Fort Gratiot Township is a significant step towards a more sustainable future for our community. Please consider my support for this project and consider it in your decision-making process. Thank you for your attention to this matter. Sincerely, Aubree Mayhew

Web Contact to Jorja Baldwin

[redacted]

Thu 10/19/2023 8:48 AM

To:Baldwin, Jorja <[redacted]>;

Recipient [redacted]

Sender: [redacted]

Message: Good morning Commissioner Baldwin, I would like to submit a letter in support of efforts to build solar farms in St. Clair County. As we transition from fossil fuels to cleaner sources of energy, a number of influence groups and PACs under the guise of protecting the enviroment have lobbied politicians and local governments to block solar farms. I have included a number of recent articles and pieces about these groups and thier influence in counties and on the media. Their tactic is to use "astroturfing" to oppose solar farms. "Astroturfing" is pretending to advocate for sound environmental policy when the real goal is to undermine it. This pretense is used also in advertising when corporations pretend to be environmentally friendly while at the same time disregarding our environment. The fossil fuel industry uses this strategy as well. As with any industry in our county, I agree that we should make the same demands of solar farms that we do industry and residential development, both of which are expesnive and displace more wildlife than solar farms do. It is interesting that these opponents are against private property rights, which they strenuously try to protect in other contexts. What it boils down to is that these organizations are manipulating folks into worries about their neighbors. The Not in My Backyard strain of Republicans are at it again. NIMBYs or rather Not in my neighbor's backyard are insisting that their neighbors not be allowed to lease their land for solar farms. It goes against their very own ideas about private property, which makes their position ironic since they are all too willing to zone farmland and timberland for subdivisions--which have a far greater impact--as well as industry. The NIMBYs are being influenced by dark money organziations who have flooded right wing echo chambers with claims of protecting the rural nature of our countryside. These organizations are led by former insiders in the GOP with connections to fossil fuels. They use environmental protection claims cynically to advance their own ends, which is to undermine renewable power under the guise of protecting the environment. Classic astroturfing. Simply, these organizations are doing the fossil fuel corporations' bidding and are likely funded by them. Here are a couple of articles about their efforts: https://www.npr.org/2023/02/18/1154867064/solar-power-misinformation-activists-rural-america?utm_medium=email https://gizmodo.com/citizens-for-responsible-solar-susan-ralston-npr-1850141936 https://www.eenews.net/articles/meet-the-nimby-people-trying-to-kill-solar/ https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/18/nyregion/solar-energy-farms-ny.html As you can see in the Open Secrets monitoring of PAC's, this group overwhelmingly supports Republicans: https://www.opensecrets.org/political-action-committees-pacs/citizens-for-responsible-energy-solutions/C00625145/summary/2020 Here are some points that are factual: Solar power does not cause immediate health risks to neighbors or wildlife. Solar power panels do not leach dangerous elements into the environment. Solar power panels if disposed of properly do not create a biohazard. Solar will help us transition to cleaner sources of energy. Solar power can be used to support the energy grid. Solar power is efficient and will generate cheap electricity for neighbors. Moreover, the anti-solar group is anti-private property rights. The anti-solar group is astroturfing: they pretend to support green policies but are secretly manipulating rural areas to support fossil fuel industry. Suburban development and its costs for utilities, services, and roads causes more harm to the rural areas of the county than solar power. Please move to support solar farms in our county. Thank your for considering my letter and taking a longer look at the forces opposed to solar farms. Sincerely, Jim Frank Burtchville, MI

solar energy

Virginia C <[redacted]>

Thu 10/19/2023 12:10 PM

To:Baldwin, Jorja [redacted] >;

EMAIL ORIGIN EXTERNAL: Use proper judgment and caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

I am writing to support the two local solar energy projects which meet all local and state standards, as well as meet standards to provide for the disposal of the project if at some point in the future they need to be dismantled.

Virginia Coury
[redacted] Fort Gratiot Twp, MI 48059

Solar Energy in St. Clair County

Tiffany Francis <[redacted]>

Thu 10/19/2023 12:39 PM

To:Simasko, Steve <[redacted]>; Rushing, David <[redacted]>;

Cc:Bohm, Jeff [redacted]>; Baldwin, Jorja <[redacted]>; Beedon, Lisa <[redacted]>; Vandenbossche, Dave <[redacted]>; Torello, Joi <[redacted]>;

EMAIL ORIGIN EXTERNAL: Use proper judgment and caution when opening attachments, clicking links, or responding to this email.

Mr. Rushing and Mr. Simasko,
I want to write in support of our local farmers and their interest in leasing their land to solar energy companies. It is their land and their business model Having cleaner energy in St Clair County is not a detriment to society our lives or our ability to have food on our tables. As well, basic science will show, it will work in our climate, regardless of our sunny days (if that is an argument you ever try to use, it is false). As commissioners who claim to want local governments to govern locally; it certainly seems as though that is only when it pleases you and your personal goals/interests.

Leave this to the land owners, townships of Clyde and Fort Gratiot, and their residents.

~Tiffany Francis, District 2 Resident

First Name	Last Name	Email	City	Address
Michael	Buza	[redacted]	Swartz Creek	[redacted]

Message

Dear Township Officials, I'm writing in support of the Portside Solar Project. This project will boost local tax revenue while creating hundreds of local in demand construction jobs and providing income for local farmers and community members. Additionally, the Portside Solar project will promote cleaner air and water for future generations.

I have written addition comments.

To whom it may concern,

This is Mike Buza from the Sierra Club. I am the chair of the Legislative Committee of the Michigan Chapter of the Sierra Club. The Sierra Club is the largest environmental organization in the United States. We are very active in any area that might be harmful to the environment or the health of people or animals.

I have been to over 100 township meetings in thew State to discuss the benefits of solar and wind farms. I hear all kinds of misinformation. I hear such things as they poison the ground water, hurt the local wildlife population and emit electro-magnetic waves. If any of these issues were true the Sierra Club would be fighting against the siting of solar and wind farms. The reason we do not try to keep solar from being developed because it is superior on all health and safety metrics vs fossil fuel and nuclear.

Some of the other areas that solar if better than fossil fuel is that it is cheaper. It also brings general income into the community in which it is sited as well as tax revenue. Communities would benefit from the tax revenue that solar provides.

The misinformation spread about solar violates many of the principles of a community. The way solar is kept out of a community is excessive regulation. This excessive regulation keeps farmers/landowners from doing with their land as they see fit. Far less use of poisonous herbicides and pesticides are used when solar is on the land instead crops. The irony is landowners are kept from putting solar on their land because of false claims they poison the land. It is also an irony when landowners want to use their land to benefit the community, they are kept form doing so by excessive regulations. This violation of land rights has no excuse.

How does this happen? If the electrification of our society comes to past it will put the fossil fuel industry out of business. This trillion-dollar industry puts much disinformation on the internet with their deep pockets. People do "research" on the internet with good intentions and run into these lies masquerading as the truth. It is understandable that people are angry when they are fed this disinformation. It is hoped that you see through this disinformation campaign and do what is right for your community.

If you have any questions on this matter, please feel free to contact me at [redacted]

First Name

Nancy

Last Name

Grant

Email

[redacted]

City

Port Huron

Message

Dear Township Officials, I'm writing in support of the Portside Solar Project. This project will boost local tax revenue while creating hundreds of local in demand construction jobs and providing income for local farmers and community members. Additionally, the Portside Solar project will promote cleaner air and water for future generations.

I support bringing this project to our community especially because of the benefit it will cause for our farmers who are a part of this project. I also personally support green energy.

Sincerely,
Nancy Streeter Grant.

First Name

Patricia

Last Name

Miller

Email

[redacted]

City

Burtchville

Message

Dear Township Officials, I'm writing in support of the Portside Solar Project. This project will boost local tax revenue. People have the right to do what they want with their land. Farmers and landowners will benefit from the income. Additionally, the Portside Solar project will promote cleaner air and water for future generations.

Planning

From: Jodi <[redacted]>
Sent: Friday, October 20, 2023 1:52 PM
To: Planning
Subject: Solar Farms

Sent from my iPhone
Jodi L Moss

We are Not against the solar farms. We will not be at the meeting as we will be gone to FL. Please consider our choice.
Thank you,
Gary and Jodi Moss

Planning

From: Wills Garage <[redacted]>
Sent: Friday, October 20, 2023 11:18 PM
To: Planning
Subject: Solar stuff

The lady going around with the no solar petition has decided to use my driveway to meetup with random people twice now, it looks like drug deals taking place in my driveway to be honest and I have kids this is unacceptable. I did sign her petition when she came over but she woke me up and I do not wish for my name to be counted on that document. I would support a solar project and think people should have freedom to do what they want with their land within reason. I do say maybe requireing recycling for such a large scale opperation and possibly even fencing in some areas so people dont have to look at it. But it can potentially save lives.. dte sucks...

Thank you,
William Beal
[redacted]

Planning

From: Robert Hunckler <[redacted]>
Sent: Sunday, October 29, 2023 3:53 PM
To: Planning; Robert Buechler
Subject: Say Yes to Michigan Solar

Hello,

My name is Bob Hunckler and I am a geography professor at SC4 (full-time since the fall of 2000) and my students do research on energy resources each semester. Here are some of the basics:

A. ~20% of electricity in the U.S. is produced using coal.

B. ~40% of electricity in the U.S. is produced using natural gas.

C. China consumes 4 times more coal than any other country and they constitute more than 50% of the world's consumption of coal each year.

D. It is estimated that China only has about 30-35 years of coal left in the ground.

E. As China runs out of coal, the price of coal will skyrocket no matter how much coal exists in the U.S. DTE knows this and that's partially why they (and other power companies) are switching to natural gas and other sources.

Now let's look at natural gas:

F. It's true that the burning of natural gas releases less carbon into the atmosphere vs. coal. It is a much cleaner-burning fossil fuel. That's good.

G. The process of hydraulic fracturing (fracking) has allowed companies to extract more natural gas from their wells. Although hydraulic fracturing was first developed in the 1940s, the technique had not been used on a massive scale until 2003-2005 when the EPA said that fracking posed no threat to the groundwater and the process was also exempted from the Clean Water Drinking Act (both highly controversial decisions with science refuting the philosophies behind such changes in the law).

H. Chemicals used in the fracking process include benzene, gelling agents, crosslinkers, friction reducers, corrosion inhibitors, scale inhibitors, biocides and, in some cases, diesel fuel. Not all of these chemicals are extracted once the natural gas is captured. 20 to 40% of the chemicals stay in the ground.

I. In addition, the fracking process consumes massive amounts of water. It's no wonder that Texas, Oklahoma and other states are wanting to tap into our Great Lakes. It's an irresponsible use of water when the world is very thirsty these days. Clean water is becoming critically scarce worldwide--especially in semi-arid areas like Texas and Oklahoma.

J. Natural gas is very cheap to use, but the true cost of using natural gas and using up our clean water in this fashion is being passed on to future generations. Our grandchildren and great-grandchildren will have to live in a world where clean water is even more scarce. Or they will have to

deal with the fact that Texas and Oklahoma have built a pipeline from the Great Lakes and really messed things up for us.

Solar:

K. China has more solar capacity than the United States. This is more than just a "space race" type of competition. Keeping up with China on the energy front is part of our national security and economic security. If supplies of coal or natural gas suddenly run out, we need to be in the same boat as China and other countries (with similar wind and solar capacity-- nuclear too). If we aren't in the same boat, then things start to get crazy and our great-grandchildren will have to deal with that too (World War 3 or 4 or whatever).

So the installation of solar farms might not be the dream that we hoped for our local land. It might not be the best situation for the deer and the wildlife. But imagine a world where the Great Lakes have dropped 40-50 feet because of Texas and Oklahoma and others gobbling up the water due to fracking and imagine a world where our groundwater is contaminated with chemicals left behind by fracking companies. Where will our next glass of water come from? We have 8 billion people in the world and we've never had that before. It's largely due to electricity (refrigeration, medical procedures, medicine production, water filtration, sewage treatment, crop processing, food packaging, computers to run it all) and all of the things that keep us healthy and allow for a such a huge population. We cannot go back to how we lived in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. We didn't have such a large population back then. We have to think about our great-grandchildren and not place the cost of our "cheap energy" on them.

The sun is pounding the earth with energy every day. Michigan is actually a better place for solar panels than Arizona because of our cooler temperatures. The solar panels in Arizona need to include coolant flowing through the back sides because the panels would melt otherwise. Michigan solar panels work great even on cloudy days. The technology of solar panels has really progressed. It works and we have it available to us right here.

I see this decision as something very patriotic and generous to our future generations. The decision is ours to make.

Feel free to browse the energy info at the following URL:

http://www.sc4geography.net/geography/EarthScience/energy.resources.lab.exercise.html

Bob Hunckler (he/him/his)
Geography Professor
St. Clair County Community College
Port Huron, MI 48060

~~~~~~
~~~~~~

From: [redacted] <[redacted]>
Sent: Tuesday, October 31, 2023 2:32 PM
To: Baldwin, Jorja
Subject: Web Contact to Jorja Baldwin

10-30-23 St. Clair County Board of Commissioners I would like to express some of my views on the push for solar power being done in our county, our state, our nation. I would like to propose first that we return to some common sense evaluation of the situation and then have our representatives lead by example to give us some frame of reference before we invest any time, space, energy (no pun intended) to this push. Here is what I mean when I say we must first return to some common sense in the need for alternate power. Let's look at the areas in which a tremendous amount of energy is being wasted. The greatest energy amount of waste I would argue is in corporate world, not among private citizens. When businesses close for the day, people leave without shutting down computers. Many of those monitors are never set to power save mode and screens are bright as can be all night long. Some mid-sized locations could have as many as 50 screens where this is the wasteful practice. In many showrooms (auto dealerships, furniture or appliance stores, etc.) large screen TVs are left on and running, scrolling beautiful displays of products, in some places five or six screens. In many waiting rooms and service customer lounges even more TVs are left on running cooking shows, animal shows, news programs, or bloopers to occupy customers who haven't been there as many as 14 hours since close of business the day prior. This happens 7 days every week, as many as 18 hours each day that no one is there. I can't imagine the amount of hours of waste each and every year. Shouldn't we first put a stop to waste like this before forcing outrageously priced systems on citizens and communities and filling land better suited to serving native plant and animal species already in drastic decline? I'm not guessing or making up this information. To verify, I urge you to contact various cleaning companies within our county to verify this. They can tell you that when they enter facilities they are responsible for cleaning during off hours that this occurs. But there is so much more that could be done to stop waste. There seems to be a push for every township in our area to invest in costly LED brightly glowing signs that are on and scrolling displays of various information 24 hours each and every day. I don't know how other people feel about them, but I consider them to be completely wasteful and an eye sore. Is there a reason they need to be on 24 hours each and every day? Are we certain that at 2:17 AM when someone may be returning home after "last call" at some local bar that a person is in dire need to be reminded of an upcoming zoning committee meeting that has occured on the same day of each month for over 50 years now (as an example)? Same said person doesn't need that sign to inform him/her that it's 2:17 AM or that it's 42° at that time. Our cars, watches, phones all provide that information. We need to understand clearly that part of our waste in terms of money and energy is from a wasteful system of information overload we have created. I will ask again, is the information that those bright township signs blink out 24 hours every single day really necessary? I'm going to say "Absolutely not!" and here's why: the township has already put all the information needed by its citizens on a complete and useful website in which it has invested money for its creation (1), the same information has been printed and then posted in a location on premises clearly visible to citizens even when the building is closed (2), and it has already copied and mailed every resident that same said information (3). That sign then becomes the fourth time that information has been shared. Waste! Waste of time and money! And to anyone living near those bright blinking lights after hours, I bet they wish the signs were turned off. So here is what I propose... Find a way to provide grant money to those townships still insisting on running their LED signs despite their having also a stationary physical sign which more attractively displays their name in non-light traditional form, to put in place a solar panel that supplies energy to run their wasteful LED signage. This works to cut cost to residents, reduces the wasteful demand on power grids, and best of all puts the townships in a position to lead by example before forcing solar systems on citizens who recognize but are unable to stop the waste.. The second step in a process I am suggesting is, if our township officials find solar systems are good enough for their signs, then ask businesses in our communities who insist upon lighting their signs as well, to obtain solar panels (cost to them) to supply

energy to their signs as well. The same reason applies. So often the signs are on for hours upon hours when business is closed and there is no need. I also see that so many of these businesses are located in areas where at cost to citizens their storefronts/businesses are already conveniently and sufficiently lit by street lighting systems put in by municipalities. Some businesses are lit up like carnival midways long after close of business with their added LED displays. Waste! Car companies are realizing now and voicing concerns just this week that people don't want EVs they have invested billions in developing and producing. Citizens see the hypocrisy in charging (so called) "green" cars at charging stations powered by fossil fuel created electricity. I would propose that those charging stations, such as the ones at Thomas Edison Inn, now be supplied with solar panels rather than the old power lines. I'm no rocket scientist, just a simple fifth grade teacher, but I know a simple mechanism could have been added to each EV that would use the rotation of wheel systems to further supply the car with energy while in use. I will never understand why that hasn't been done all the while certain powers that be are trying to force wind turbines on us. Same principle. So if EVs are still going to be pushed, let them use solar panels. If solar is so useful that it's even being considered to be forced on the citizenry, then we first want examples of it in use. We first need to see a need for it. We first need to know that we aren't being asked to supply way more energy than is really needed. Please make some decisions first to reduce waste and then put yourselves in a position to lead by example.

Thank you for your service to this community, Carey Fuller Grant Township Resident