

1 IROQUOIS COUNTY, ILLINOIS
2 ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

3 01/06/2026

4 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

5 ZBA BOARD PRESENT:

6 Steve Anderson

7 Jerry Bennett

8 Steven Rapp

9 Richard Smith

10 Wayne Wagner, Chairman

11 Julie Feller, ZBA Administrator

12 COUNSEL FOR ZBA:

13 Andy Keyt, Esq.

14 COUNSEL FOR THE APPLICANT:

15 David D. Streicker, Esq.

16 COURT REPORTER:

17 Mary Diane Holly Matthews, CSR, CRR, RPR

18 IL License No. 084-003888

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1 MR. WAGNER: Call this meeting to order.

2 Roll call of the Zoning Board of Appeals?

3 MS. FELLER: Steve Anderson?

4 MR. ANDERSON: Here.

5 MS. FELLER: Jerry Bennett?

6 MR. BENNETT: Here.

7 MS. FELLER: Steve Rapp?

8 MR. RAPP: Here.

9 MS. FELLER: Richard Smith?

10 MR. SMITH: Here.

11 MS. FELLER: Wayne Wagner?

12 MR. WAGNER: Here.

13 I know this is a packed room, but if I

14 could have everyone stand and do the Pledge of

15 Allegiance to the flag.

16 (PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.)

17 MR. WAGNER: Thank you. You may be

18 seated.

19 I need a motion to approve our agenda.

20 MR. ANDERSON: I move.

21 MR. BENNETT: I'll second that.

22 MR. WAGNER: All in favor say aye.

23 Nay, the same.

24 Approval of minutes from last meeting,

5

1 September 23, 2025?

2 MR. RAPP: I'll make a motion to approve.

3 MR. SMITH: Second.

4 MR. WAGNER: All in favor, say the same.

5 Contrary, same?

6 MS. FELLER: I am sorry. Steve made the

7 motion, and who seconded it?

8 MR. SMITH: I did.

9 MS. FELLER: Thank you. I am sorry.

10 MR. WAGNER: Do you want to read the

11 meeting notice?

12 MS. FELLER: Yeah.

13 Notice of Public Hearing: Please take

14 notice: Public notice is hereby given that on

15 Tuesday, January 6, 2026, commencing at 6:00 p.m.,

16 Iroquois County Zoning Board of Appeals will hold a

17 public hearing at the Clifford Bury Administrative

18 Center, 1001 East Grant Street, Watseka, Illinois,

19 to consider the application of Two Roads Solar, LLC,

20 Zoning Case Number 26-ZBA-001, which seeks a

21 conditional use permit to construct and operate a

22 commercial solar energy facility on 4,468.25 acres

23 of land and an approximate nameplate capacity of 398

24 megawatts. The proposed site is generally located

6

1 south of East 600 North Road/East County Road 600

2 North, east of US 45, north of East 200 North

3 Road/East County Road 200 North, and west of North

4 900 East Road/County Road 900 East in Loda Township

5 and Pigeon Grove Township, Iroquois County,

6 Illinois.

7 A variation is requested to permit Two

8 Roads Solar, LLC, to supply the Interconnection

9 Agreement with their Building Permit Application.

10 A second variation is requested to permit

11 Two Roads Solar, LLC, to provide a field-delineated

12 drain tile survey in 2026 as a condition of approval

13 to the Conditional Use Permit.

14 The properties for which the Conditional

15 Use Permit and variances are requested consists of

16 the parcels below, each of which is described by

17 address or legal description, property parcel

18 number, and acreage. The general location of the

19 proposed commercial solar energy facility is also

20 depicted in the below map.

21 The applicant is Two Roads Solar, LLC, and

22 is a limited liability company. Two Roads Solar,

23 LLC's registered place of business is 320 North

24 Sangamon Street, Suite 1025, Chicago, Illinois,

1 60607. Two Roads Solar, LLC, is being developed by
2 Ranger Power, LLC, located at 320 North Sangamon
3 Street, Suite 1025, Chicago, Illinois, 60607.

4 The officers and directors of Two Roads
5 Solar, LLC, are Co-founder and CEO Adam Cohen,
6 Co-founder and President Paul Harris.

7 Ranger Power, LLC, provides all
8 development services for Two Roads Solar, LLC.

9 The following individuals own in excess of
10 20 percent of Two Roads Solar, LLC: D.E. Shaw
11 Renewable Investments (DESRI), located at 575 Fifth
12 Avenue, 24th Floor, New York, New York, 10017. The
13 applicant is not operating under an assumed name.

14 All persons wishing to be heard in support
15 of or opposition to the proposed Conditional Use
16 Permit shall be afforded such an opportunity and may
17 submit their statement orally, in writing, or both.

18 Obviously, we are not going to have a map
19 for me and all of the parcel numbers.

20 MR. WAGNER: Okay. At this time I would
21 like to turn the meeting over to our facilitator
22 Andrew Keyt.

23 MR. KEYT: So, my name is Andy Keyt. I am
24 an attorney. I represent the county, and I also

1 serve, in this role, as the hearing facilitator for
2 the hearing.

3 I am going to go through just a couple of
4 ground rules so everybody understands what is going
5 on and to make the process go as smooth as possible.

6 So, this is the Zoning Board of Appeals up
7 here. Their job is to hear the evidence that comes
8 in through the record, through anybody's testimony,
9 and then they make a recommendation to the county
10 board. They do not have the final say on what
11 occurs on whether the project gets approved or not,
12 but they make a recommendation of any findings of
13 fact.

14 I would suspect we may not finish all of
15 this tonight because there are quite a few people
16 here that want to be heard. Right?

17 So, the form of this, in terms of the way
18 it works, it has to be a very orderly process.
19 One person at a time speaks. The court reporter is
20 taking down everything that's said. If there is
21 side conversations taking place, she is not able to
22 take down the primary conversation. So, what we
23 need, number one, is, to the extent that you are
24 asking questions of somebody, either wait until they

1 are done with their question and then answer the
2 question.

3 The way procedurally we'll go through this
4 is the applicant will start. They provide their
5 evidence first. Kind of like a trial, informal
6 trial, if you will. Their witnesses are sworn in.
7 They'll provide testimony. The Zoning Board of
8 Appeals can ask questions, staff, the County Board
9 can ask questions, and I promise anybody from the
10 public that wants to ask questions can also ask
11 questions. If you have a question you want to ask,
12 I promise you we'll get to it.

13 Once the applicant has gone through all of
14 their witnesses and gone through all of the evidence
15 they want to provide, then anybody from the public
16 who wants to provide any testimony or evidence will
17 have an opportunity to provide their own testimony
18 and evidence.

19 Keep in mind, when it's your time to ask a
20 question, it's time to ask a question not your time
21 to put in your own evidence or testimony. You'll
22 have that opportunity. That will come up, and we
23 will get to that. It may not be tonight. It might
24 be tonight. We'll try and get as far as we can. If

1 we can get it all done in one night, we will.

2 But once the public has had an
3 opportunity, you'll have an opportunity to provide
4 your own testimony, provide your own evidence, once
5 we get through all of that, then the Zoning Board of
6 Appeals will close the evidence and deliberate on
7 the request.

8 It is, as Julie mentioned, a fairly large
9 solar project. There are two variance requests
10 within that. For the purposes of efficiency, we'll
11 combine all of that into one hearing, but the votes
12 will take place separately on each of those items.
13 There will be, really, three items that will be
14 assessed and determined at the end of the hearing
15 and all the evidence. The Special Use Permit
16 Application or Conditional Use Permit Application
17 and the two variances will all be decided
18 separately.

19 There's no cheering. There's no yelling.
20 There's no arguing. None of that is going to be
21 tolerated. If that occurs, you are going to have to
22 leave, or we'll suspend the hearing and then wait
23 until it's done and then come back and do it.

24 In terms of the role of the zoning board,

1 they make findings of fact and a recommendation to
2 the county board. There may be stipulations or
3 conditions attached to anything. But ultimately it
4 goes to a committee next, and then it goes to the
5 full county board.

6 There is a state statute that none of us
7 here drafted or wrote, but it has several mandates
8 to the county in terms of how they are supposed to
9 address these things. That's an issue for another
10 day, but it's not appropriate to yell at the zoning
11 board, not appropriate to yell at the county board.
12 They didn't have anything to do with any of that.
13 Okay?

14 So, we are going to get started here in
15 just a second. Before we do, does anybody have a
16 question or did not understand what I just said?

17 Okay. Hearing none.

18 We are going to proceed. The first thing
19 that we are going to proceed with is public comment.
20 Now, public comment, what I am going to suggest is,
21 if anybody has public comment that's not related to
22 the project, now would be the time to do so. During
23 the hearing itself there will be a time at the end
24 for public comment, if people have public comment

1 related to the actual projects.

2 Public comment is different than
3 testimony. If you want to provide testimony or
4 evidence for the zoning board or county board to
5 consider, you need to provide evidence or testimony.
6 You can also make public comment, but public comment
7 isn't going to be considered by the county board or
8 the zoning board in making their decision, okay?
9 Does everybody understand that?

10 It's a very subtle difference, but it is a
11 difference. So, if you are wanting to provide
12 evidence or information for the zoning board to
13 consider, or the county board, you need to provide
14 that at the time of providing testimony or evidence
15 not during public comment. You can also make public
16 comment, but that doesn't get considered.

17 Okay. With that, I'll ask: Does anybody
18 have public comment that is not related to the
19 project itself? Again, there will be a time for
20 public comment later on, but does anybody have
21 public comment not related to this project?

22 Going once. Going twice.

23 MR. CHANDLER: I got a question.

24 MR. KEYT: Yes, sir.

1 MR. CHANDLER: Spencer Chandler. Now, you
2 guys are just going to decide whether this project
3 goes ahead or not, right?

4 MR. KEYT: Well, the zoning board makes a
5 recommendation to the county board.

6 MR. CHANDLER: Right. Okay. And then, if
7 it's okayed, and then they got to come back and get
8 a building permit later?

9 MR. KEYT: Correct.

10 MR. CHANDLER: Okay. That's all I needed
11 to know. So, that's two different? That would come
12 later, after the zoning board okay's it?

13 MR. KEYT: Correct. Presume for the sake
14 of argument -- that's a long ways away, but presume
15 for the sake of argument, the county board approved
16 it.

17 MR. CHANDLER: Right.

18 MR. KEYT: If they did, they can't start
19 construction tomorrow on a conditional use permit.
20 They still have to come back to the county, the
21 zoning office, and get a building permit.

22 MR. CHANDLER: Okay.

23 MR. KEYT: So, that's a separate -- it's
24 not a separate hearing, but they would have to come

1 back and get a building permit.

2 MR. CHANDLER: Okay. I guess that is what
3 I am concerned about.

4 MR. KEYT: Okay. Understood.

5 MR. CHANDLER: The infrastructure of tile
6 and stuff, so that is what I would be. So, I don't
7 really need to be here for this because I am a --

8 MR. KEYT: I would suggest, if you want to
9 have some information you want to provide on that
10 topic, stick around and provide it.

11 MR. CHANDLER: Okay.

12 MR. KEYT: Okay. Anybody have public
13 comment unrelated to the project? Public comment
14 could be anything unrelated to the project.

15 Going once. Going twice.

16 Okay. Why don't we get started? I think,
17 in terms of process, what I would suggest to the
18 zoning board is: We have three items on the agenda
19 that are largely related. We have a conditional use
20 permit for Two Roads Solar, and then there are two
21 variances for Two Roads Solar.

22 What I would suggest, just for
23 efficiency's sake, is that you make a motion to
24 combine those for the purposes of the hearing, just

1 the hearing, so that you can hear evidence as to all
2 three of those issues at one time. You are going to
3 vote separately at the end of it anyway, okay? That
4 way we are not closing one, moving on to the next
5 one, opening that, and going through all of this
6 process three different times. So, it's much more
7 efficient if you combine those three.

8 Somebody just needs to make a motion, if
9 you want to do that.

10 MR. WAGNER: I make a motion that we
11 combine the three for hearing purposes.

12 MR. BENNETT: I second that.

13 MS. FELLER: Roll call vote:

14 Steve Anderson?

15 MR. ANDERSON: Yes.

16 MS. FELLER: Jerry Bennett?

17 MR. BENNETT: Yes.

18 MS. FELLER: Steve Rapp?

19 MR. RAPP: Yes.

20 MS. FELLER: Richard Smith?

21 MR. SMITH: Yes.

22 MS. FELLER: Wayne Wagner?

23 MR. WAGNER: Yes.

24 MS. FELLER: Motion carries.

1 MR. KEYT: Okay. Let's go ahead and open
2 the hearing. We'll be opening the hearing for all
3 three of those issues, public hearing, and action on
4 conditional use permit for Two Roads Solar, the
5 public hearing and action on variance application of
6 Two Roads Solar in relation to an interconnection
7 agreement, and public hearing and action on variance
8 application of Two Roads Solar to perform the drain
9 tile survey at the time of the building permit. So,
10 we'll open the hearing at this time.

11 Mr. Streicker is counsel for the
12 developer.

13 Mr. Streicker, do you have a few opening
14 comments you want to make before we start with the
15 actual --

16 MR. STREICKER: I do. Thank you very
17 much.

18 Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Members of the
19 ZBA, Iroquois County Staff.

20 Good evening, my name is David Streicker,
21 and I am counsel for the applicant here this
22 evening, Two Roads Solar.

23 As Andy mentioned, and Julie recited, we
24 are here tonight on a CUP application and two

1 related variance applications.

2 Also, as Julie noted, the applicant is a
3 subsidiary of Ranger Power, which as you'll hear, is
4 one of the largest and most experienced solar
5 developers in the United States.

6 Importantly, and I think importantly for a
7 lot of you hear tonight, Ranger is a long-term owner
8 and operator of the projects, and it becomes a
9 member of the local community where it resides.

10 As you also heard Julie mention, Ranger
11 has its corporate office in Chicago. So, it's an
12 Illinois resident as well and has developed, as
13 you'll hear tonight, and is developing several large
14 solar projects here in Illinois. So, Illinois is
15 its home as well, and we very much look forward to
16 speaking with you.

17 As you can see behind me here, we have a
18 couple of Ranger team members. We have got a bunch
19 more out in the hall that gave up their seats to sit
20 out there.

21 But on behalf of the entire team, I want
22 to thank all of you for coming tonight, and thanks
23 to Iroquois County for hosting us. We are very much
24 looking forward to our discussion here.

1 The applicant, again, Two Roads, along
2 with our Iroquois County landowners that we are
3 partnered with for this project are here seeking the
4 county's support and approval for a 398-megawatt
5 commercial solar energy facility. And, again, we've
6 also requested the two minor variances that were
7 noted.

8 I also want to note that we submitted very
9 detailed written application materials covering both
10 the conditional use permit request and the variance,
11 and there is a lot of information in there, and I
12 would encourage, again, all of you out in the
13 audience to read that as we go along with and,
14 certainly, hopefully engaging with us this evening
15 on a number of questions that you might have.

16 The project will be a cutting-edge
17 development incorporating advanced materials and
18 skilled trades which will bring significant private
19 investment, incremental tax revenue, and job
20 creation to Iroquois County.

21 The project site, as noted in the
22 application, is approximately 4,468 acres; however,
23 only approximately 3,000 of those acres would be
24 developed and behind the fence for this project.

1 All of the land is currently in
2 agricultural use, and when the project is
3 decommissioned it will return to that use.

4 Further, while the site is being used for
5 solar generation, it will be landscaped with native
6 pollinator-friendly vegetation that will not only
7 allow it to blend in with the surrounding area but
8 also provide wildlife habitat, benefit local water
9 quality, and recharge the fields that host it,
10 making those fields more productive after
11 decommissioning.

12 The project construction is expected to
13 last approximately 12 to 18 months. If approved, it
14 would kick off in late 2027, and project
15 construction would be expected to be completed by
16 the end of 2029.

17 The application before you was submitted
18 in September of 2025 and contains both the narrative
19 portion and approximately 23 exhibits.

20 As I hope all of you have noted, we
21 specifically crafted this application to strictly
22 conform with Iroquois County ordinances, namely the
23 county's commercial solar ordinance that was
24 recently passed in May of 2025.

1 I want to note, from a developer's
2 perspective, Iroquois County is a great place to
3 work because the county has clearly done its
4 homework. Back in May when it prepared this
5 ordinance, we found it to be a very user-friendly
6 and workable ordinance that has allowed us, the
7 developer, to know exactly what the county expects
8 for us to not only be able to design the project but
9 also to know specifically what requirements and
10 criteria need to go into that design. So, again, we
11 want to thank you for the homework that the county
12 did last year in creating that ordinance.

13 And, again, hopefully you have found that
14 our written materials are user friendly and allow
15 you to efficiently go through those, and you are
16 able to line everything that is responsive in that
17 application up with the specific criteria in the
18 ordinance that it is responsive to.

19 In that spirit, we provided, just
20 specifically pointed out in both Section 2 of the
21 application and Exhibit A, charts noting each of
22 those ordinance requirements and where in the
23 application we address that and where you can,
24 again, find responsive material.

1 Additionally, in Exhibit A to the
2 application, we've also provided narrative responses
3 to how the project complies with the county's what
4 it calls here "factors of consideration" that are
5 laid out in Section 18 of your ordinance.

6 So, again, hopefully you have all had a
7 chance to read those, and we look forward to
8 addressing those topics with you as well as along
9 with the technical criteria regarding the project.

10 As I noted, we hope this project not only
11 meets but exceeds your requirements. And when I say
12 exceeds, again, not just meeting the minimum
13 requirements in the ordinance but taking all of the
14 best practices that the experienced Ranger team has
15 developed through projects in Illinois and other
16 states and incorporating all of those here into Two
17 Roads Solar to truly make it a world-class project
18 that everybody can be proud of.

19 You'll note, in most cases, we are either
20 not only just meeting but actually exceeding some of
21 the minimum county criteria, setbacks being one of
22 the areas that is probably most important to you all
23 here in the room.

24 We recognize, again, that the members of

1 the ZBA here this evening are largely volunteers
2 spending your time here this evening to protect the
3 interest of those Iroquois County residents that are
4 not only here tonight but are just, again, Iroquois
5 County residents that you are here to protect. So,
6 we want to be very respectful of your time and
7 understanding that we have submitted a detailed
8 application.

9 We are not just going to simply repeat
10 here this evening everything that is in there. We
11 really want to describe who we are, how we intend to
12 be a member of the community, and most importantly,
13 to answer all of the questions here for you in the
14 room.

15 So, again, I want to not only thank the
16 staff members but thank all of you behind me here in
17 the public. This is a public hearing, as Andy
18 mentioned. It doesn't work without active public
19 engagement, and we are here tonight primarily to
20 answer your questions, and we look forward to that
21 engagement.

22 So, as I wrap things up here, I'll turn
23 things over to Ashton Merbach, of Ranger, and she is
24 going to tell you again who we are, describe

1 Ranger's significant applicable development
 2 experience. She'll describe the outreach that the
 3 project has conducted with the community to make
 4 sure you are all as up to speed as possible, and
 5 hopefully at the end you are all as convinced as we
 6 are that Ranger has the industry leading skill set
 7 and expertise to, again, deliver a world-class
 8 project here to the folks in Iroquois County.

9 So, when Erin -- or excuse me -- when
 10 Ashton starts, she is going to present a brief
 11 PowerPoint presentation, and we would ask that that
 12 presentation, along with any other exhibits that we
 13 work through here this evening, be entered into the
 14 record along with our application and the exhibits
 15 that go along with that.

16 Following Ashton, we will have a number of
 17 other witnesses available, but it will be:

18 Liam Sawyer of Kimley-Horn. He is an
 19 Illinois Licensed Civil Engineer that can take you
 20 through a number of the project plans.

21 Erin Bowen, Erin is with CohnReznick and
 22 performed the property valuation study that was in
 23 the application.

24 And then John Braden with SAM, and John

1 will be here to speak specifically about field
 2 tiling issues that I know a number of you may have
 3 some questions about.

4 So, again, at this point I am going to
 5 turn the process over to Ashton and then ultimately
 6 back over to you all.

7 We look forward to responding to your
 8 questions. Thank you very much for your time this
 9 evening.

10 And with that, Ashton, let me turn things
 11 over to you.

12 Thank you again.

13 MR. KEYT: Okay. Ashton, you are going to
 14 have to raise your right hand, and Holly will swear
 15 you in.

16 *ASHTON MERBACH,*

17 a witness herein, called by the Applicant, after having
 18 been first duly sworn, was examined, and testified as
 19 follows:

20 EXAMINATION

21 BY MR. KEYT:

22 Q. Ashton, what is your -- can you state and
 23 spell your name for the record and then also provide
 24 your address, please?

1 **A.** Yes. My name is Ashton Merbach,
 2 A-s-h-t-o-n, last name M-e-r-b-a-c-h. Address is
 3 320 North Sangamon Street, Suite 1025, Chicago,
 4 Illinois, 60607.

5 Good to proceed?

6 **Q.** Yes. Just keep your voice up because
 7 there's --

8 **A.** Oh, absolutely. Yes. I know there's a
 9 full room.

10 So, thank you all so much for your time
 11 this evening. I think Dave gave a great
 12 introduction to this project.

13 Two Roads Solar and Ranger Power are
 14 thrilled to be here going through the conditional
 15 use permitting process with you all.

16 MS. MATTER: Louder, please.

17 **A.** Oh, absolutely. I can adjust, too.

18 We are thrilled to be going through this
 19 process and thank you all for the turnout tonight.

20 I know you are taking time out of your
 21 evening, so we genuinely appreciate the attendance
 22 here.

23 Ranger has been active in the community
 24 for a number of years here developing this project

1 and taking strict adherence to the Commercial Solar
 2 Energy Facility Ordinance recently adopted by
 3 Iroquois County, and we are excited to not only
 4 demonstrate that we are in compliance with that
 5 ordinance but also exceeding expectations.

6 We know this ordinance is heavily
 7 influenced by the State of Illinois recent siting
 8 legislation, and so we look forward to entering this
 9 project specifically with the Iroquois County
 10 community, taking community feedback, and building a
 11 responsible solar project that fits within the
 12 landscape of the county.

13 So, thank you all again for being here.
 14 Again, my name is Ashton Merbach. I am an Associate
 15 Development Manager at Ranger Power.

16 MS. MATTER: You really need to speak up
 17 more.

18 MR. KEYT: Hold on. Hold on.

19 Ashton, just keep your voice up.

20 If people can't hear, just say, "I am
 21 having a hard time hearing," and we'll take care of
 22 it.

23 But keep your voice up.

24 **A.** Sorry. I know my back is turned to some

1 folks, so I'll do my best to kind of swivel around,
2 but please interject if you can't hear anything I am
3 saying.

4 Yeah. So, we passed along two
5 deliverables here. We have our slide presentation
6 to follow along. The room, I think, is bigger than
7 what we printed. So, if you want to look off of
8 other people's, please do.

9 We also printed out a copy of Exhibit A,
10 which is our Iroquois County Commercial Solar Energy
11 Facility Ordinance Checklist that directly copies
12 and pastes information from the Iroquois County
13 Ordinance adopted back in May of 2025 and how we
14 adhere to that ordinance with exhibit numbers or
15 narrative descriptions of what we are doing to meet
16 that requirement. So, I'm happy to take any
17 questions if it's about either of those.

18 Without further ado, we can go ahead and
19 get started.

20 We can start here with a Ranger Power
21 introduction. Ranger Power was founded in 2017 and
22 is headquartered in Chicago, Illinois.

23 Two Road Solar is a utility-scale solar
24 project being developed by Ranger Power. The Ranger

1 portfolio includes over 10 gigawatts of active solar
2 development throughout the Midwest; that includes
3 states like Illinois, where we are now, in Iowa,
4 Nebraska, Minnesota, Michigan, and across the
5 Midwest. So, we have an active portfolio and are
6 looking forward to expanding that.

7 Our Ranger experience in Illinois is
8 particularly extensive. We currently have three
9 operating solar projects, utility-scale solar
10 projects within the state.

11 MS. MATTER: It's still really hard to
12 hear you.

13 MR. KEYT: Hold on. Why don't we do this:
14 Why don't we -- let's move this podium.

15 A. So, back to our Ranger experience in
16 Illinois, Ranger Power has three operational
17 utility-scale solar projects within the state. They
18 are listed below. They are: Dressor Plains Solar,
19 in Fayette County; Prairie State Solar in Perry
20 County; Big River Solar, in White County; and two
21 additional Ranger-developed projects will join that
22 portfolio and will begin construction in 2026,
23 becoming operational in 2028.

24 All of Ranger's projects in Illinois

1 feature some sort of agrivoltaic dual-use, keeping
2 one leg in agriculture and one in energy generation.
3 This includes a mixture of apiaries used and sheep
4 grazing, all done by local landowners or local
5 residents. It's a good way to have a dual-use,
6 agrivoltaic mixture for your projects.

7 Ranger Power is also extremely committed
8 to community engagement and development. The most
9 recent example is a donation we made in Perry County
10 on behalf of our Prairie State Solar Project. We
11 donated \$25,000 to the local volunteer fire
12 department in Coulterville to fund a new UTV for
13 that fire department. They had a demonstrated need
14 not only to serve our project better but their local
15 community, and we are happy to support them.

16 This is a great example of Ranger's
17 commitment to community engagement and meeting need
18 for critical resources like emergency response even
19 after the project is operational. So, we want to
20 focus on that through development, construction, and
21 operation. We want these to be long-term
22 partnerships with these communities, and we are
23 committed to showing that.

24 Moving next to the Ranger Power and DESRI

1 slide. In order to bring these projects to life,
2 Ranger Power partners with DESRI headquartered in
3 New York.

4 The Two Roads Solar Project is being
5 developed by Ranger Power and is majority owned by
6 DESRI. So, Ranger Power is developing this project
7 with the intention that it will be long-term owned
8 and operated by DESRI.

9 DESRI brings a long track record of
10 success in owning, operating, and financing
11 utility-scale solar facilities in the state, in the
12 Midwest, and across the country.

13 Our three previously mentioned operational
14 solar projects follow the same standard. It's
15 worked very well in which Ranger Power develops the
16 project and transitions it over to DESRI for
17 construction and long-term operation. We find that
18 our expertise complements each other well and has
19 been a great working relationship to date. We
20 expect to continue with that same trajectory with
21 Two Roads Solar here. So, again, Two Roads Solar is
22 majority owned by DESRI, and Ranger Power is the
23 developer.

24 On to the Two Roads overview for this

1 project, Two Roads Solar is a proposed 398-megawatt
2 project in the Loda and Pigeon Grove Townships. Two
3 Roads Solar, through this process, is seeking a
4 conditional use permit for a commercial solar energy
5 facility located on 4,468.25 parcel acres of
6 privately owned land.

7 The project will ultimately be sited on
8 approximately 3,000 of these acres, which shakes out
9 to be about 0.45 percent of Iroquois County's total
10 farmed acreage.

11 The project will interconnect into the
12 existing Paxton to Gilman transmission line running
13 just east of Highway 45.

14 The project is completely sited on
15 privately owned land in which landowners have
16 decided to voluntarily sign agreements with us,
17 either through lease, easements, or purchase options
18 to participate in this project.

19 There are 22 local landowners that we work
20 with here, and they are very excited about the
21 project, as are we to bring this to life in
22 partnership with them.

23 The project will produce enough clean
24 renewable energy to power approximately 90,000 homes

1 once it's constructed.

2 As Dave mentioned earlier, too, the start
3 of construction would happen toward the end of 2027
4 with the intention of the project becoming
5 operational in 2029.

6 Moving on next, our community engagement
7 to date: Ranger Power has been active in the
8 community since 2022 talking with landowners about
9 their participation or lack thereof in the project.

10 We've also been meeting one on one with
11 neighbors the past couple of months particularly. I
12 have personally knocked on all doors within a half
13 mile of the project area, and I see a lot of
14 familiar faces today. So, I appreciate your
15 attendance and your engagement with us as we develop
16 this project.

17 I know I've had longer conversations with
18 some, and my goal there is just to make myself
19 completely available to all for questions, feedback
20 at any point, and just to keep you actively engaged
21 with the development process.

22 In addition to the neighbor engagement we
23 have done, I have also been attending meetings with
24 the Planning and Zoning Committee and County Board

1 for the past year or so, sitting in on most those
2 meetings, meeting with township and local government
3 officials, and we've had ongoing coordination with
4 local drainage districts, highway commissioners,
5 fire districts, the Iroquois County Soil, Water and
6 Conservation District, the US Fish and Wildlife, the
7 Illinois State Historic Preservation Office, and the
8 Village of Loda. We also have a dedicated project
9 website at tworoadssolar.com.

10 These next couple slides do entail what
11 the project will actually look like, Solar Energy at
12 a Glance.

13 I know that multiple projects have gone
14 before this ZBA too, so I can go through these at
15 kind of a quicker pace.

16 But the visual to the right is helpful to
17 visualize what the height of the panels will look
18 like with, you know, a full-grown corn crop next to
19 it, and just helpful to visualize what our project
20 will materially look like.

21 Our projects consist of solar panels
22 sitting on steel racking, inverters, electrical
23 collector lines, access roads, and fencing.

24 There will also be a vegetative buffer in

1 accordance with the Iroquois County Commercial Solar
2 Energy Ordinance that requires trees surrounding the
3 facilities in its entirety.

4 The solar panels will sit in a
5 north-to-south configured racking, and they tilt
6 east to west to follow the sun throughout the day
7 and maximize our energy collection.

8 Solar panels contain no toxic elements or
9 materials that could leach into the soil, and all
10 contents are naturally occurring.

11 At the end of the project's life, the land
12 will be fully restored for agricultural use, and
13 panels can either be repurposed or recycled.

14 These next few photos are photos of what
15 the inside of our project area might look like,
16 showing you what inverters look like and how they
17 kind of interact with the solar panels that you
18 might see.

19 The next photos are also photos of our
20 construction process, putting in those steel beams,
21 putting up the racking, the panels, and the last
22 step is wiring in order to get the energy from the
23 panels onto the electrical grid.

24 Moving on to the benefits you'll see from

1 this project, starting with environmental: Two
2 Roads Solar Project will improve air quality and
3 lessen our reliance on fuel-burning energy for
4 generations and will provide some much needed
5 domestic clean power onto the grid.

6 There are no air or water emissions as a
7 result of our project.

8 And there will also be, underneath our
9 panels, a permanent vegetative cover consisting of
10 native grasses and pollinator species. This will
11 increase biodiversity and reduce stormwater runoff
12 as well as reduce soil erosion.

13 Then, again, at the end of the project's
14 life, the land will be fully restored and available
15 for agricultural-use land again.

16 Our projects are a temporary use. So, the
17 land will be restored at the end of the project.
18 This is not only a requirement of the Iroquois
19 County Solar Ordinance and the State of Illinois,
20 but it's also protected under our individual land
21 use agreements with the landowners and the Illinois
22 Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Mitigation
23 Impact Agreement, or AIMA, as I'll refer to it from
24 now on.

1 That AIMA covers things like restoration
2 requirements, drain tile repair. That is a document
3 that we've already signed as of September, before
4 submitting our application.

5 So, there is multiple layers of protection
6 for the full restoration of this project as well as
7 a posting of a decommissioning fund in order to
8 cover the cost of that, which we will post with the
9 county. Again, protected by all three layers of
10 that agreement, or of those three agreements.

11 The project is also compatible with
12 neighboring and local agricultural uses. There are
13 similar benefits to the federal CRP Program,
14 Conservation Reserve Program. The vegetative
15 management includes deep-rooted grasses, plants,
16 flowers. This, again, improves soil and water
17 quality and reduces stormwater and soil erosion. It
18 also reduces use of fertilizer, herbicide, and
19 pesticide use on the ground, and the pollinator
20 habitat may also increase the productivity of
21 neighboring farms.

22 Using solar as a temporary use allows the
23 ground to lie fallow for a bit, and we actually find
24 that it's more productive once taken out of solar

1 and used again for agricultural use.

2 Not only does solar preserve agricultural
3 land for future generations, but the farmland
4 remains highly productive.

5 Again, as I mentioned, too, all of our
6 sites in Illinois feature some form of agrivoltaics
7 and dual-use, again keeping it productive in
8 agricultural and keeping it also productive in
9 energy generation, and we are excited to bring that
10 unique use to the Two Roads Solar Project.

11 Moving on to our Neighbor Commitments, as
12 I've stated before, neighbor outreach is very
13 important to Ranger Power and issuance of our
14 project.

15 Again, I have personally been knocking on
16 doors, engaging with neighbors, fielding questions,
17 and, again, making myself available to folks just so
18 you are updated on the development process, updated
19 on, for example, this hearing tonight, where we are,
20 when we submitted our permit application, and we are
21 committed to continuing that relationship and
22 building on that further.

23 Based on feedback that we've perceived
24 from neighbors throughout this coordination, we have

1 decided to voluntarily double the setback for any
2 neighboring homes.

3 The State of Illinois requires a setback
4 of 150 feet from neighboring dwellings on
5 nonparticipating property. We felt that this was a
6 little close, so we have voluntarily doubled that to
7 300 feet, meaning the setback of any of our project
8 facilities will be minimally 300 feet from any
9 dwellings on nonparticipating parcels. Again, that
10 is a completely voluntary commitment that Ranger is
11 willing to make based on this community feedback.

12 We have also created a Neighbor
13 Coordination Program to be rolled out prior to
14 construction. The goal of this program is to
15 support project neighbors and include them in the
16 development process as we go through. This
17 collaboration, again, has already begun, and we look
18 forward to continuing this relationship and
19 continuing to have these conversations.

20 The next slide is addressing common
21 questions that we received with this outreach. They
22 surround sound, glare, and property values.

23 Today we brought experts from Kimley-Horn
24 and CohnReznick to speak to these more. So,

1 questions about those studies or about noise or
2 property values can be directed to them.

3 High Levels, the noise study we submitted
4 as Exhibit J, identified no noise concerns as a
5 result of the project. The only components of the
6 project that produce noise are the inverters, and
7 all inverters are placed within the project fence
8 line away from any sort of public road right-of-ways
9 or non-project facilities or homes. So, all sound
10 will be minimal and will meet the ordinance
11 requirements of Iroquois County.

12 Our Glare Study was submitted as Exhibit I
13 and determined that no glare is anticipated from the
14 project.

15 We also submitted a Real Estate Adjacent
16 Property Value Impact Report as Exhibit R, which
17 concluded that there will be no negative trend
18 observed for property values adjacent to solar
19 farms.

20 And, again, to speak further on that are
21 our representatives with Kimley-Horn, our
22 environmental consultants, and CohnReznick.

23 I know that drainage is also a big concern
24 in the county, and I know that this came up on

1 previous projects and making sure that we are fully
2 aware of the drain tile present within the project
3 area and preserving the existing drainage
4 infrastructure. We understand this importance and
5 are committed to protecting drain tile as it is.

6 We have submitted a preliminary survey of
7 drain tile included in Exhibit F, which is the
8 Conditional Use Permit Plan Set on page C-205. This
9 is a preliminary map based on topographical features
10 that we were able to see from aerial imagery as well
11 as from landowners' records that we were able to
12 collaborate with them and get and map it out for
13 you.

14 As a proposed condition of approval, Two
15 Roads Solar also wants to commit to an aerial survey
16 of this property.

17 Again, we have an expert from SAM who will
18 actually be conducting this drain tile survey from
19 an aerial view. They use technology after a
20 rainfall to track the water flow, and so that is a
21 great way to identify any and all drain tile within
22 the project area and actually identify flow
23 patterns.

24 So, questions about that study

1 specifically can be directed toward them, and they
2 will come up later on to address those. But Two
3 Roads Solar, as a solar company, completely
4 understands the need to protect and preserve drain
5 tile and the existing drainage infrastructure.

6 I know there are ditches out there,
7 drainage ditches, and it's important to maintain all
8 of that infrastructure for the neighboring farms and
9 our project as well.

10 Of course, energy and water don't mix
11 well, so it's important that we preserve this
12 drainage infrastructure for our own use as well as
13 neighboring usage.

14 Coordination with local drainage
15 commissioners has already begun, and we look forward
16 to continuing that and making sure that we address
17 everyone's concerns in accordance with drainage.

18 Again, it's worth noting that this is
19 protected not only under the Illinois State
20 Guidelines and the Iroquois County Commercial Solar
21 Energy Facility Ordinance, it's also covered as we
22 will commit to protecting drain tile and maintaining
23 patterns to a pre-construction condition. It's also
24 protected by those ordinances, by our agreements

1 with project landowners, and that Illinois
2 Department of Agriculture's AIMA. So, again, more
3 layers of protection that will ensure that we are
4 actually maintaining that drainage structure.

5 In addition to the neighbor and
6 environmental benefits that this project will bring,
7 Two Roads Solar will also provide significant tax
8 revenue to Iroquois County.

9 We submitted a tax analysis by Anderson
10 Economic Group that showed that over \$81.6 million
11 in new tax revenue will be contributed to the
12 project over its lifetime. This will serve the
13 townships, local schools, the county, emergency
14 responders, and other essential infrastructure
15 within the county and in the Loda and Pigeon Grove
16 Townships.

17 Some highlights are:

18 \$7.7 million will go directly to Iroquois
19 County and its functions.

20 \$2.7 million will go to the Loda and
21 Pigeon Grove Townships. This is not including the
22 funds that will also be directed to the Loda and
23 Pigeon Grove roads and bridges.

24 \$59.5 million will go to local schools,

1 including the Paxton-Buckley-Loda School District
2 and the Cissna Park School District.

3 And \$6.9 million will go to local fire
4 departments.

5 The project in the first year of operation
6 alone will generate \$3.2 million in tax revenue.

7 We have seen this tax revenue at work
8 where our other operational projects are. It's nice
9 that Ranger has operational projects to lean on and
10 to see the real benefits after operations.

11 We've seen that schools have more
12 resources, counties have more resources, and
13 townships have really great resources to fund their
14 function and support their communities. This is
15 especially evident with emergency responders and the
16 fire departments, and we are excited to bring this
17 sort of economic impact to Iroquois County and to
18 the Loda and Pigeon Grove Townships.

19 In addition to the sheer tax revenue, this
20 will also provide stable and diversified income for
21 landowners while protecting and preserving
22 agricultural land for future generations.

23 This will also produce hundreds of jobs
24 during construction and that added economic spend

1 from people working in the county constantly.

2 And, again, there will also be
3 improvements in soil quality and reduction of soil
4 erosion through the installation of permanent
5 groundcover.

6 This last page here is more of a
7 logistical page giving you guys some dates as well
8 as explaining Exhibit A that we passed out.

9 Again, Exhibit A is the Iroquois County
10 Commercial Solar Energy Facility Ordinance
11 Compliance list with all the ordinance requirements
12 copied and pasted directly from the county's
13 website, and then, in the next column, how we plan
14 to address those in our applications.

15 Our AIMA agreement with the Illinois
16 Department of Agriculture was executed on
17 September 8, 2025.

18 Our Conditional Use Permit Application was
19 submitted on September 19, 2025.

20 And our application was deemed complete by
21 the Tax/Planning & Zoning Committee on November 4,
22 2025, which brings us to the next step in the
23 process, which is this evening, January 6, 2026.

24 That concludes my presentation. The

1 contact info for myself and my colleague, Toby
2 Valentino, is on this last slide here. Please reach
3 out if there are any questions beyond this evening.

4 But other than that, I am happy to address
5 things now as they come up.

6 MR. KEYT: Okay. We start first with
7 questions from the Zoning Board of Appeals.

8 Zoning Board of Appeals, any questions for
9 Ms. Merbach?

10 MR. ANDERSON: If we don't ask them now,
11 can we ask them later?

12 MR. KEYT: Yeah. The Zoning Board of
13 Appeals can always recall a witness back up, just so
14 you know.

15 MR. ANDERSON: I had a couple questions.
16 Maybe I can just go ahead and do that.

17 MR. KEYT: Yeah.

18 EXAMINATION

19 BY MR. ANDERSON:

20 Q. You mentioned in this handout -- I don't
21 know what it's called -- anyway, this handout --

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. You mentioned "in the lifetime of the
24 project." How many years are you considering to be

1 the lifetime of the project?

2 A. That tax analysis looked at the lifetime
3 of the project being up to 40 years. We expect the
4 project to be around 30 years.

5 Q. Thirty to 40?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Thank you. So, you mentioned lighting.
8 And can you give us some -- I don't know how you do
9 this -- per acre number of lights, or how many
10 lights are we talking?

11 A. Lighting?

12 Q. Yeah. You said something about lighting,
13 that it would -- it's on page 369 of this larger
14 material.

15 A. Can I look at what you are looking at --

16 Q. Sure.

17 A. -- so I know what you are referencing?

18 Q. Sure. And it talks about, you know, how
19 lighting will be turned so it's away from the road
20 and things like that.

21 MS. FELLER: The glare?

22 BY MR. ANDERSON:

23 Q. The glare.

24 A. Oh, lighting of the project?

1 Q. Yes.
2 **A.** Yeah. So, any lighting that we do use for
3 security purposes, the project will comply with
4 Iroquois County Ordinance and will be directed
5 downward as to not impede any other neighboring
6 uses.

7 MR. KEYT: Hold on one second. Probably
8 the people in the back couldn't hear you.

9 MS. MERBACH: Yes. The question was
10 surrounding lighting and lighting at the project.

11 Any lighting to light the project for
12 security purposes will be turned in a downward
13 direction and will be in accordance with the
14 Iroquois County Ordinance.

15 BY MR. ANDERSON:

16 Q. And my question to her was: How many
17 lights are you talking about?

18 **A.** I don't have an actual number. I think it
19 varies on a per project basis --

20 Q. Oh, sure.

21 **A.** -- based on, you know, where they are
22 needed with the final construction design. It is
23 not a number I have today, but I can certainly look
24 into that.

1 Q. I guess my concern is, this is so close to
2 the highway, you know. If this was two miles
3 further over, no offense to anybody that lives
4 two miles further to the east, but if it was farther
5 away from the highway, I don't think it would be
6 nearly as much of an issue as being right on the
7 highway.

8 And I am visualizing this like you go past
9 a car dealership at night, you know, a Ford
10 dealership, or whatever, and there's 10,000 lights
11 showing, you know, over the cars.

12 **A.** Yeah. Or like a football stadium. It
13 will not be anything like that.

14 Q. That's what I picture.

15 **A.** The lighting is not meant to light every
16 inch of the solar project.

17 Q. Okay.

18 **A.** The lighting will be used at gates --

19 Q. Thank you.

20 **A.** -- or service entrances to identify those
21 and make sure our contact information and signage is
22 always visible, but nothing high up, nothing that is
23 bright like a football stadium.

24 Q. Thank you.

1 MR. KEYT: Okay. Any other questions for
2 the Zoning Board of Appeals?

3 Going once. Going twice.

4 You can always recall Ms. Merbach if you
5 feel the need.

6 EXAMINATION

7 BY MR. RAPP:

8 Q. I have a question for whoever: You are
9 asking for a variance on the tile survey until
10 spring of 2026?

11 **A.** Uh-huh.

12 Q. Because?

13 **A.** Yeah. So, the tile survey will be
14 conducted by SAM. It's an aerial survey. They were
15 not able to accommodate the workload for our project
16 until later this spring. We have every intention to
17 do it in the spring of 2026 and immediately share
18 those results with the county. That timeline just
19 did not align with this conditional use permitting
20 timeline, so Andy instructed us to include that as a
21 variance just so that would be a supplemental
22 material per application and a condition of approval
23 that we will have that aerial survey completed in
24 the next couple months.

1 Q. It's an aerial survey?

2 **A.** Yeah. So, questions about the actual
3 survey would be best addressed by SAM, who will come
4 up later.

5 Q. Okay.

6 **A.** But it's my understanding that it's an
7 aerial survey.

8 Q. Thank you.

9 MR. KEYT: Okay. Thank you.

10 Any other questions for the Zoning Board
11 of Appeals for this witness?

12 Going once. Going twice.

13 Okay. County staff, any questions for
14 this witness?

15 Anybody from the county board have any
16 questions for this witness?

17 Going once. Okay. Twice.

18 Okay. People from the public, how many
19 people might have questions for Ms. Merbach?

20 We've got a few. One or two -- three.

21 All right, sir, right here in the front.

22 MR. CHANDLER: Why --

23 MR. KEYT: Hold on, sir. I am not trying
24 to cut you off. Holly needs your name.

1 MR. CHANDLER: Spencer Chandler.
2 MR. KEYT: Mr. Chandler, go ahead. Ask
3 your questions.

EXAMINATION

5 BY MR. CHANDLER:

6 Q. You said you have been around talking to
7 people within a half mile?

8 A. Yes, sir.

9 Q. I got places across the road, and I have
10 never seen your face at my place.

11 A. Yeah. I think I actually did knock on
12 your door twice. I would have left my card in your
13 door if you did not answer.

14 Q. I've never seen your card.

15 A. I might have put it in the backdoor. I do
16 keep a tracker of folks that I have seen. I have
17 visited every home within a half mile, and I left a
18 card if there is was a good space for it.

19 Q. No. I haven't seen it.

20 A. I am happy to begin coordination now and
21 continue these discussions and, you know, drop by
22 again, if that is helpful.

23 Q. I've got two places, and I haven't seen
24 them in either one.

1 A. I have visited both of those. I noticed
2 that you particularly had two addresses. Yes, sir.

3 Q. All right.

4 A. I have attempted. I think I missed you on
5 both attempts, but I am happy to begin coordination
6 from here on out.

7 Q. All right.

8 MR. KEYT: Mr. Chandler, do you have any
9 other questions for Ms. Merbach?

10 MR. CHANDLER: No. That's it I think.

11 MR. KEYT: Okay. Any other questions for
12 Ms. Merbach?

13 I think there were two others, at least.

14 Sir -- I'm sorry. Ma'am, in the back, why
15 don't you go ahead? You'll need to state your name.
16 Keep your voice up for the court reporter.

17 MS. STEINER: Krista Steiner, K-r-i-s-t-a
18 S-t-e-i-n-e-r.

EXAMINATION

20 BY MS. STEINER:

21 Q. My first question is: We have land that's
22 included in this permit. Number 1: We don't have
23 any want or need to be included in any of this at
24 all. We have never been contacted, other than this

1 letter about the hearing. Okay?

2 So, how do we get our land out of all of
3 this, number 1?

4 A. We don't have any rights to land that we
5 have not had an agreement signed upon.

6 MR. STEINER: So, then you guys aren't --

7 MR. KEYT: Hold on. Hold on. You have to
8 go one at a time. The court reporter can't take
9 down anonymous people.

10 But if I understand the question: You
11 think you might have land that is showing up on the
12 map here; is that correct?

13 MS. STEINER: Yeah. In the "permitted
14 area" of the legal description.

15 MR. KEYT: Okay.

16 MS. STEINER: So, we received a letter,
17 but that is the first time that we have heard about
18 this project at all.

19 MR. KEYT: I understand.

20 Ms. Merbach, can you address the question?

21 And then, it's probably something that you
22 might have to talk on a break about this specific
23 issue, I think.

24 MS. MERBACH: Sure. Can she point out the

1 area?

2 MR. KEYT: Yeah. If you can, point it
3 out.

4 And then, Ms. Merbach, if you can address
5 what they are asking.

6 MS. MERBACH: Yeah. So, everything shaded
7 in blue is what we are permitting today. So, that
8 is not shaded in blue or included in the project
9 area. So, yeah. We fully understand. If we don't
10 have a signed agreement with you all, we have no
11 rights to put anything there.

12 BY MS. STEINER:

13 Q. That means any equipment, any of the --

14 A. Nothing. No. Nothing for construction.
15 Nothing for operation. Nothing.

16 Q. And so what's the purpose of me getting
17 this letter, is my question?

18 A. I believe the letter you are referring to
19 is the Notice of Public Hearing for this tonight.

20 Q. Right.

21 A. All adjacent landowners were noticed for
22 this hearing. So, if you have any land adjacent to
23 this property, you were noticed for this hearing
24 tonight.

1 MR. KEYT: I can probably flush out that
2 answer a little more. There is a state statute that
3 requires that we provide notice to adjacent
4 landowners.

5 MS. STEINER: Okay.

6 MR. KEYT: That's why you would have
7 gotten -- that is why you would have gotten notice
8 of it.

9 BY MS. STEINER:

10 Q. And so I understand that portion of it,
11 but here is another question: We have multiple
12 tornados in the state of Illinois, an awful lot in
13 recent years. And in that area in particular we
14 have had two in the last ten years, taking out
15 buildings and stuff like that.

16 So my question, about weather-related
17 issues that could take your project and throw it all
18 over adjacent properties, land, who is responsible
19 for all of the cleanup and the mess that occurs from
20 those type of events?

21 A. Yeah. Absolutely. So, the panels that we
22 use on this project are extensively weather tested.
23 We have operational projects in the state where we
24 do see tornadoes as well, and they are made to

1 withstand heavy weather events. They are tested for
2 that. They are built for that. They are made for
3 that.

4 But in the event that something does
5 happen that is out of our control, we have insurance
6 on the entire project area, and we would be
7 responsible.

8 Does that address your question?

9 Q. I guess.

10 A. Okay.

11 Q. And then another question I have about how
12 much or is there any water needed for solar at all?
13 Like, are there any water resources that you will be
14 using?

15 A. Not intensively. I know that we have some
16 landowners with wells on their property that could
17 be used for routine maintenance of the panels but
18 nothing intensive. No, nothing to support the
19 actual function of the solar facility.

20 MR. KEYT: Okay. Any other questions from
21 people?

22 Sir, in the hat right here, just stand up
23 and state your name.

24 MR. THOMAS: Jeff Thomas, just a local

1 Iroquois resident/farmer.

2 EXAMINATION

3 BY MR. THOMAS:

4 Q. I've got a couple questions. I know
5 there's probably a lot of people that have many, and
6 I just have one, which is: Are there any batteries
7 -- is there going to be battery storage on this
8 project?

9 A. No, sir.

10 Q. There are no batteries in use on this?

11 A. No.

12 Q. And so all the energy is produced and then
13 sent out; there is no storage?

14 A. Solar is the only component of this permit
15 application. Yes.

16 Q. Okay. I guess another portion of the
17 question -- I've got to get my notes here so I don't
18 forget. Where are the solar panels made that you
19 use?

20 A. We have relationships with multiple
21 manufacturers. We are unsure of which one will be
22 used for this project, but we prioritize our
23 domestic partners and try to source locally.

24 Q. So US made if you can?

1 A. Yes. Absolutely.

2 Q. Okay. What happens to the panels when
3 they are defective or no longer functioning?

4 A. Yeah. So, it's in our best interest to
5 only have functioning panels out in the field. That
6 is our responsibility to replace them if they are
7 defective, because if they are not capturing sun and
8 producing energy, you know, we are not seeing the
9 output that we need from our project. So, we
10 replace them as needed. We do routine maintenance.
11 And, again, we source tier 1 panels that are the
12 best on the market. They are weather resistant.
13 They are proven to be very efficient. We will
14 replace ones with any issues.

15 Q. So, where do you dispose of a solar panel?

16 A. It can either be recycled or sold on a
17 secondhand market. People want solar panels even if
18 they are used up a little bit. So, they don't just
19 go away. They are easily resold or recycled.

20 Q. Okay. I guess I'll leave it at that.

21 Thank you.

22 MR. KEYT: Okay. Next?

23 I think right here.

24 MR. KAEB: Anthony Kaeb, K-a-e-b.

EXAMINATION

- 1
2 BY MR. KAEB:
3 Q. I guess, do you have any -- talking about
4 the trees, or the boundary around the fence, do you
5 have any drawings as far as what kind of trees, what
6 spacing and/or anything like that?
7 **A.** No drawings present with us today, but the
8 vegetative screening that we put on the perimeter of
9 the project will adhere to the Iroquois County Solar
10 Ordinance. I believe it states evergreen trees.
11 It does not define spacing, but those
12 vegetative plans will be built in collaboration with
13 the county and the Iroquois County Soil and Water
14 Conservation District.
15 Q. That's all I have.
16 MR. KEYT: Thank you, Mr. Kaeb.
17 Any other questions for Ms. Merbach?
18 I missed somebody behind me. I'm sorry.
19 MS. MERKLE: Dawn Merkle.
20 MR. KEYT: How do you spell that?
21 MS. MERKLE: M-e-r-k-l-e.
22 MR. KEYT: Okay.

EXAMINATION

24 BY MS. MERKLE:

- 1 question to what was just asked.
2 Q. I can't hear her.
3 **A.** Oh. All good. We are responsible for the
4 maintenance both inside the fence line, on that
5 groundcover vegetation with that native pollinator
6 mix, underneath the panels, and also as well as the
7 vegetative buffer outside of the fence line.
8 Q. And how often do you come out and inspect
9 to make sure trees and flowers are doing okay?
10 **A.** We have full-time maintenance, or
11 long-term staff, to monitor the project and address
12 issues.
13 Q. And you say about the jobs that this is
14 going to bring. How can solar panels really bring
15 jobs besides the jobs that are brought in by the
16 construction of it?
17 **A.** The construction process will generate
18 hundreds of jobs with as much local resourced labor
19 as we are able to find.
20 Q. For 18 months, right?
21 And then, after that, there is no jobs?
22 **A.** Construction will be, yes, up to 12 to
23 18 months. And then long-term jobs can either be
24 local -- those are closer to probably eight to ten

- 1 Q. The trees that will be planted around the
2 perimeter, are they going to be watered so they
3 actually don't die?
4 **A.** I am sorry. Can you repeat that?
5 Q. Will the trees be watered so they don't
6 die?
7 **A.** Yes. We are fully in charge of that
8 maintenance. And should issues occur, we would
9 replant them.
10 MR. KEYT: Do you have any other
11 questions?
12 MS. MERKLE: (Shaking head.)
13 MR. KEYT: Back row. Yes, ma'am?
14 MS. MATTER: DiAnn Matter, spelled D-i
15 capital A-n-n M-a-t-t-e-r.
16 EXAMINATION
17 BY MS. MATTER:
18 Q. Now, when this vegetation -- what if these
19 trees die?
20 What if the wildflowers die?
21 Are you going to be responsible to replace
22 them?
23 **A.** Yes. So, we are in charge of full
24 maintenance of the project, and that was a similar

- 1 on a project of this size. That includes
2 maintenance of the grounds. We have sheep grazing
3 that will include a shepherd as well as folks of
4 that nature, also long-term remote operations,
5 people to check out the site consistently. It will
6 be close to eight to ten long-term jobs.
7 Q. Also, I had another question. I might get
8 back to you on that. I can't think of it at this
9 minute.
10 MR. KEYT: Okay. All right. Anybody who
11 has not had an opportunity to ask a question of
12 Ms. Merbach that wishes to ask questions of
13 Ms. Merbach?
14 Yes, sir. Right here.
15 RAY GRIEST: Ray Griest, G-r-i-e-s-t.
16 EXAMINATION
17 BY MR. GRIEST:
18 Q. My question is: The vegetation around
19 these perimeter fences -- okay? -- trees, trees and
20 any drainage tiles coming and going to the property
21 will destroy those tiles. How do you address that?
22 **A.** Yeah. The vegetative management that we
23 plan is required by the Iroquois County Commercial
24 Solar Energy Facility Ordinance. So, in order to

1 remain in compliance with that ordinance, we need to
2 do what is written, which does define trees. And I
3 think that could contextually be a larger
4 conversation when we go back for the building
5 permit. That vegetative management plan is a part
6 of the building permit.

7 I definitely see your point of wanting to
8 protect both the buffer and the drainage, as those
9 are top priorities for us. So, finding that balance
10 I think will be a larger conversation to be had with
11 the county. Thank you.

12 Q. Yeah. Thank you for your question,
13 Mr. Griest.

14 MR. KEYT: Okay. Thank you.

15 Any other questions?

16 Okay. In the back here?

17 EXAMINATION

18 BY MR. KAEB:

19 Q. Just one question.

20 Hartzell Kaeb, K-a-e-b.

21 On the legend, you have a red dotted line
22 and blue dotted line. On the map, which one of
23 those is the fence?

24 A. On a red dotted line? Okay. So, neither

1 of those are the fence. The blue dotted line that
2 kind of shows over our project area is, I believe
3 that is a 1.5 mile buffer just showing where
4 1.5 miles is in relation to the project boundary.
5 We will plan no facilities there. That is just more
6 of a buffer.

7 And then, the red line, too, is the parcel
8 boundary of the parcels participating in our
9 project.

10 Q. So, the fence goes around the red?

11 A. The fence will be inside the red and will
12 not go outside of the red at all.

13 It's shown -- and I am not sure if you can
14 see it well here -- I believe it's, like, a line and
15 an X that you'll see surrounding all of the gray
16 area which shows the solar panels.

17 Q. Okay. So, the fences will be inside of
18 the red line that you are showing here?

19 A. Yes. Absolutely.

20 MR. KEYT: Thank you.

21 Any other questions for Ms. Merbach?

22 FURTHER EXAMINATION

23 BY MS. MATTER:

24 Q. I remember the question I had now. I

1 would like to know if you've had any studies done of
2 how many jobs that you are going to take away from
3 the farmers using up their acreage of farm ground
4 that they are going to lose revenue and livelihood.

5 Have you taken studies of how many jobs
6 and how many people's lives that are affected by
7 putting solar panels on fertile farm ground?

8 How many jobs will be lost?

9 How many businesses might close down?

10 How many farmers won't be able to get
11 their seed corn? Because why get it? Because they
12 don't have any farm.

13 Plus --

14 MR. KEYT: Hold on, ma'am. Just one
15 question at a time. So, I think your question was:
16 Have you done studies on -- correct me if I am
17 wrong -- have you done studies in relation to the
18 negative impacts in relation to removing this land
19 out of farmland in terms of jobs?

20 Am I following that correct?

21 MS. MATTER: Yes. You are saying that
22 much better than I did.

23 MR. KEYT: That's okay. Probably not.

24 But, Ms. Merbach, can you answer that

1 question?

2 MS. MERBACH: Yeah. Absolutely.

3 So, we don't have a one-to-one comparison
4 study of that for the Two Roads Solar Project.

5 We have done that on other projects that
6 ran through development across the Midwest, and we
7 have found that the economic impacts, the good ones,
8 greatly outweigh the other job loss that we see in
9 other industries, with the tax revenue, the
10 injection of dollars in construction and operation,
11 we find the delta is significant and significantly
12 in a positive direction.

13 MS. MATTER: I just don't believe that.

14 But that's okay.

15 MR. KEYT: Okay. Any other questions for
16 Ms. Merbach?

17 Sir, with your hand up here?

18 MR. MATTER: Yeah. I got a quick one.

19 Steve Matter, M-a-t-t-e-r.

20 EXAMINATION

21 BY MR. MATTER:

22 Q. You had stated in your testimony, you said
23 you are going to give 300 feet of offset for these
24 folks that are surrounded by your panels. You said

1 that you will do all the vegetation and all the
2 stuff that is in the boundaries of the fence and at
3 the fence.

4 What about that 300 feet around that area?
5 Who is going to be responsible to take care of that?

6 **A.** Yeah. So, that is still within our
7 project area, and we are responsible for the
8 maintenance of that buffer. That 300-foot setback
9 is that voluntary setback from the 150 feet.

10 Q. Yes.

11 **A.** So, we are still in compliance with the
12 Iroquois County Solar Ordinance and are responsible
13 for any of our project facilities, including the
14 fence.

15 Q. So that will be mowed and taken care of?

16 **A.** Yes. Yes. That is correct.

17 MR. KEYT: Okay. Thank you.

18 Any other questions for Ms. Merbach?

19 I'll let you have one more. We can't go
20 round and round, but go ahead.

21 MR. THOMAS: I'm sorry. Jeff Thomas.

22 EXAMINATION

23 BY MR. THOMAS:

24 Q. Just on the finances of the project, what

1 percent or amount of money is being paid by state
2 tax dollars, and what amount or percentage is to be
3 paid by federal tax dollars for the project?

4 **A.** No percent. This is a complete private
5 investment that is a private investment. We don't
6 receive federal funding for these projects.

7 Q. No subsidies then?

8 **A.** We are eligible for tax credits that we do
9 tap into sometimes for building materials.

10 Q. Sure.

11 **A.** But even without them, the projects are
12 completely a private investment.

13 Q. Thank you.

14 MR. KEYT: Okay. Thank you.

15 All right. I didn't see any other hands
16 up. Did anybody else have questions for
17 Ms. Merbach?

18 Going once. Anybody back here?

19 Okay. All right. Back to the Zoning
20 Board of Appeals. Any further questions that you
21 folks have for Ms. Merbach?

22 Okay. Probably time to take a break. We
23 have been going about an hour. Holly needs to rest
24 her fingers, so we'll break until 7:15ish. So, plan

1 to be back and ready to go at 7:15.

2 (BREAK TAKEN.)

3 MR. KEYT: Okay, folks. We are going to
4 get started again. I think we completed questions
5 from Ms. Merbach.

6 You are excused.

7 Mr. Streicker, can you call your next
8 witness?

9 *JOHN BRADEN,*

10 a witness herein, called by the Applicant, after having
11 been first duly sworn, was examined, and testified as
12 follows:

13 EXAMINATION

14 BY MR. KEYT:

15 Q. Okay. John, before you say anything else,
16 give the court reporter your name and address, spell
17 your full name.

18 **A.** John Braden, J-o-h-n B-r-a-d-e-n. My
19 current address is 197 Mendez Loop, Kyle, Texas,
20 78640.

21 Q. And who is your employer, Mr. Braden?

22 **A.** SAM, S-A-M.

23 Q. Okay. Mr. Braden, go ahead.

24 **A.** Thank you. I'm John Braden. I'm a senior

1 project manager for SAM. SAM is one of the nation's
2 largest geospatial surveying and mapping companies.
3 We have been in business for over 30 years. We have
4 over 50 offices across the country.

5 I had a question about earlier. So, I
6 wanted to mention that we own all of our planes, our
7 sensors, our equipment, and all data that we process
8 for our clients is done here in the states. So, we
9 are going to do everything out of our offices here.

10 For this project, we are going to be doing
11 the aerial drain tile investigation. So, we are
12 going to collect RGB imagery and infrared data from
13 a fixed-wing platform flying over the site.

14 We are going to process that data with
15 some independent algorithms that we have developed
16 over the years to be able to visually see and
17 extract drain tile locations over the project area.

18 We have had very good success with this
19 exact same method for projects just like this before
20 in this region. We have been doing drain tile
21 analysis now for almost a decade, and I have been
22 instrumental in a lot of that process and procedures
23 that we have developed at SAM.

24 So, like I said, we have done a lot of

1 this work, and we are excited to be a part of this
2 project on this one.

3 That's really just the quick brief
4 explanation of why I'm here. So, I'll open it up
5 for any further questions or analysis that anybody
6 has for us.

7 EXAMINATION

8 BY MR. STREICKER:

9 Q. John, this is Dave Streicker. I have got
10 a question for you.

11 You were outside, but Ashton mentioned
12 that we would be doing the survey in the spring. Is
13 that correct?

14 A. That is. So, the acquisition window for
15 this type of work are very precise. We need to make
16 sure there are no crops in the fields. So, we are
17 in a spring acquisition window. It's going to be
18 post snow, post ice, but before the crops start
19 growing. So, we need a clear view of the soil. So,
20 there is a flight window there that kind of
21 restricts us.

22 And beyond that, whenever that window is
23 open, we need a significant rainfall event to occur,
24 and then we are going to go fly right after the

1 rainfall. So, our goal is to acquire within a day
2 or two of a significant rainfall event while the
3 field is actively drying.

4 If we do that with the algorithms in play
5 that we have developed, we will be able to see the
6 drain tiles where you couldn't visually see them in
7 the field.

8 Like I said, we have had very, very good
9 success with that process.

10 Q. And, John, Ashton also mentioned that we
11 are seeking a variance to do the tile survey that
12 you mentioned in the spring as opposed to
13 pre-application?

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. One of the reasons we couldn't do it
16 pre-application, I think you all were booked up, and
17 the weather conditions just didn't hit right for
18 what you need; is that correct?

19 A. Absolutely. I didn't know if you were
20 asking me.

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. Yeah. So, like I said, we need precise
23 windows. There is a window in the fall. Kind of
24 the opposite effect; it's after the crops are out of

1 the fields but before the first snowfall. But that
2 window didn't work for us, so now we are looking at
3 spring.

4 Q. Okay. If you could just describe, once
5 you are able to do this, you get the right weather
6 window in the spring, you go up there and do the
7 aerial survey, what does that survey show? What's
8 the deliverable?

9 A. The deliverable is going to be usually a
10 DGN/DXF. It's a map. It's a vectorization map,
11 like you get whenever you have a land survey done at
12 your house.

13 It's going to show the drain tile
14 locations drawn out, and you can view that in Google
15 Earth or any design-planning software that you have.

16 But basically it's just going to be a
17 two-dimensional map drawn with all the linear
18 delineations of the drain tiles per field.

19 Q. And you hope to find the drain tiles
20 themselves out in the field, correct?

21 A. Yes. That is the goal.

22 MR. STREICKER: Andy, we'll tender the
23 witness to the ZBA.

24 MR. KEYT: Okay. Gotcha.

1 Mr. Braden?

2 MR. BRADEN: Yes.

3 MR. KEYT: You are now subject to
4 questions from other people. I don't know if you
5 were in here when I went through all of the
6 explanations.

7 MR. BRADEN: Yes. I did hear that.

8 MR. KEYT: Okay. Zoning Board of Appeals,
9 any questions for Mr. Braden?

10 EXAMINATION

11 BY MR. RAPP:

12 Q. Yeah. I have a question. What is your
13 percentage of accuracy?

14 A. So, if we find a drain tile location,
15 without having to put any boots on the ground, no
16 ground survey effort, it's within two to three feet
17 of horizontal accuracy from where we draw.

18 So, once we find them and draw them, they
19 are going to be within two or three feet of
20 horizontal accuracy on the earth of where that drain
21 tile actually is.

22 Q. So, you don't -- after you do that, you
23 don't physically go out there and verify what you
24 found?

1 **A.** That's not part of the scope that we are
2 working on for this project.

3 **Q.** Okay. And is that any size of drain tile?

4 **A.** So, our camera resolution is down to a
5 quarter of a foot. So, all drain tile we encounter
6 is going to be larger than our investigation site.
7 So, we are going to be able to see all the types of
8 drain tiles that are down there.

9 **Q.** And you can't do that now?

10 **A.** If we had a proper weather window, and the
11 right weather event, we could do it as soon as we
12 are given the green light.

13 So, right now is a good time to do it,
14 assuming there is not snow or ice on the ground.
15 Snow or ice is going to affect the way the field
16 normally drains, and we can't base the drainage
17 analysis on snow or ice melt. It doesn't work the
18 same as an actual rainfall event.

19 So, if it's warm enough for, you know, a
20 week, and there is a rainfall event, there is no
21 reason why we couldn't do it now.

22 The reality is, after doing this for a
23 number years, springtime is going to be our best
24 shot.

1 **Q.** Thank you.

2 **MR. KEYT:** Okay. Any other questions for
3 the Zoning Board of Appeals?

4 Going once. Twice.

5 Okay. County staff, any questions for
6 this witness?

7 All right. Members of the public, anybody
8 from the public?

9 **Mr. Chandler?**

10 **EXAMINATION**

11 **BY MR. CHANDLER:**

12 **Q.** I've got a drain tile that runs at an
13 angle across one of these fields. Now, when you
14 make your map, will I be able to get a look at it to
15 make sure that you know where this tile is at and
16 make sure that you didn't miss it, so I can verify
17 where it's at on your map?

18 **A.** So, there's three stages to our mapping
19 process. The first stage includes getting all of
20 the data we can from current landowners. So, any
21 existing records you have, if you'll give that to us
22 at the beginning, it gives us a good idea where you
23 say there's drain tile.

24 **Q.** I can walk out and show you where it's at.

1 **A.** That is the first step, right? I's getting
2 all that information from all the people that are
3 involved that own the property. Sometimes it's hand
4 drawn on a napkin. We have seen that before.

5 **Q.** Well, that is what this is here. I can
6 show you where it comes in. I can show you where it
7 goes out. You know, like all tile, it doesn't go
8 straight. It kind of wanders a little bit.

9 **A.** Right. Right.

10 **Q.** But I can give you --

11 **A.** Any information that we can get from
12 landowners, we would love to have it at the
13 beginning of the project for sure.

14 **Q.** Well, come see me.

15 **A.** And then SAM also has access to
16 independent imagery archives. So, we will also look
17 through archives. Maybe there's some archival
18 imagery where we got lucky and we can see some tiles
19 there. So we'll look at that too.

20 And the third is our acquisition in
21 process.

22 So, all three together will combine into
23 one final project.

24 **Q.** Well, that's what I am concerned about.

1 **A.** Yes, sir.

2 **Q.** Good news so far.

3 **A.** So far.

4 **MR. KEYT:** All right. Thank you,
5 Mr. Chandler.

6 Yes, sir, in the back? You need to state
7 your name.

8 **MR. GRIEST:** Ray Griest.

9 **EXAMINATION**

10 **BY MR. GRIEST:**

11 **Q.** You said that you had to have bare ground
12 for this to be efficient?

13 **A.** Yes, sir.

14 **Q.** Okay. What do you do with grass grounds
15 or stalk grounds? How does your efficiency rate
16 under that?

17 **A.** Well, we are looking at drain tiles
18 underneath farm fields, right?

19 **Q.** Correct.

20 **A.** So, if there is anything growing on the
21 fields, we are going to be less effective. It's not
22 to say that we are not going to be able to see
23 anything, but it's going to seriously hinder the
24 effectiveness of the survey.

1 Q. You have grass that grows all the time,
2 but do you have stock from the previous year that
3 maybe wasn't -- the ground wasn't tiled? That is
4 what I am talking about. That stock revenue, can
5 you see through it?

6 A. Like I said, we've done a ton of these
7 projects over the last decade. I've never had -- if
8 it's an actively used farm field in between growing
9 seasons, we've never had a problem. So I assume
10 what you are talking about would be pretty prevalent
11 around most of them. We've never had an issue.

12 Q. There is a lot of grass up in this area.

13 A. Okay. Most of the work we do is up here.
14 Yeah. So, this is where our drain tile analysis is
15 every year.

16 MR. KEYT: Okay. Thank you, sir.

17 Are there any other questions for
18 Mr. Braden?

19 Yes, sir, in the back?

20 MR. RUST: Steve Rust, R-u-s-t.

21 EXAMINATION

22 BY MR. RUST:

23 Q. Are you going to sit there and say you got
24 technology, that you own this, that tile that's been

1 in there 150 years, and some of it is not even
2 hooked up yet, some of them got disconnected -- how
3 are you going to know which one's flowing and which
4 one is not running?

5 A. If the tile isn't actively draining, it's
6 not going to show up like a normal drain tile would.

7 Q. So, you are not really actually doing
8 nothing. You are showing the ones that are working,
9 yeah. Everybody knows them. The ones that are
10 still working, but they are not really hooked up,
11 but they are still there.

12 A. If it's inactive and not in use, then it's
13 not going to show up with our normal process.

14 Q. And you wouldn't care about them?

15 A. I wouldn't say I don't care, sir, but the
16 service that I provide, it's going to be a lot less
17 effective if the drain tile is not working.

18 Q. Yeah. That's --

19 MR. KEYT: Okay. Any other questions for
20 Mr. Braden, members of the public?

21 Yes, sir?

22 MR. WILLIAMS: Ray Williams, County Board.

23 MR. KEYT: Okay. Mr. Williams, go ahead.

24 EXAMINATION

1 BY MR. WILLIAMS:

2 Q. What is the depth that you can go down?

3 A. There isn't -- so, my data isn't going
4 anywhere past surface level, but our algorithms
5 allow us to see the difference in actively drawing
6 soil versus non-actively drawing soil, which allows
7 us to see the lineations where the drain tiles are.

8 And it's not an aerial survey where we are
9 going to see anything below the surface. I am not
10 looking below the surface.

11 If the drain tiles are installed, and in
12 use, and draining, and we fly whenever we say we are
13 going to fly, we'll have a good chance of seeing
14 them.

15 MR. KEYT: Okay. I think there was a
16 question over here. Here, in the checkered shirt.

17 MR. KAEB: Eric Kaeb, K-a-e-b.

18 EXAMINATION

19 BY MR. KAEB:

20 Q. So what about -- a couple questions. I
21 plant a lot of cover crop, so it's growing -- it
22 will be growing in the spring. Is that going to
23 alter any maps?

24 A. It's going to make my drain tile analysis

1 for SAM a lot less efficient in your fields.

2 Q. Okay. And then, being it's so dry, how
3 much rain do we need?

4 I mean, a lot of the tiles aren't running
5 right now. So, if we don't get much rain by spring,
6 will there be a possibility you can't even do it
7 this spring?

8 A. So, there would be a possibility, if we
9 don't get our weather window, that we may have to
10 reduce the restrictions on the weather window and
11 fly with a smaller rainfall event.

12 A rainfall event I need is just an inch of
13 rain. And so every year we have been doing this, we
14 have found that here, and we have not had a problem
15 waiting for the right weather. So, even an inch in
16 a -- we can call it a single rainfall event. I am
17 not saying an inch in a single storm. But, you
18 know, if it's an inch of rainfall over a day or two,
19 followed by some sunny skies, a front goes through,
20 the sun comes out, day three we are good to go.

21 MR. KEYT: Okay. Any other questions for
22 Mr. Braden?

23 Going once. Twice.

24 Back to the ZBA; any other questions?

1 Okay. Mr. Braden, I've got a couple just
2 so I understand correctly.

3 EXAMINATION

4 BY MR. KETY:

5 Q. Mr. Braden, the projects you have done
6 here -- is most of your work in Illinois?

7 A. Ohio, Illinois, Indiana. If I had to say
8 a majority, a majority of the work has probably been
9 in Ohio, but it's very, very similar to what we are
10 seeing here.

11 Q. In terms of locating where the drain tile
12 is, if I am understanding it correctly, you do a
13 flyover after a rain event to see where the water is
14 flowing to; am I understanding that correctly?

15 A. So, we can see the difference in actively
16 drawing soil directly over a drain tile versus
17 non-drawing soil over a drain tile.

18 So, the field is giving off different --
19 so it's really -- it's the infrared, near infrared
20 band of light we are going to collect non-visibly
21 off the surface, and we have algorithms that we run
22 that would allow us to see something that would be
23 nonvisible otherwise. So, the soil looks different
24 if it's above the drain tile.

1 Q. And is the plan to survey the project
2 parcels only, or project parcels and surrounding
3 parcels to that?

4 A. We always acquire much larger than just
5 the project parcel. So, we are going to end up
6 flying probably, if I had to guess, half a mile
7 buffer of the blue lines you see back there, which
8 is already a buffer.

9 We are not going to necessarily map all of
10 the drain tile in the areas outside of the parcels.
11 We are going to stick to drain tile mapping for only
12 the designated parcels that are in the project.

13 Q. When you do the mapping, are you able to
14 tell the size of the drain tile when you do it?

15 A. No. We will not report on width of tile.

16 Q. In terms of the drainage districts in the
17 area, and drainage district tile that may flow
18 through multiple properties, how do you account for
19 that?

20 A. I'm not sure I understand the question.
21 If it exists, and it's actively draining both
22 fields, we are going to see it in both fields. Like
23 I said, I don't understand what you are asking
24 exactly.

1 Q. I understand the confusion there. I guess
2 my question is: You are not -- from your survey,
3 you don't necessarily -- you are not able to tell
4 whether a tile is just on an individual field or if
5 it's part of a larger drainage district tile?

6 A. Correct.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. If it's all continuous, and I can map it
9 all the way through several properties, we will.

10 MR. KEYT: Understood. All right. I
11 don't have any more questions for you.

12 Zoning Board, any questions?

13 Sir, go ahead with your question.

14 MR. RUST: Mark Rust.

15 EXAMINATION

16 BY MR. RUST:

17 Q. I've got a question. Okay. Some of these
18 drain tiles, the drainage tiles, are six, eight feet
19 in the ground. Are you going to be able to detect
20 all that with your high-quality stuff?

21 A. If they are working, yes.

22 Q. You'll still be able to go that deep with
23 them?

24 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. Okay. And then, what about all the
2 laterals coming into that; will you be able to catch
3 all of them as well?

4 A. So, I don't want to mislead you and say
5 that this technology is going to collect 100 percent
6 of all drain tiles that are on your property,
7 period; but if the drain tiles are actively
8 draining, and we collect them when we say we are, we
9 have very high accuracy of what I just said.

10 So, if what you are talking about is part
11 of the drain tile system, on the ins and outs, where
12 there is active draining happening, we will be able
13 to see it on the map.

14 Q. Also, I have got an 80 that I am not
15 signed up for this crap, but the neighbors are
16 around. There is tile coming into my field that you
17 are going to fly theirs and see that. So am I going
18 to be able to see that tile and if they are draining
19 onto me?

20 And now am I going to have the runoff, a
21 lot more runoff on this?

22 So, are they going to overload my tiles as
23 they come in?

24 MR. STREICKER: If I can, this is Dave

1 Streicker. The project will be willing to share the
2 data of the map after it's completed with the
3 neighboring landowners, if that answers your
4 question.

5 MR. RUST: Even if I didn't sign up for
6 the job?

7 MR. STREICKER: That is correct. Yeah.
8 We are going to share it.

9 MR. KEYT: All right. Thank you, sir.
10 Okay. Any questions from the Zoning Board
11 of Appeals for this witness?

12 Going once. Going twice.

13 Mr. Braden, you are excused.

14 Mr. Streicker, your next witness?

15 MR. STREICKER: Thanks. We are going to
16 call Erin Bowen next.

17 *ERIN C. BOWEN,*
18 a witness herein, called by the Applicant, after having
19 been first duly sworn, was examined, and testified as
20 follows:

21 EXAMINATION

22 BY MR. KEYT:

23 Q. Okay. Ms. Bowen, can you give us your
24 name, spell the name, and also your address?

1 **A.** Erin Bowen, E-r-i-n B-o-w-e-n. 1 South
2 Wacker Drive, Suite 3550, Chicago, Illinois.

3 Q. Okay. Please proceed.

4 **A.** Good evening. My name is Erin Bowen. I
5 am an independent property value expert. I am an
6 MAI designated real estate appraiser.

7 At CohnReznick we specialize in impact
8 studies ranging from landfills, transmission lines,
9 and for the last eight years we have studied solar
10 facilities.

11 The applicant has submitted my report that
12 demonstrates solar facilities do not have an impact
13 on property values. I am going to spend a couple
14 minutes going over these conclusions and the
15 research that we have conducted.

16 So, at CohnReznick, we use data-driven
17 research and empirical evidence from actual sales
18 transactions. Our approach to study solar farm
19 impact on property values is threefold.

20 The first is to review published academic
21 literature, the second is to perform our own paired
22 sales analyses, and third is to conduct market
23 participant interviews.

24 For the academic literature, there have

1 been eight published academic studies in the United
2 States that focus on solar facilities and property
3 values.

4 I would like to highlight one study in
5 particular recently published by the Loyola
6 University in September of 2024 as it specifically
7 focuses on utility-scale solar facilities in the
8 Midwest, including Illinois.

9 The results of that study showed that
10 there was a slight positive impact on property
11 values ranging from .5 percent to 2 percentage
12 points which the authors of that study attributed to
13 the additional real estate tax revenue generated by
14 the solar facilities to the tax roll.

15 The other academic studies also show
16 similar conclusions. While the academic studies
17 tend to take a macro approach, looking at properties
18 up to a mile away from the solar facilities, at
19 CohnReznick, we prefer to take a micro approach.

20 We look at homes that directly abut a
21 solar project that have solar in their front yard,
22 backyards, and in some cases have solar surrounding
23 on all four sides; the thought being that, if there
24 is impact of property value, the homes that are

1 closest to the project, sharing a property boundary,
2 would have the greatest impact.

3 Our process involves identifying all homes
4 that share a property boundary with an existing
5 solar facility and then identify if any of those
6 homes have sold after the completion of a solar
7 facility.

8 We then compare that home to a similar
9 home in the larger community on an apples-to-apples
10 basis. For example, we'll compare a three-bedroom,
11 two-bath home with other three-bedroom, two-bath
12 homes, farmstead property on a large-acre lot as
13 compared to other farmstead properties.

14 We have found in our research of hundreds
15 of transactions that there is no impact to property
16 values for a variety of market indicators, including
17 total sale price, price per square foot, rate of
18 appreciation, days on market, conditions of sale.
19 We have also seen that solar does not deter new
20 construction.

21 And we have replicated our research on
22 over 45 solar facilities throughout the country. We
23 also want to make sure that we are not getting lost
24 in the data, and so we conducted market-participant

1 interviews. We have talked to people that are
2 directly involved in the listing and selling of
3 properties that are directly adjacent solar
4 facilities.

5 We have spoken to over 50 real estate
6 agents and brokers who have indicated that these
7 homes sold for full market value, that they received
8 multiple offers, and had similar marketing time.

9 We've also spoken with over a hundred
10 county and township assessors who have solar in
11 their jurisdiction. It is their job to identify and
12 track transactions and note any trends. These
13 assessors confirmed that they have not identified
14 any trends in home prices for homes being next to
15 solar, nor have they changed the way they have
16 assessed these properties.

17 So, in conclusion, our research shows that
18 there is no consistent negative impact to properties
19 adjacent to solar facilities, and our conclusions
20 have been confirmed by academic studies as well as
21 market participants.

22 Thank you.

23 MR. STREICKER: Could I have a couple
24 questions I wanted to ask?

1 MR. KEYT: Yes. That's fine.

2 EXAMINATION

3 BY MR. STREICKER:

4 Q. Erin, again, Dave Streicker. A couple
5 follow-up questions for you.

6 You mentioned that your report is attached
7 to the application; is that correct?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. And was that report prepared by you or
10 under your direct supervision?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. All right. And is there a co-author of
13 the report, Andrew Lines?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Okay. Same thing for him, he would have
16 been a participant as well?

17 A. Indeed. Yes.

18 Q. Okay. And your curriculum vitae is
19 attached to the report; is that correct?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Is that up to date as of today?

22 A. I believe it is. Yes.

23 Q. Okay. And, lastly, you mentioned that you
24 had spoken with a number of county assessors; is

1 that correct?

2 A. Uh-huh.

3 Q. Were any of those assessors in Illinois?

4 A. Yes, multiple.

5 Q. Okay. And what was the result of those
6 conversations?

7 A. That they have confirmed that they have
8 not seen any impact to property values.

9 Q. Because of solar projects?

10 A. Due to solar projects, they have not seen
11 any evidence to suggest that there has been impact
12 to property values based on solar farms.

13 MR. STREICKER: Thank you, Ms. Bowen.

14 Mr. Keyt, that is my last direct question.

15 MR. KEYT: Okay. Understood.

16 Any questions for the Zoning Board of
17 Appeals?

18 Yes, sir?

19 EXAMINATION

20 BY MR. ANDERSON:

21 Q. Your report is in our documentation?

22 A. Yes. Can you give the letter?

23 MR. STREICKER: Yes. It's Exhibit R to
24 the application.

1 MR. ANDERSON: Okay. Let me just -- under
2 R? Okay. Okay. Thank you.

3 MR. KEYT: Any other questions for the
4 Zoning Board of Appeals?

5 EXAMINATION

6 BY MR. SMITH:

7 Q. We are dealing with farm ground, not
8 residential properties, retail value.

9 A. So, we have studied both residential
10 properties, including farmstead properties as well
11 as vacant agricultural land, and our conclusions
12 apply to both our research on agricultural land as
13 well as single-family residential properties.

14 Q. If the farm ground -- say that company
15 goes bankrupt ten years down the road, and all that
16 stuff is just sitting in the field, is the value of
17 the property going to be like it is now? Prime farm
18 ground at 10 or \$14,000 an acre, or is it going to
19 be half of that?

20 A. My understanding is that there is a
21 decommission bond that is in place with every solar
22 project; and, therefore, if the property were to go
23 -- or the project were to go bankrupt, that there
24 would be mechanisms in place to remove that

1 equipment.

2 Q. Would that bond be increased per year due
3 to the fact of inflation?

4 A. That is not my area of expertise, but it
5 is my understanding that that is accounted for. I
6 would redirect that question to somebody else.

7 Q. I understand, but not all residential
8 properties have increased in value due to solar
9 systems.

10 A. My conclusions are that solar facilities
11 don't have any impact to the property values from
12 solar.

13 Q. Okay. That is your conclusion. It's not
14 mine, because I've had personal experiences, and
15 they do, just to tell everybody that.

16 MR. KEYT: Okay. Any other questions from
17 Zoning Board of Appeals members?

18 Going once. Going twice.

19 County staff, any questions for this
20 witness?

21 All right. Anybody from members of the
22 public?

23 Not county board, but members of the
24 public, any questions from members of the public?

1 We have got a few.

2 State your name.

3 MR. GRIEST: Steve Griest.

4 EXAMINATION

5 BY MR. GRIEST:

6 Q. Do you live around solar? Have you ever
7 lived around solar panels?

8 A. Personally, no.

9 Q. Would you do it?

10 A. Yes, I would.

11 Q. You would?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. So, your property values or whatever, your
14 house, if you buy it, it would stay the same?

15 A. My answer to your question is: I would
16 personally live next to solar, yes. And my research
17 demonstrates that there is no impact to property
18 values.

19 Q. All right. You did your survey. Did you
20 do your survey in the residential where the solar
21 panels are, or did you do it in fields, around the
22 fields, and when this house was going to be right in
23 the middle, and there is going to have solar on one
24 side, this side, this side, and this side, so there

1 is going to be solar panels around the whole house?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. You are talking now maybe they tell you
4 300 feet back, is what they are going to have their
5 setback. So now have you done studies where they
6 are that close to --

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. And out in the country, not in a
9 residential area?

10 A. Yes. My research includes over 45
11 existing solar facilities, including in rural
12 locations with solar as close to 80 feet from a
13 single -- from the improvement to the panels. My
14 research also includes examples of solar surrounding
15 a property on all four sides.

16 And in both of those cases that we do not
17 find any impact to the sale price of those homes.

18 Q. You'll guarantee that?

19 A. My research shows that, of the actual
20 sales that we have studied in those cases, we have
21 not seen any evidence or --

22 Q. You'll guarantee it?

23 A. I can't guarantee anything.

24 Q. I mean, who is going to buy a rural house

1 that has solar around it all?

2 A. My research shows actual homes that are
3 under the proposed conditions of this proposed
4 project, in which there are setbacks of less than
5 300 feet, and they are selling for just as much as
6 homes in the larger community that are not next to
7 the solar project, and that is confirmed by actual
8 sales data.

9 Q. But you can't guarantee that, right?

10 MR. KEYT: Hold on. I think you're
11 getting redundant here with that question. I think
12 it has been asked and responded to.

13 Is there any other questions for Ms. Bowen
14 from the public?

15 Going once. Going twice.

16 Okay. Zoning Board of Appeals, any other
17 questions from the Zoning Board of Appeals?

18 Going once. Twice.

19 Okay. Ms. Bowen, you are excused.

20 Mr. Streicker, is there another witness?

21 MR. STREICKER: Yes. We'll call Liam

22 Sawyer from Kimley-Horn.

23 *LIAM SAWYER,*

24 a witness herein, called by the Applicant, after having

1 been first duly sworn, was examined, and testified as
2 follows:

3 MR. SAWYER: My name is Liam Sawyer, L-i-a-m
4 S-a-w-y-e-r. I am located at 111 West Jackson Street,
5 Suite 1320, Chicago, Illinois, 60604. I am a licensed
6 engineer in the State of Illinois along with working with
7 Ryan Ams, who is also a professional engineer, and John
8 Conklin, who is also a professional engineer, on this
9 project.

10 I am here representing Kimley-Horn. We
11 provided a number of studies for this project and
12 deliverables, including the conditional use permit
13 site plan, which is really the crux of all the other
14 studies. This goes over the existing conditions
15 onsite, the property area, the topographic map,
16 probably most importantly the proposed conditions of
17 what is going to be out there, and that takes into
18 account, as Ashton shows, the setbacks required in
19 the Iroquois County code and other mitigating
20 factors such as environmental factors.

21 And then, we also provided a glare study,
22 a noise analysis. Kimley-Horn did the wetland
23 delineation. We prepared a decommissioning plan and
24 estimate.

1 You've heard that talked about here
2 before, but that goes through, at the end of life,
3 how this project is taken out of the ground and
4 returned to agricultural land, and it also provides
5 an estimate for the financial assurance we've talked
6 about that is part of what we prepared as well.

7 We also provided a transportation memo,
8 which is working with the local road authorities.
9 In this case, it's the Pigeon Grove Township and the
10 Loda Township and then also Iroquois County to make
11 sure that the route of construction traffic and
12 construction workers getting to the site is
13 appropriate and everyone is on board with it from
14 the township authorities.

15 And then also -- sorry. Things are
16 sliding.

17 We also helped Ranger Power prepare the
18 vegetative maintenance plan, working with, again,
19 Iroquois County and the Soil and Water Conservation
20 District. That is all part of the application.

21 I am not going to repeat everything Ashton
22 went over earlier, but if you go through our
23 deliverables, we meet all of the county
24 requirements, or exceed them, including setbacks.

1 Mr. Streicker has said that my query
2 report or analysis shows that there is no glare
3 anticipated onsite. The noise analysis, which as
4 said, takes the noise-producing equipment, that
5 meets the Illinois Pollution Control Board
6 standards, which is also Iroquois County's.

7 And then, we are also meeting
8 environmental standards. We have done coordination
9 and ongoing coordination with several environmental
10 agencies, including the US Army Corps of Engineers,
11 the IDNR, or Illinois Department of Natural
12 Resources, consultation with the US Fish & Wildlife
13 Service, and then also with the local authorities
14 around here as well.

15 But, yeah, and I don't want to rehash
16 anything. I just went through a whole bunch of
17 deliverables, but I am happy to answer any questions
18 on any of them from county board or members of the
19 public.

EXAMINATION

20 BY MR. STREICKER:

21 Q. Liam, I have a couple questions for you.

22 This is Dave Streicker.

23 You prepared a number of drawings and site
24

1 plans for the project; is that correct?

2 **A.** That is correct.

3 Q. Okay. Kimley-Horn has done this. I think
4 most of them are Exhibit F to the application.

5 **A.** Yes.

6 Q. Okay. And, you know, we talked about the
7 drawings you had prepared right now are a certain
8 status. For instance, those are not construction
9 drawings, correct?

10 **A.** They are not a construction drawing yet.
11 What was brought up earlier, this is merely the
12 first -- well, it is a step among many steps here.
13 This is a zoning approval. We would have to go back
14 to the county with a zoning permit, which is what we
15 eventually call issue for construction, which is the
16 full construction set that it would be built off of.

17 Q. And that is helpful, because we had a
18 couple questions about what stage we are at right
19 now and what we would have to provide at the
20 building permit stage.

21 And when you talk about a professional --
22 are you a professional engineer in Illinois?

23 **A.** I am a professional engineer in Illinois.

24 Q. Okay. And are you familiar with the term

1 "stamped" plans?

2 **A.** I am. Yes.

3 **Q.** So, at this point, the plans that you have
4 prepared are stamped but not for construction; is
5 that correct?

6 **A.** Yes. You could say what we exhibit as
7 Exhibit F, we have the stamp there that shows that
8 they have been prepared under the supervision of our
9 professional engineer, but they are not -- they are
10 not construction level, and they are not approved
11 for construction.

12 Again, that is protection for Iroquois
13 County that you need that building permit. I
14 personally don't take that stamp off until I get
15 that building permit, because that is when they are
16 approved for construction.

17 **Q.** Okay. So, that is a different set of
18 plans?

19 **A.** Yes.

20 **MR. KEYT:** Okay. Thank you. Are you
21 done?

22 **MR. STREICKER:** Yeah. I'll tender to the
23 ZBA.

24 **MR. KEYT:** Okay. Gotcha.

1 Zoning Board of Appeals, any questions for
2 this witness?

3 Going once. Going twice.

4 Okay. County staff, any questions?

5 All right. Members of the public, not
6 county board, any questions for this witness?

7 Okay. Going once.

8 Oh, I am sorry. Ms. Matter, go ahead.

9 EXAMINATION

10 BY MS. MATTER:

11 **Q.** DiAnn Matter.

12 I was just wondering, leukemia has been
13 associated with solar panels, and I was just
14 wondering: Have you guys done any studies for the
15 health effects that solar panels will cause with all
16 the dirty electricity and microwave electricity that
17 is going on in the universe, the solar panels?

18 **MR. STREICKER:** I would just object to
19 that question. There was a lot of assumption of
20 facts there.

21 Liam, I don't know if that is your
22 particular area of expertise or not.

23 **MR. KEYT:** Let's start with this: Is the
24 health safety impacts of solar panels within your

1 expertise? It is a yes or no.

2 **MR. SAWYER:** No.

3 **MR. KEYT:** Okay. All right.

4 **MS. MATTER:** So, is there somebody that is
5 here that would answer that?

6 **MR. KEYT:** Understood.

7 I understand you can't.

8 But, Mr. Streicker, is there someone on
9 your pool of witnesses that might be able to answer
10 or respond to that question?

11 **MS. MERBACH:** I can take that.

12 **MR. KEYT:** We'll come back to you, Ashton,
13 towards the end here.

14 **MR. SAWYER:** Mr. Keyt, I can. I have
15 reviewed -- North Carolina State has published
16 studies from experts that I have reviewed. So, I am
17 not the creator of that study, but I have reviewed
18 that before.

19 So, there are experts out there that have
20 shown that the panels are safe as well. I did not
21 prepare that report, but I have reviewed it from
22 academic journals.

23 **MR. STREICKER:** Okay. For the ZBA's
24 purpose, we do not have an independent health expert

1 here this evening.

2 **MR. KEYT:** Okay. Is there someone who
3 could answer or respond to that question?

4 **MR. STREICKER:** Better than what Liam just
5 did? No, we don't.

6 **MS. MATTER:** I think that should be
7 something that is looked into.

8 **MR. KEYT:** Hold on. Ms. Matter, do you
9 have another question for Mr. Sawyer?

10 **MS. MATTER:** No, I don't.

11 **MR. KEYT:** Okay. Understood.

12 Okay. Any other questions from members of
13 the public for Mr. Sawyer?

14 Going once. Going twice.

15 EXAMINATION

16 BY MR. RUST:

17 **Q.** Mark Rust.

18 Is there any way a guy could get a copy of
19 your plan of how these and where they are going to
20 be put at and everything on the land that is
21 available?

22 **A.** Yeah.

23 **Q.** I am talking not just the square map. I
24 am talking the solar panels. What fields are we

1 going to be using?

2 **A.** Talking to my clients, yeah, the building
3 permit is public. So, everything that has been
4 submitted is public record. We can talk after and
5 get contact information.

6 **MR. STREICKER:** This is Counsel Dave
7 Streicker. We will make those plans available.

8 **MR. RUST:** I would say, if he was the
9 engineer that drew the plans up for the solar
10 panels, where they are going to be, that's what I
11 just -- maybe he's not that.

12 **MR. STREICKER:** What you are asking for
13 will be made available. One of the things that I
14 was trying to get out with the questions of the
15 witness, is we have a plan right now, and when it
16 goes to the building permit stage and that final
17 engineering, those plans will be made available,
18 too, and those will show the intended locations of
19 the specific infrastructure.

20 **MR. RUST:** Okay.

21 **MR. KEYT:** Okay. Any other members of the
22 public have questions for Mr. Sawyer?

23 Yes, sir. State your name.

24 **MR. BOWMAN:** Terry Bowman.

1 EXAMINATION

2 BY MR. BOWMAN:

3 Q. What is the effects of wildlife?

4 **A.** Yeah. So, we take wildlife into
5 consideration. We are in consultation with both the
6 IDNR Fish & Wildlife and US Army Corps, and there
7 are several -- in fact, we are set back from any
8 potential habitats more than is required. We are
9 also avoiding any delineated streams.

10 And then, also, we are providing, as part
11 of the vegetation maintenance plan, as Ashton said,
12 pollinator species that attract bees and other local
13 pollinators, and usually we see a kind of net
14 positive impact to wildlife over the course of the
15 project.

16 **MR. ANDERSON:** Along that question --
17 Can it come back to me?

18 **MR. KEYT:** It can. Yeah. Go ahead.

19 EXAMINATION

20 BY MR. ANDERSON:

21 Q. Okay. On page 236 of the report -- okay?
22 -- it talks -- it addresses things that I think you
23 are talking about right now, and it uses two terms,
24 and I am not real sure what the terms mean as they

1 are used here.

2 It talks about certain things within the
3 project area. I would assume that would be the blue
4 line or the red line or the whatever.

5 **A.** It will be the red line that you are
6 shown. The blue line is just representative of a
7 buffer.

8 Q. Thank you. The other term then, on the
9 same page, talks about the vicinity of the project
10 area. What does vicinity mean in that regard?

11 **A.** It means the project area, and it's more
12 akin to kind of that blue line that you are seeing
13 here.

14 I am not sure about exactly every page of
15 the report. Can you tell me what page?

16 Q. 236 is where I am looking.

17 **MS. FELLER:** What tab?

18 Q. I'm sorry. Oh, what tab? I apologize.

19 **A.** No worries. Sorry about that.

20 Q. I thought the entire thing was numbers.

21 **A.** Yeah. So, Tab H is what's called the
22 IPAC. That is a Fish and Wildlife Service. It is a
23 tool that you use to see if there is any protected
24 or endangered species within the project vicinity.

1 So, it's an online tool within that. It takes a
2 buffer. I believe it is a mile buffer outside of
3 the project area that you put in to see if there is
4 any other protected or possibly endangered species
5 within that. So, that is what the vicinity of the
6 project means, is Fish and Wildlife doesn't just
7 look at the direct area; they look at the overall
8 vicinity as well.

9 Q. Okay. Thank you.

10 **MR. KEYT:** Okay. Any questions from
11 members of the public?

12 Anybody who has not had a chance to ask
13 questions that have a questions for Mr. Sawyer?

14 Going once. Going twice.

15 Okay. Back to the zoning board, any
16 questions from the Zoning Board of Appeals for this
17 witness?

18 I've got a couple.

19 EXAMINATION

20 BY MR. KETY:

21 Q. In relation to the soil, is there any
22 testing of the soils that takes place before the
23 panels are installed to determine productivity?

24 **A.** Of the -- we look at the USDA Soils Map,

1 which is a public mapping system. There is not
2 necessarily field testing. We have other wetland
3 delineations, but we use the USDA soil type maps for
4 what's out there, so Type A through D soils.

5 Q. How about after the panels are
6 decommissioned, is there any testing that takes
7 place after that timeframe?

8 A. As part of our decommissioning plan, we do
9 have a line for testing and maintenance that may
10 include soil testing. I can't say it will certainly
11 include it, but there is a line in our estimate for
12 testing.

13 MR. KEYT: Okay. Understood. All right.
14 Sir, we've already gone around here. So,
15 do you have one question? What do you have?

16 MR. RUST: Yeah. I've got one question.

17 MR. KEYT: All right. State your name for
18 the record.

19 MR. RUST: Mark Rust.

20 EXAMINATION

21 BY MR. RUST:

22 Q. I am just kind of thinking what he said of
23 the soil testing. Okay. What do you do?

24 You soil test?

1 I didn't hear the answer, really.

2 Do you soil test after the panels are
3 going to be gone?

4 A. So, we have included an amount of budget
5 within the decommissioning plan for testing. The
6 exact testing has not been specified yet.

7 Q. Okay. What are you going to do if all of
8 the tests come back where it's contaminated?

9 MR. STREICKER: I think, go back to what
10 Ashton said before; if it shows contamination, and
11 it can be traced to the project, it will have to be
12 addressed. But this is all going to be in the
13 decommissioning plan that ultimately gets worked
14 out.

15 MR. RUST: So, you'll be able to tell if
16 it's all contaminated. I am asking you, though,
17 what are you going to do if it is contaminated?

18 MR. STREICKER: If it's contaminated, and
19 it's a result of the project, as Ashton said, the
20 project is responsible and has insurance.

21 MR. RUST: So, you're going to take the
22 topsoil off and haul it that off?

23 MR. STREICKER: That would be a question
24 for a different day as far as what the contamination

1 is and the extent of it.

2 MR. RUST: Because if it's going to be
3 contaminated, it's going to have to be hauled off.

4 MR. STREICKER: It would have to be --

5 MR. KEYT: Hold on. Let's pause here for
6 just a second. We are kind of getting into,
7 number one, Mr. Streicker is not a witness.

8 MR. RUST: I am just curious on if it's
9 contaminated ground --

10 MR. KEYT: Hold on. I think Mr. Sawyer
11 probably has an answer of the question what if it's
12 contaminated.

13 Do I understand? You seem to be
14 indicating that.

15 MR. SAWYER: Well, it's -- part of the
16 Agricultural Impact Mitigation Agreement speaks to
17 that, which the project has entered into. It's with
18 the State of Illinois Department of Agriculture that
19 goes through what happens if soil is contaminated
20 and how to remediate it.

21 The project has already entered into that
22 agreement, and that is a state statute, and we would
23 follow those rules.

24 MR. KEYT: Okay. Any other questions?

1 Zoning Board of Appeals, it is back to
2 you, but any other questions for this witness?

3 Okay. Mr. Sawyer, you are excused.

4 Mr. Streicker, any other witness?

5 MR. STREICKER: Yes. Thank you. That
6 completes our prepared presentation tonight.

7 We would like to -- if there are any
8 public comment after any evidence or anything else,
9 we would like to reserve time to respond to that if
10 there is time.

11 MR. KEYT: We'll consider it.

12 MR. STREICKER: Otherwise, that completes
13 our prepared presentation.

14 MR. KEYT: Okay. Understood.

15 Why don't we take a break for about
16 15 minutes, for the Zoning Board of Appeals, during
17 the break, just to consider, is there any witness
18 you want to recall, whether Ashton or somebody else
19 from the development team, or if there is a topic
20 you want to hear from that you haven't heard about.

21 MR. ANDERSON: I have three or four
22 questions, but I don't know who to ask. Can I just
23 toss out a question and let them field it?

24 MR. KEYT: Yeah. We can do that. We'll

1 do that after the break.

2 Why don't we break until 8:15?

3 MR. ANDERSON: Thank you.

4 MR. KEYT: We'll be in recess until 8:15.

5 (BREAK TAKEN.)

6 MR. KEYT: We are back on the record. It
7 is 8:17, and we will reconvene.

8 Before we get to public testimony, I think
9 there was maybe a few questions from the zoning
10 board. We are not quite sure who on the Ranger
11 Power Group would be able to answer it, but why
12 don't we go and ask those questions.

13 Whoever is going to answer it, come up to
14 the podium. Same thing, state your name so Holly
15 has it, and then answer the question.

16 Go ahead.

17 *ASHTON MERBACH,*
18 a witness recalled, after having been first duly sworn,
19 was examined, and testified as follows:

20 EXAMINATION

21 BY MR. ANDERSON:

22 Q. I think it was Ms. Merbach that was
23 speaking maybe when this first question comes to my
24 mind.

1 You talked about the total acreage is
2 4,468 acres, and something about 3,000 acres would
3 be utilized?

4 **A.** Yes. Am I okay to respond from here?

5 Q. So, the rest of that is buffer and border
6 and whatever?

7 **A.** Yeah. Again, so my name is Ashton
8 Merbach, M-e-r-b-a-c-h.

9 We are seeking a permit for 4,468.2 total
10 parcel acres.

11 Q. Uh-huh.

12 **A.** The end project, end result of the
13 project, with all of our facilities, buffers, etc.,
14 will be sited on more like 3,000 of that acreage.

15 Q. Okay. Right after that you said something
16 about there being a percentage of Iroquois County
17 acres?

18 **A.** Yes. Yeah. So that number was --

19 Q. Go ahead.

20 **A.** Are you asking how that --

21 Q. What was the percentage?

22 **A.** It was 0.45 percent.

23 Q. Okay. Is that tillable acres or total
24 acres?

1 **A.** That was a number that I sourced from the
2 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture for Iroquois County,
3 Illinois. It was a public resource. It reported a
4 figure close to 669,000 total farmed acreage. I am
5 not sure how that's defined by the USDA, but that's
6 the report I pulled that from.

7 Q. Okay. Thank you.

8 **A.** Yeah.

9 Q. My next question you may or may not be the
10 person for this.

11 We haven't said anything, and I am
12 concerned about not only Route 45 but also the
13 secondary roads and such in terms of congestion,
14 damage to the roads from excess wear. Can you say a
15 little bit about that issue?

16 **A.** Yeah. Absolutely. So, as part of our
17 Conditional Use Permit, we submitted a potential
18 transportation plan. I am not sure what exhibit
19 number that is for you to reference.

20 Q. Okay.

21 **A.** I can find that for you here quick.

22 Transportation Memorandum and Acces Plan is Exhibit
23 P.

24 Q. Okay.

1 **A.** That shows what roads we preliminarily
2 intend to use. Of course, that will be adjusted
3 based on our final construction design, but that is
4 based on the preliminary site layout.

5 Based on the Iroquois County Ordinance, we
6 need to engage with the local record authorities, be
7 that county or township level, and execute a road
8 use agreement, which covers things like potential
9 damage to roads --

10 Q. Uh-huh.

11 **A.** -- and making sure that they are repaired,
12 should any damage occur through construction.

13 We only expect construction -- or I am
14 sorry -- traffic on the roads from our project for
15 construction, the long-term use of the land will not
16 result in a lot more traffic. It will just be a
17 couple cars a week going out to the project site.

18 Q. I am sure people here use Route 45 and
19 secondary roads.

20 **A.** Yes.

21 Q. You know, I go up 45 every morning. I
22 come back in the afternoon. I sure hope I don't
23 have to sit there like a train and wait for trucks
24 and things to get off the road.

1 **A.** I don't think it will be that intensive --
 2 **Q.** Okay.
 3 **A.** -- nor all at once. There will be trucks
 4 coming in with our building materials at designated
 5 points of time, but I don't think it will be as
 6 extreme as what you might envision.
 7 **Q.** Okay. I think that may be the extent of
 8 my questions.
 9 **MR. WAGNER:** I have one.
 10 **MR. KEYT:** Yes, sir.
 11 **EXAMINATION**
 12 **BY MR. WAGNER:**
 13 **Q.** Of the 3,000 acres, or the 22
 14 participating farmers, how many of them are going to
 15 actually get a solar farm on theirs or solar sites
 16 on theirs? Or will they all get something? Or will
 17 some get none?
 18 **A.** With the siting of the project, is that
 19 what you are saying?
 20 **Q.** Yeah. I know you don't know the final
 21 siting, but is there any estimate of how many are
 22 going to get something on their property?
 23 **A.** So, that would be determined closer to the
 24 final plan for construction, is when we actually

1 know what land, how much we will use in our final
 2 plans. That will be more toward the building
 3 permit.
 4 **Q.** The other question I have, I think along
 5 that line, is: If folks who are not in the program
 6 -- and that is my terminology.
 7 **A.** Sure.
 8 **Q.** They are not in the program now but wish
 9 to later, can they -- can they become part of it?
 10 **And then, do you come back and ask for an**
 11 **additional 300 acres or whatever?**
 12 **A.** Should that happen, we are certainly open
 13 to having that conversation. And if the land was
 14 added to the project, we would come back to amend
 15 our permit --
 16 **Q.** Okay.
 17 **A.** -- and ensure that you guys know our plan.
 18 And any additional land, we would have to go through
 19 that process again.
 20 **Q.** Okay. Thank you very much.
 21 **MR. KEYT:** Okay. Any other questions for
 22 the Zoning Board of Appeals?
 23 **Okay.** Staff, any questions just based on
 24 the follow-up that has occurred?

1 Members of the public, not county board,
 2 is there any questions just based on the additional
 3 information that has been provided?
 4 Going once.
 5 Yes, ma'am, in the back?
 6 **EXAMINATION**
 7 **BY MS. MERKLE:**
 8 **Q.** Dawn Merkle.
 9 So, is there currently, or do you foresee
 10 in the future, expansion of what you are already
 11 planning to do?
 12 **A.** Our current plans just include the
 13 footprint that we have here. While there's no
 14 certainty, we don't have current plans for
 15 development outside of these perimeters.
 16 **MR. KEYT:** Any other questions,
 17 Ms. Merkle?
 18 **MS. MERKLE:** No.
 19 **MR. KEYT:** Okay. Any other questions?
 20 Sir, in the back, state your name again.
 21 **EXAMINATION**
 22 **BY MR. RUST:**
 23 **Q.** Mark Rust.
 24 Okay. Is there going to be any estimation

1 done as far as the land better or filling in all the
 2 wet holes or anything in the waterways?
 3 **A.** Making land better, can you elaborate on
 4 that?
 5 **Q.** Just making it better --
 6 **MR. STREICKER:** Just objection to outside
 7 the scope of what you had said.
 8 **BY MR. RUST:**
 9 **Q.** Are you going to be doing excavation work
 10 to level the land and put these poles up and make it
 11 all level across there? Are you going to do any
 12 excavation of that?
 13 **MR. KEYT:** Hold on a second. There was an
 14 objection to it being outside the scope. It
 15 probably is, but if you can answer the question, go
 16 ahead.
 17 **MS. MERBACH:** Our current plans for
 18 developing and siting our project will be malleable
 19 with the existing features. For example, drainage
 20 ditches, you know, we won't improve those or shift
 21 those to accommodate our plans here.
 22 Is that what you are asking?
 23 **BY MR. RUST:**
 24 **Q.** No. I am asking: If you are going to

1 level off the land, or where there's a wet hole or
2 something like that, are you going to make it
3 smooth?

4 **A.** This might be a better question for our
5 environmental consultants.

6 **Q.** Okay.

7 **A.** The site is fairly flat. We don't expect
8 a lot of grading of sorts to happen.

9 But if William Sawyer can come up here?

10 **MR. SAWYER:** Yeah. William Sawyer again.

11 When this design comes, Mr. Rust, the
12 imperative is to leave the existing drainage
13 topography as normal to coexisting conditions as
14 possible. This land is pretty ideal for solar
15 farms. It is flat. There might be some minor
16 grading, but it won't be extensive.

17 Across the site, the panel technology has
18 a pretty high tolerance to deal with topographic
19 features. So, typically we try to minimize any
20 potential grading work, if possible, to the project.

21 **MR. RUST:** So, where the waterways are on
22 fields, are you going to go through the waterways?

23 Are you going to go over waterways?

24 The waterways are going to stay?

1 What are you going to do with waterways,
2 grass waterways?

3 **MS. MERBACH:** That is back to Liam.

4 **MR. SAWYER:** Yeah. So, we've done a
5 delineation report that identifies there's different
6 types of waterways. There is regulated waterways
7 and nonregulated. We will keep any regulated
8 waterways. We have a buffer that is off that we
9 will not be disturbing, by state law and permit.
10 And then other drainage features onsite we do take
11 into account, when designing, to utilize those to
12 our advantage and typically try to maintain them, if
13 there is a grass-line swale.

14 *ASHTON MERBACH,*

15 a witness herein recalled, testified as follows:

16 EXAMINATION

17 BY MR. RUST:

18 **Q.** Typically?

19 I mean, are you going to keep them the way
20 they are?

21 I mean I've got water that runs through
22 some of these waterways that this property is going
23 to go on. Are you going to keep them? Or are you
24 going to -- what are you going to do about it?

1 **A.** We can discuss certain features of yours
2 post meeting, if that is important to you, but we
3 also have no right to alter anything on your
4 property if you are not participating with the
5 project.

6 **Q.** Okay. But I got another field that's on
7 the other side of me. I didn't sign up for the
8 junk, and their water comes over onto me. So, it's
9 going to -- some runs in the catch basin.

10 So, I am going to get all of that runoff
11 water more to me now, because usually they are
12 soaked into the ground a little bit, and now we are
13 going to get the runoff on it. So, how are you
14 going to fix that?

15 **A.** We've seen no increase in runoff from our
16 projects. We have a permanent vegetative cover
17 under all of our solar panels. It's not just dirt.
18 It's all deep-rooted vegetation. So, we are seeing
19 actually improvement throughout all these properties
20 from our projects.

21 **Q.** So, these panels, no water runs off of
22 them; it all trickles into the ground?

23 **A.** The water can trickle off the panel, but
24 then it's caught by permanent ground vegetative

1 cover that limits runoff from the land.

2 **Q.** When we get these two or three inches of
3 rain, that water doesn't run through there? And
4 it's not going to pour off --

5 **MR. STREICKER:** Just so you know, there
6 are legal protections in Illinois. You can't make
7 runoff worse on the neighbor's property. It won't
8 happen, okay?

9 And I think what you are talking about is
10 the water running off, is going to be --

11 **MR. RUST:** Have you ever been there to
12 see?

13 **MR. KEYT:** Hold on. Hold on. Stop.

14 **MR. STREICKER:** Well, I am telling you
15 what the law is. You have been very argumentative.

16 **MR. KEYT:** Hold on. Dave, hold on.

17 We are getting argumentative, and this is
18 not helping.

19 **Mr. Rust,** do you have any other questions?

20 **MR. RUST:** No. That is it.

21 **MR. KEYT:** Any other questions based on
22 the follow-up that has happened, not something that
23 is brand new here, from the zoning board, any
24 questions?

1 Ma'am, in the back, you are going to have
 2 to state your name for the court reporter over here.
 3 MS. BACHMAN: Tina Bachman, B-a-c-h-m-a-n.
 4 EXAMINATION
 5 BY MS. BACHMAN:
 6 Q. Nothing has been talked about with the
 7 fencing that you are putting around the property.
 8 What kind of fencing are you putting?
 9 And are you doing barbed wire at the top,
 10 with wildlife?
 11 What's your --
 12 MR. KEYT: I think that question is beyond
 13 the scope of what we've come back to with the zoning
 14 board here, but --
 15 MS. BACHMAN: It comes back to the
 16 environmental with being right there with trees and
 17 all the deer that are in that area. What is your --
 18 MR. KEYT: I think we haven't had any
 19 information about it. So, can you provide just a
 20 very overview of what the fencing would be?
 21 MS. MERBACH: Yeah. Absolutely. So, the
 22 fencing that will be surrounding the project area is
 23 mandated by the Iroquois County Commercial Solar
 24 Energy Facility Ordinance. They require a woven

1 wire fence and no barbed wire will be on top.
 2 MR. KEYT: Okay. Any other questions?
 3 Again, based on the follow-up that just occurred
 4 from the zoning board, any other questions following
 5 up on that?
 6 Going once. Going twice.
 7 Okay. Hearing none.
 8 Okay. I think we have concluded the
 9 witnesses from the developer; is that correct,
 10 Mr. Streicker?
 11 MR. STREICKER: That is correct. Yes,
 12 sir.
 13 MR. KEYT: Okay. There's a number of
 14 exhibits, which we can come down to or mark later
 15 for the record.
 16 We are about 8:30. We'll go until about
 17 8:45 at the most.
 18 Members of the public, how many people
 19 wish to testify or provide public comment? Testify
 20 or provide public comment? One, two, three. It
 21 looks like an auction.
 22 Zoning Board of Appeals, I think we can
 23 probably get through the testimony at least. Who
 24 wants to start off first with the public?

1 Ms. Merbach, you are excused.
 2 MS. MERBACH: Thank you.
 3 MR. KEYT: Okay. Come on up to the
 4 podium. Do you have any documents or anything like
 5 that you wish to put into the record?
 6 And you can submit either documents or
 7 provide testimony.
 8 MS. MATTER: Do I submit it?
 9 MR. KEYT: Bring it on up here, if you
 10 can.
 11 Okay. Ms. Matter, correct?
 12 MS. MATTER: Yes.
 13 MR. KEYT: Okay. Ms. Matter, you have
 14 submitted a typed-up document. We are just going to
 15 mark it as Matter Exhibit Number 1, for the record.
 16 First of all, you've got to get sworn in.
 17 *DIANN MATTER,*
 18 a witness herein, after having been first duly sworn, was
 19 examined, and testified as follows:
 20 MR. KEYT: Okay. Ms. Matter, if you can,
 21 give us your name and spelling again, and then also
 22 your address.
 23 MS. MATTER: My name is DiAnn Matter, D-i
 24 capital A-n-n M-a-t-t-e-r, and I live in Joliet. I

1 came from Buckley. I have property in Buckley.
 2 Good evening ladies and gentlemen of
 3 Iroquois County Planning Commission.
 4 My name is DiAnn Matter, and I am a
 5 landowner. I am here to support my local farmers
 6 who have spent their entire lives farming to support
 7 America's food chain.
 8 Farmers support their local communities.
 9 They give so much back to the community by
 10 supporting their local churches, schools, donating
 11 time to one another, helping each other out with
 12 tasks.
 13 This is a farming community. We work
 14 together, and we play together. We know a lot of
 15 farmers because that is what we are. We are
 16 professional caretakers of the land.
 17 Please stop letting these companies take
 18 our profession and livelihood away.
 19 Thank you for this opportunity to voice my
 20 concerns over solar farms being put in Iroquois
 21 County.
 22 Solar farms and wind farms are just the
 23 beginning. Next come industrial-size AI centers
 24 popping up all over Illinois, using billions of

1 gallons and gallons of water and electricity that
 2 could power entire states.
 3 Have environmental studies been done?
 4 I am going to add this one, too: Has any
 5 health studies been done?
 6 Think about the ecosystem and how this
 7 will disrupt fish, birds, and deer in our community.
 8 Do you have any answers to these questions
 9 I am about to ask?
 10 If you don't, I believe it's time for you
 11 to get them.
 12 What are the advantages to the county for
 13 approving solar farms?
 14 What will they do to our community?
 15 What will they donate to local schools,
 16 food banks, and the elderly?
 17 What's the plan if this fails?
 18 Will the county be left holding the bag?
 19 Think about the devastation to our small
 20 community. Local grain elevators will lose
 21 business, farmers won't be able to buy supplies, and
 22 jobs will be lost, insurance companies will pull out
 23 because they won't insure solar farms, leaving
 24 landowners with nothing. Property values will

1 plummet, and tax revenues will dry up.
 2 If you promote this, you are literally
 3 bringing thieves -- you are being thieves of your
 4 own citizens. You are robbing our community of
 5 their quality of life and livelihood.
 6 The solar farms will pay for
 7 infrastructure and service, but what happens when
 8 they don't?
 9 We are stuck with them.
 10 And what about the ripple effect?
 11 Local businesses will suffer. Farm
 12 implement dealers will lose sales, and our community
 13 will wither.
 14 These companies, they do not care about
 15 us. They are taking some of the best fertile farm
 16 ground in the United States and disrupting our
 17 quality of life. They are stealing from the
 18 American farmers that supply our food chain.
 19 You are being influenced by money and
 20 fast-talking lawyers and false lies. Don't be pawns
 21 in their game. Be diligent. Listen to the people,
 22 and think about the heroes you will be if you stop
 23 this insanity.
 24 Don't rush into something you fully don't

1 understand. Please stop this. Please stop using us
 2 landowners who lived, farmed, and raised our kids
 3 here to support billion-dollar companies. I beg
 4 you; stop these projects now.
 5 Think about the future. No more 4-H. No
 6 more Iroquois County fair. No more Farm Bureau.
 7 Is this what you want for Iroquois County?
 8 I did do a little paper. I gave it to
 9 him, and I am submitting the document so that can be
 10 read and understood what is really going on here.
 11 Corporate greed at its finest is taking
 12 advantage of small-town America by sweet talking you
 13 into believing that this is the best thing that will
 14 ever happen to this county.
 15 If it's too good to be true, then there
 16 must be a catch. Please take the time to educate
 17 yourself what is really happening to our county. Be
 18 careful for what you vote for. It may be the worst
 19 decision of your life. Don't do something the
 20 future generations of farmers will never be able to
 21 undo.
 22 I pray to the God Almighty that you all do
 23 the right thing and deny these applications to
 24 preserve small-town America where farming is our way

1 of life.
 2 Thank you, and I really hope you think
 3 long and hard before you make such a huge decision.
 4 Thank you for your time.
 5 MR. KEYT: Okay. Thank you, Ms. Matter.
 6 Hold on one second. Sorry.
 7 Does anybody from the Zoning Board of
 8 Appeals have questions for her?
 9 Yes, sir?
 10 EXAMINATION
 11 BY MR. RAPP:
 12 Q. I have a question. Are you addressing
 13 this to us?
 14 A. To anybody here that will listen to me.
 15 MR. RAPP: I better shut up.
 16 MR. KEYT: It's okay.
 17 All right. Any other questions from
 18 Zoning Board of Appeals members?
 19 Okay. Any questions from staff?
 20 Any questions from members of the public?
 21 Any questions from the developer?
 22 MR. STREICKER: We would just like to
 23 reserve. I haven't seen Exhibit 1, and this was
 24 more comment than actual testimony. So, not at this

1 time.

2 MR. KEYT: I'll tell you what: For
3 simplicity, if it's okay with you, Ms. Matter, I can
4 just read it into the record.

5 MS. MATTER: Sure.

6 MR. KEYT: Okay. Okay. Matter -- I am
7 going to say Matter Hearing Exhibit Number 1. Okay:

8 Solar panels harbor hazardous materials,
9 including hydrochloric acid, sulfuric acid, nitric
10 acid, hydrogen fluoride, trichloroethylene, acetone,
11 other hazardous chemicals that are released during
12 the manufacture and disposal of solar panels,
13 including cadmium compound, silicone, tetrachloride,
14 hexachloroethane, and led -- excuse my
15 pronunciations there -- hazards of data centers
16 increase vulnerability to security breaches.

17 Cooling a 400-acre data center requires,
18 for example, a 100-megawatt data center could use up
19 to 530,000 gallons of water daily, equating to 6,500
20 households. So, a 400-acre facility potentially
21 operating at a similar scale may consume several
22 million gallons of water daily, depleting water from
23 aquifers and draining water from wells and water
24 sources.

1 The waste contaminant water is then
2 released to the environment to enter our
3 groundwater, thus polluting our water supply.

4 It takes an absorbant amount of
5 electricity to operate these facilities, so thus
6 creating residents' electricity bills to increase.

7 For a 100-megawatt facility consuming the
8 same amount of power per year as 350,000 to 400,000
9 electric cars, a larger facility can use as much
10 electricity as a medium-size power plant. This
11 information is from US Energy.

12 Did I read that correctly, Ms. Matter?

13 MS. MATTER: Yes.

14 MR. KEYT: Okay. All right. I just
15 wanted to read it into the record so the Zoning
16 Board of Appeals has it and members of the public
17 have it. Okay.

18 EXAMINATION

19 BY MS. FELLER:

20 Q. I do have one question for Ms. Matter.

21 And this is just for my own records, but
22 what is the parcel number or the address of the
23 property that you own in Iroquois County?

24 A. The parcel that I own?

1 Q. Yes.

2 A. It's -- I don't even know the address.

3 Q. Or the address?

4 Like I said, this is just for my records.

5 A. For your records?

6 Q. Yes.

7 A. In Buckley or Joliet?

8 Q. In Buckley.

9 A. In Buckley, it's like -- I don't know --
10 200 North East Road or something like that.

11 MS. FELLER: Okay.

12 MR. KEYT: Okay. Thank you, Ms. Matter.

13 Anybody else that wishes to provide public
14 testimony?

15 Mr. Rust, I know you are going to roll
16 your eyes, but can you state your name for the court
17 reporter again?

18 MR. RUST: Mark Rust.

19 MR. KEYT: And, Mr. Rust, can you state
20 your address, please?

21 MR. RUST: 354 East 200 North Road, Loda,
22 Illinois, 60948.

23 MR. KEYT: Okay. Please proceed, sir.

24 MR. RUST: Do I got to swear in?

1 MR. KEYT: Yes.

2 *MARK RUST,*

3 after having been first duly sworn, was examined, and
4 testified as follows:

5 MR. RUST: Good evening members of the
6 board and fellow neighbors here.

7 I am Mark Rust. My family has lived on
8 our land for generations. It is more than just
9 property. It's our history.

10 While I support the transition of
11 renewable energy, it should not come at expense of
12 our most productive agricultural land and our rural
13 identity.

14 I am here to oppose the transition of our
15 family land into solar farms for several critical
16 reasons.

17 Large-scale solar development often
18 requires clearing, grading, heavy machinery that
19 compacts soil and strips away fertile topsoil.

20 Critiques have argued that even if panels
21 are removed decades later, the unique balance of
22 nutrients may never fully return, rendering the land
23 fallow for future generations.

24 Our community depends on agriculture.

1 Replacing thousands of acres of productive fields
2 with industrial rows of glass, metal can detailize
3 [sic] local agricultural economy.

4 While solar provides revenue for some, it
5 employs fewer people than active farming, and it can
6 hinder the growth of our next generation of farmers.

7 Concerns remain regarding the habitat,
8 depression, dips -- redition [sic]-- increased water
9 runoff and potential soil contamination.

10 In 2025, many rural communities have
11 raised alarms about the toxic substances leaching
12 into the groundwater if panels are damaged by storms
13 and hail.

14 We love to live here for the green fields,
15 the open sky. Replacing this with miles of dark
16 panels and high fencing, it alters the character of
17 our home and can negatively impact the property
18 values of our neighbors.

19 There are better places for this
20 technology, such as roughly 600,000 acres of unused
21 industrial roof space, contaminated brown fields
22 that are unsuitable for farming.

23 I am putting Iroquois County on notice:
24 We are watching and will hold you accountable for

1 these future actions. You will be remembered as the
2 council that sold out for future corporate greed.

3 Our ancestors clinged to this ground with
4 their own hands. It was their dream to let the next
5 generation's gates open for the industrialization.

6 I urge you to prioritize the preservation
7 of our agricultural heritage and vote against the
8 project. Thank you.

9 Okay. I know we answered some questions
10 here before, too, but I just got some highlights
11 here about the runoff water.

12 It's going to be like concrete, okay?

13 They say it's not going to run off. I
14 kind of see how it can't, but it's going to be like
15 concrete where it runs off.

16 We all know Loda water goes to Cissna
17 Park, and it comes up here to Watseka. Okay. We
18 got all this runoff now, and it usually soaks into
19 the ground for a little while, and then it will run
20 off. This is going to run off into one of our
21 ditches, and now it's going to get to Cissna Park
22 that much faster, and it's going to get to Watseka
23 that much faster. And we know, when water comes
24 from Loda, sometimes when it's a really big rain, it

1 floods Watseka. We have got to be aware of that, I
2 guess.

3 What about the tile they are going to
4 break?

5 Are they going to fix them?

6 Is there a written agreement, with the
7 tile, if they are going to fix them or not?

8 What are they going to do?

9 Like I say, I've got a main drainage
10 district tile on one farm that they are going to
11 have. There's other tile from the other farms that
12 is not signed up for that to go into it. Are they
13 going to take care of that as well to make sure that
14 water goes in the drainage district tile?

15 And with all this runoff water, if the old
16 drainage district tile isn't real good, we are going
17 to put more water into it, and now that drainage
18 district tile is going to maybe break out and blow
19 out more, and who is going to fix that and be liable
20 for that?

21 What if they find a post in the ground and
22 they hit tile?

23 They said they are going to do studies.

24 Are they going to find every tile?

1 We don't know that.

2 Are they going to fix them?

3 All the local businesses is going to hurt
4 around here by this. You know, we've got our local
5 fertilizer guy; he's going to hurt for it.

6 Our local seed guys that we have, they are
7 going to hurt for it.

8 Our local fuel man.

9 We buy all our inputs locally pretty well,
10 and all those people are going to get hurt from it.
11 It's not going to help us at all.

12 These guys are going to come in and say,
13 "Oh, yes, 108 people come here to work."

14 They are going to be out of here in no
15 time. We are going to have maybe five or six they
16 say that is going to take care of it.

17 Are they? Who knows.

18 I just -- we've all lived in this area
19 most of our life. I think we should have to say
20 whether we -- how about put a vote on it at a tax
21 ref -- not a tax, but the election. Can we put a
22 vote on it and see if the people in Iroquois County
23 even want it?

24 I think there is a lot of concerns yet

1 before this project moves ahead that we need to
 2 answer.
 3 In closing, you know, WGFA, I always
 4 thought it meant the "world's greatest farming
 5 area," but I kind of wonder anymore if it's going to
 6 be with this on here.
 7 With that, thank you. Any questions?
 8 MR. KEYT: Okay. Any questions for
 9 Mr. Rust? Zoning Board of Appeals?
 10 Going once. Twice. Hearing none.
 11 Staff, any questions?
 12 Any questions from members of the public
 13 or the developer for Mr. Rust?
 14 Questions? Going once. Going twice.
 15 Okay. Sold.
 16 Thank you very much. Anyone else wishing
 17 to make testimony?
 18 Yes, sir.
 19 MR. EIGHNER: Not necessarily testimony
 20 but public comment.
 21 MR. KEYT: Okay. Well, you can make
 22 public comment.
 23 But before we get to that --
 24 MR. EIGHNER: No, that's fine.

1 MR. KEYT: Before we get to that anybody
 2 else that wishes to provide any testimony or
 3 documents, evidence for the zoning board to
 4 consider?
 5 Going once. Twice. Anybody?
 6 Okay. Hearing none.
 7 We can then move on to public comment. Is
 8 there anybody else that wishes to make public
 9 comment, other than the gentleman over here?
 10 Going once. Twice.
 11 Okay. Sir, why don't you come on up? You
 12 Can give public comment. You are limited to three
 13 minutes, I believe, for public comment.
 14 PUBLIC COMMENT
 15 BY MR. EIGHNER:
 16 My name is Mark, M-a-r-k, Eighner,
 17 E-i-g-h-n-e-r. I reside at 305 North Main in
 18 Rankin.
 19 I'm a quarter owner of property in
 20 Iroquois County, landowner in Iroquois County, and
 21 my siblings and myself voluntarily signed up for the
 22 solar program.
 23 We are excited about it. As landowners,
 24 we think it's our right, especially if you have a

1 conditional use agreement as well.
 2 I assume everybody in this room is
 3 familiar with the economic impact. They talked
 4 about it a little bit earlier as far as the county
 5 board.
 6 The economic impact, basically it shows
 7 where taxing bodies, 14 different taxing bodies,
 8 will receive revenue during the whole lifetime of
 9 this program, of up to 81 million in Iroquois
 10 County.
 11 So, for example, out of the 14 bodies, you
 12 are talking about fire departments, townships, roads
 13 and bridges, libraries, and schools. They are all
 14 going to benefit for the EAV off these solar panels.
 15 I think the economic impact showed that for Iroquois
 16 County.
 17 For example, in the school system, I know
 18 a lot about school finance. Take Cissna Park, for
 19 example; Cissna Park is going to see, year one,
 20 around \$404,000. Year one.
 21 Does everybody understand what \$404,000
 22 means?
 23 Basically, if you take \$150,000 cash value
 24 home, and you move it down to the assessed value,

1 50,000, and you got somebody that lives there with a
 2 \$6,000 tax exemption, it's a \$44,000 piece of
 3 property they are going to pay taxes on. And in
 4 Cissna Park School District, it's \$4.66 per hundred.
 5 So, they are going to pay about \$2,050 on that
 6 property.
 7 So, that's just like saying, in Cissna
 8 Park, you are going to get 404,000. That is like
 9 building 197 homes. When is the last time you built
 10 197 homes?
 11 I mean I am just -- I am talking about it
 12 for economics, okay?
 13 That economic impact is critical. In a
 14 school district, there is no new revenue, folks.
 15 None. You're taxed. Because you did something to
 16 your property, your assessed value goes up, and you
 17 get taxed. That is what operates the school system.
 18 There's three sources. There's federal,
 19 state, and local. Cissna Park schools is about
 20 79 percent local dollars that runs it. So, you are
 21 going to bring in a lifetime \$10.2 million to a
 22 school district that could use it.
 23 The Buckley Fire Department, they are
 24 going to bring in 240,000 year one. They respond to

1 fires on your properties. It's going to give them
2 the equipment they need to do a good job.

3 MR. KEYT: Okay, sir. Your time is up.

4 MR. EIGHNER: Thank you.

5 MR. KEYT: Thank you.

6 All right. Anybody else wishing to make
7 public --

8 Yes, sir. Come on up.

9 Other than this gentleman here, anybody
10 else that wishes to make public comment?

11 Going once.

12 MR. COULTER: Yeah. I'll speak.

13 MR. KEYT: I'm sorry?

14 MR. COULTER: I'll speak.

15 MR. KEYT: Okay.

16 Go ahead, sir. You are going to have to
17 give your name.

18 PUBLIC COMMENT

19 BY MR. SIMPSON:

20 Dane Simpson. Residence is 4208 West Park
21 Range Way, Peoria, Illinois. I am Renewable Energy
22 Director for the Great Plains Laborers-Employers
23 Cooperation and Education Trust. We are a labor
24 union that builds renewable energy projects along

1 with roads, bridges, schools, firehouses, and
2 commercial buildings across the state of Illinois.

3 We have a very small project just like
4 this project that is going on right now in Scott
5 County, Iowa, 300-plus megawatts. It's employing
6 400 construction craft laborers. There will be
7 probably another 250 IBEW electricians and probably
8 another 120 union operators, and that is non peak.
9 At peak, this spring, we are going to be looking at
10 closer to 600 construction craft laborers on that
11 project.

12 Economic impact for our members, I know it
13 was brought up. I know these are temporary
14 part-time jobs. So is an attorney. So is the
15 barber. You know, you go from one haircut to the
16 next haircut to the next. That is what our
17 construction members do day in and day out. The
18 first day on any project they are already working
19 themselves out of a job.

20 These jobs in renewable energy projects,
21 like Ranger is talking about today, they help our
22 members who live in this community, the members from
23 Local 751 come from Kankakee, Iroquois, and Ford
24 County, and those are the people who will be doing

1 the work on this project.

2 Those members buy cars in your community.
3 They pay their taxes in your community. They put
4 backpacks on their children in this community off of
5 projects like these.

6 So, we are thankful for Ranger to be
7 landing in our community, to be building this
8 project here in Iroquois County, and fully support
9 the project.

10 Thank you.

11 MR. KEYT: Okay. Last one. I assume
12 there is nobody else after this gentleman here?

13 MS. FELLER: Can I ask that gentleman that
14 just spoke a question?

15 MR. KEYT: Yeah. That's fine.

16 MS. FELLER: I am sorry.

17 MR. SIMPSON: I'll take a question. Sure.

18 MS. FELLER: I just have a quick question:
19 The project that you said you are working on, do you
20 have a website for that project or anything that you
21 can share with me? I would like to -- just for my
22 own knowledge.

23 MR. SIMPSON: Yeah. I probably can.

24 MS. FELLER: Okay.

1 MR. SIMPSON: I'll look it up and then
2 give it to you.

3 MS. FELLER: Perfect. Thank you.

4 MR. KEYT: Come on up. You've got
5 three minutes.

6 State your name for Holly.

7 PUBLIC COMMENT

8 BY MR. COULTER:

9 My name is Ben Coulter, C-o-u-l-t-e-r. I
10 just wanted to say, you know, a lot of this land is
11 being used for energy production already. You are
12 growing corn for ethenol. You are growing beans,
13 bio diesel.

14 I mean you are taking sunlight and you are
15 turning it into energy currently. You are just
16 cutting a lot of expenses. I mean this isn't -- it
17 is productive ground. I mean you can grow an okay
18 crop. It's not Champaign County.

19 I mean, I feel like, when you are talking
20 about low commodity prices year after year, low
21 production, I mean sometimes the economics say maybe
22 it's time to look in a different direction. I don't
23 think Loda is a bad place to do it.

24 That's really all I wanted to say.

1 MR. KEYT: Okay. All right. Last one, if
2 I understand it correctly.

3 PUBLIC COMMENT

4 BY MR. KABE:

5 Todd Kabe from Cissna Park. I just wanted
6 to say two things: 1.) I took the time to go down
7 and look at the Dressor Solar Field that Ranger
8 Power put in down in Southern Illinois in the
9 Ramsey-Herrick area a week ago. I wanted to see
10 what kind of work they did, what it looked like, do
11 they do what they say they are going to do, is the
12 end result what this county expects, what does it
13 look like, how does it work.

14 And I think that my only conclusion would
15 be, to the county board, that I believe they will do
16 exactly what the contracts say. I think we need to
17 make sure that we understand what the expectations
18 are, and I think Ranger Power will do it if we
19 establish the perimeter trees, the perimeter fences.

20 I just counted up, and according to those
21 prints over there, there's 26 participating
22 entities. That means there is 26 people that are
23 getting some sort of revenue from these solar
24 panels.

1 There are 69 entities on that, in that
2 blue fence, that are not. I assume, since they are
3 nonparticipating, they aren't getting any revenue;
4 but they are close enough in proximity that they are
5 either going to have to look at them, live around
6 them, or see them.

7 So, I asked just the county board to take
8 care of the 69 entities because -- along with the 26
9 participating entities, would be my request.

10 So, thank you. That is all I have to say.

11 MR. KEYT: Okay. I think we've completed
12 public comment.

13 Anybody else that wants to make public
14 comment?

15 Going once. Going twice.

16 Okay. Closed on public comment.

17 Okay. We are at the hour. We are past
18 where we were going to plan to keep going. We are
19 going to need to prepare findings of fact and
20 conditions for the zoning board, so we'll have to
21 recess and come back a night to do that.

22 So, I am going to suggest -- I don't know
23 if staff has a suggestion. I was going to suggest
24 the week of the 19th. Now, we also are here on the

1 28th, and it may not take that long to do this. So,
2 if we wanted to do it on the 28th we could, but
3 there's three other projects already on that night.
4 So, if we want to do a separate night.

5 MR. ANDERSON: Let's do separate.

6 MR. KEYT: Okay. It may take a little bit
7 to get through it all anyway. So, why don't you
8 consider some day on the 19th if that -- or some day
9 on the week of the 19th. You guys think about that.

10 I am going to make one comment.

11 MS. FELLER: Okay. The 19th is a holiday.
12 We are closed, so that day will not work.

13 MR. KEYT: Yeah. I just meant the week of
14 the 19th.

15 MS. FELLER: Okay. Oh, the 20th? I am
16 good on the 20th.

17 MR. KEYT: Let's just go on down the list.
18 Would January 20th work?

19 Would that work for you, Holly?

20 COURT REPORTER: What time are you going
21 to do it?

22 MR. KEYT: Six.

23 COURT REPORTER: Yes.

24 MR. KEYT: We just need a quorum to make a

1 decision. Does the 20th work? January 20, that is
2 a Tuesday; is that right?

3 Okay. Hearing no objections. Okay.

4 Before we recess then, one thing: There
5 has been some comments about doing a referendum or
6 some other thing in relation to a solar project.

7 Just so everybody understands, there is a
8 state statute that was passed in January of 2023.
9 The state statute mandates to the county that the
10 county adopt certain provisions into its own
11 ordinance.

12 It essentially says here's the parameters,
13 here is the criteria we want you to adjudge solar
14 projects by.

15 And then also, in the state statute, in
16 subparagraph G, states: A request for siting
17 approval or special use permit for a commercial wind
18 energy facility or commercial solar energy facility
19 or modification of an approved siting for special
20 use permit shall be approved if the request is in
21 compliance with the standards and conditions imposed
22 in this act and zoning ordinance adopted with the
23 existence of this code and conditions imposed under
24 state and federal statutes and regulations.

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