

STATE OF ILLINOIS
PIATT COUNTY ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

GOOSE CREEK WIND, LLC
APPLICATION FOR A SPECIAL USE PERMIT

12/07/2022
6:00 P.M. - 9:00P.M.
Held at Monticello, IL, Community Building

PIATT COUNTY ZONING OFFICER:
Keri Nusbaum

HEARING FACILITATOR:
Scott Kains, Esq.

PIATT COUNTY ZONING BOARD MEMBERS:
Loyd Wax - Chairman
Jim Harrington - Vice Chairman
Paul Foran

PIATT COUNTY BOARD MEMBERS:
Todd Henricks
Michael Beem
Kathleen Piatt

COUNSEL FOR THE PIATT COUNTY BOARD:
Andrew J. Keyt, Esq.

COUNSEL FOR THE APPLICANT:
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APPLICANT - APEX CLEAN ENERGY:
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COUNSEL FOR THE OBJECTORS:
Phillip A. Luetkehans, Esq.

COURT REPORTER: Tammy Greenfield, CSR

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1 CHAIRMAN WAX: Let's call the meeting to
2 order. Would you join me in the pledge of allegiance to
3 the flag.

4 (WHEREUPON, the Pledge
5 of Allegiance was recited.

6 CHAIRMAN WAX: May we have a roll call of
7 the zoning board members, please.

8 MS. NUSBAUM: Sure. Mr. Larson, Mr.
9 Harrington.

10 MR. HARRINGTON: Here.

11 MS. NUSBAUM: Mr. Lovin, Mr. Wax.

12 CHAIRMAN WAX: Here.

13 MS. NUSBAUM: Mr. Chambers, Mr. Foran.

14 MR. FORAN: Here.

15 MS. NUSBAUM: State's Attorney Perry.

16 CHAIRMAN WAX: Okay. Do you want to take
17 roll of the county board members?

18 MS. NUSBAUM: Sure. Mr. Henricks.

19 MR. HENRICKS: Here.

20 MS. NUSBAUM: Mr. Edwards, Mr. Beem.

21 MR. BEEM: Present.

22 MS. NUSBAUM: Ms. Jones. Ms. Piatt.

23 MS. PIATT: Here.

24 MS. NUSBAUM: Mr. Shumard.

1 Thank you.

2 CHAIRMAN WAX: Thank you.

3 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: All right. Good
4 evening good, ladies and gentlemen. We are continuing with
5 testimony from the applicant.

6 Prior to Mr. Gershon calling his final witness, are
7 there any preliminary matters, Mr. Gershon?

8 MR. GERSHON: None for us. Thank you.

9 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Anything from
10 you, Mr. Luetkehans?

11 MR. LUETKEHANS: No, sir.

12 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good.

13 All right. Mr. Gershon, you may call your next
14 witness.

15 MR. GERSHON: Thank you. As we submitted
16 last night, the press release by Rivian and Apex regarding
17 our purchase agreement with Rivian, I'm pleased to
18 introduce Zach Dietmeier, who's senior management for
19 communications at the Normal facility.

20 EXAMINATION

21 BY MR. GERSON:

22 Q. Would you state your name -- actually, I apologize.
23 Want to swear you in first.

24 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Mr. Dietmeier, if

1 you could raise your right hand to be sworn by the court
2 reporter, please.

3 (WHEREUPON, the witness
4 was sworn.)

5 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: And, Mr. Gershon,
6 are you tendering this gentleman as an expert?

7 MR. GERSHON: Thank you. Thank you. No,
8 I'm not. We're tendering him as an informational witness
9 with respect to the subject matter of the press release.

10 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: All right. He'll
11 have 15 minutes.

12 MR. GERSHON: Thank you.

13 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good. You
14 may proceed.

15 BY THE WITNESS:

16 A. Excellent. Thank you. As mentioned, I'm Zach,
17 Dietmeier, senior manager for public affairs. I'm based in
18 Normal, Illinois, just living up the road. I'm from a
19 small western central Illinois community call Aledo, which
20 you may be familiar with. There's 3500 people in Mercer
21 County, but more relevant to the folks in Monticello that
22 would be the Sage's football coach Cully Welter, former
23 hometown, so -- and former neighbor of mine -- and happy to
24 see the success he's had down in these parts.

1 For those of you who don't know Rivian, however,
2 we're a fully electric pickup truck, SUV and electric
3 delivery van manufacturer just 40 miles from this spot
4 right here (indicating) in Normal, Illinois. And our
5 mission to create products and services out of our facility
6 that help not only the planet transition to carbon-neutral
7 energy and transportation, but we focus heavily on economic
8 sustainability for our communities as well.

9 We're here to share our excitement about the power
10 purchase agreement we just signed this week with Apex for
11 50 megawatts worth of clean electricity generated by the
12 proposed Goose Creek Wind Farm. And the Goose Creek
13 project would make it possible for Rivian to power our
14 first manufacturing campus in Normal with clean power
15 generated right here (indicating) in central Illinois.

16 And as we look forward to this development, we
17 welcome the opportunity to take anyone interested on a tour
18 up the road of our facility, also happy to have a chance to
19 meet some of the board members before this. We have about
20 180 open job positions at the plant as well, and happy to
21 share more with the residents of Piatt County on that
22 front.

23 As Rivian's really first major renewable energy
24 purchase in Illinois, this project is something that we're

1 extremely proud of and know that this will support local
2 jobs, economic development, right here (indicating) in
3 Piatt County and new tax revenues for local schools and
4 services as well. Our normal plant currently employs about
5 6800 workers and has created economic development
6 opportunities already across the region of central
7 Illinois. We really view ourselves as a regional project
8 as well. Our employees come from across about a 90-mile
9 radius of Normal. That certainly includes dozens of
10 employees right here in Piatt County. I know we have
11 groups daily come from Monticello, Mansfield, Deland, Cisco
12 and Bement, to be quite specific on that front. We just
13 added about 110 new employees on Monday of this week as
14 well. So it's definitely a regional prospect. We consider
15 this very local to us and are very excited to see the
16 opportunities come out of this opportunity.

17 Rivian, really proud of the relationship we already
18 have with Apex as well. We're in the process of developing
19 a wind turbine on our site that's about two-and-a-half
20 megawatts of energy mainly focused on our charging yard for
21 our plant. As the vehicles roll off the line it's a chance
22 for us to fully power that first charge for a vehicle going
23 to the consumer as it rolls out of Normal and ships across
24 North America.

1 Three -- the three points we really want to focus
2 on at this time, though, is this is a project helping to
3 keep energy, not only for Rivian but for central Illinois,
4 right here in central Illinois. It's our first major
5 renewable project and it really demonstrates our commitment
6 to the regional community as a whole. And typically the
7 energy from wind projects you don't see that much of a
8 local emphasis. And in this case the energy only traveling
9 40 miles for us is very uncommon and absolutely something
10 that we're excited about.

11 We also invest in high impact renewables projects.
12 And this being the first is a great example in part of the
13 country where they're fairly scarce. You're likely well
14 aware by now Illinois' grid really only powered by just
15 about by 11% renewable energy. So for our company that's
16 less than the national average of 20% and we are hopeful to
17 see that increase quite significantly.

18 We also choose to do site selections a little bit
19 differently. We have a partnership with the nature
20 conservancy, and this is the first project that we are
21 emphasizing with that group. But the site selection
22 process really zeroes in on projects that go above and
23 beyond in terms of impact, not only for the carbon
24 footprint but for the communities as a whole. We're

1 working with TNC at this time to put out more information
2 about that process. It's called the site renewables
3 project with TNC, expecting to see that in the next three
4 to six months in particular, so stay tuned for more detail
5 on that one.

6 But we really picked this Goose Creek Wind project
7 because we believe it incorporates all of our
8 considerations across the board and have selected Apex as
9 our partner because we have great trust in the company's
10 proven competence, integrity and execution and commitment
11 to supporting local communities and enhancing local
12 ecosystems. And we encourage everyone to share in that
13 sense of pride that we have and are really impressed with
14 how this has moved forward and are looking forward to
15 helping power regional industry with jobs from homegrown
16 energy. So thank you for the time and happy to answer
17 questions.

18 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good. Thank
19 you, Mr. Dietmeier.

20 Any additional questions from you, Mr. Gershon?

21 Q. Just one to verify. Does your press release
22 indicate that this project is not approved?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Thank you.

1 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good.

2 Questions for Mr. Dietmeier from members of the
3 Piatt County Zoning Board of Appeals?

4 Mr. Harrington.

5 MR. HARRINGTON: Thank you.

6 EXAMINATION

7 BY MR. HARRINGTON:

8 Q. Could you tell me what does TNC stand for?

9 A. The Nature Conservancy.

10 Q. The Nature Conservancy, okay. That's great. I
11 guess tell me a little bit more about that. What is your
12 motivation? I know that's a buzz word right now, but what
13 is, what is your thoughts on this?

14 A. With the partnership with The Nature Conservancy?
15 Essentially how Rivian views this is part of our mission
16 with electric vehicles is to help move away from more
17 carbon to, to -- I should say less carbon emission -- not
18 only on the transportation side but also on the energy
19 side. We have more broadly participated with The Nature
20 Conservancy in conservation projects outside of renewable
21 energy. Many of those are with one in particular in north
22 central Illinois with a prairie restoration project. We're
23 looking to do more of that around our facility as well.
24 They're very helpful with information, very experienced on

1 that front, and it allows us to cover a lot of ground.
2 They have projects all over the globe as well, so another
3 project in Oklahoma was focused on rounding up bison with
4 an electric vehicle. It doesn't make any sound so that's a
5 really efficient way to essentially provide a more powerful
6 version of a horse for that kind of project. So it really
7 runs the gamut with how we approach that.

8 Q. So is there something about this particular project
9 that lends to that, or maybe I missed that in your previous
10 statement.

11 A. Sure. So it's, it's, it's really a new approach to
12 site selection we're partnering with The Nature Conservancy
13 on, and it helps to really focus down on projects that,
14 that do focus on community impacts from a beneficial
15 nature. So it -- on the greater sense, you know, the
16 renewable energy coming out of that is the focus, but we
17 want to make sure it's more broadly highly impactful to
18 communities and beneficial for all.

19 Q. Okay. You mentioned you got a lot of trust in
20 Apex. Do you already have a venture of some sort to gain
21 that or what does that refer to?

22 A. We worked with Apex to approve a project in the
23 city limits of the town of Normal. We are in the process
24 of building about a 500-foot turbine on our property.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. The plant is incorporated in the city limits so it
3 required an ordinance approval this last spring, and Apex
4 is the one providing for that turbine. We hope to really
5 kick start that construction in the spring upcoming.

6 Q. Great. So I'd have to ask just out of curiosity
7 there's a lot of other wind projects in McLean County,
8 right?

9 A. Sure.

10 Q. And I assume based on your comments you haven't
11 partnered with them. What, what held you up before now?
12 What was the reason you haven't done this before now?

13 A. The availability is, is the reason there. They're
14 already in existence. They have their own purchase
15 agreements with others. As a McLean County resident, most
16 of that energy does not stay in McLean County.

17 So for us it's really about seeing the opportunity
18 to keep it regionally and certainly having seen those
19 projects it excites me to have the opportunity to keep wind
20 energy local.

21 Q. Right. So I hear you. It's interesting, isn't it,
22 that you hear a lot about it's for the local but a lot of
23 it doesn't stay local so I hear what you're saying.

24 That's all I got.

1 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good.

2 Mr. Wax.

3 EXAMINATION

4 BY CHAIRMAN WAX:

5 Q. I'm curious about how many of the electrical
6 pickups are you producing per year now and what is your
7 anticipation of production in the next two or three years?

8 A. I can't largely speak to that. I'm constrained by
9 Securities and Exchange Commission regulation. I can tell
10 you that as of quarter three this year -- we began
11 production in September of 2021.

12 Q. Uh-huh.

13 A. -- and we produced just under 15,000 vehicles this
14 year so far. Our target, we reaffirmed, 25,000 for this
15 upcoming year. That scale will continue to grow.

16 Q. Very good.

17 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Any other
18 questions from members of the zoning board?

19 Very good. Questions for Mr. Dietmeier from
20 members of units of local government, including school
21 districts.

22 Questions from interested parties represented by
23 licensed attorneys. Mr. Luetkehans.

24 MR. LUETKEHANS: Yes.

1 EXAMINATION

2 BY MR. LUETKEHANS:

3 Q. I heard Mr. Gershon -- I don't think I'm on. I
4 heard Mr. Gershon ask you about your press release.
5 However, I see Apex's name on this press release. Did they
6 issue this or did you?

7 A. It's posted on our website as well. It was a joint
8 press release.

9 Q. Okay. But the only -- the website at the bottom of
10 the first page -- or the bottom of the first page says --
11 Apex Clean Energy and the website referred to on the first
12 page again is apexcleanenergy.com, correct?

13 A. I believe so.

14 Q. Okay. When you say TNC -- talk to me about TNC.
15 I've dealt with TNC. And you said something about site
16 selection. I'm sorry. I know the question was asked, but
17 I didn't really understand the specifics of what TNC is
18 doing here. What are they doing in relation to this wind
19 farm, I guess, is my question.

20 A. I can't speak largely to that specific in regards
21 to this. It's part of a way that we show and how we work.
22 A lot of their consultation allows us to better understand
23 what these most beneficial and high impact projects are.

24 Q. Okay. So, just so I'm clear, it doesn't appear --

1 I mean TNC -- and I understand you work with them and
2 they're a great organization -- but I haven't heard exactly
3 what TNC is doing in relation to this wind farm and your
4 project, or did I miss it? That's really what I'm trying
5 to understand because I haven't heard it yet.

6 A. I apologize. I'm not informed on that one.

7 Q. Okay. Fair enough. So you were just telling us
8 about your general relationship with TNC?

9 A. Correct. Correct.

10 Q. Oh, okay. Fair enough.

11 You said -- and I guess I'm -- you're about 40
12 miles away from here. How far away are you from the
13 proposed project?

14 A. I believe it is right on 40 miles as well.

15 Q. Okay. And is there a transmission -- is there a
16 dedicated line going from this project to Rivian?

17 A. I can't speak to the, the MISO considerations there
18 with how the electricity is dedicated. But as far as I'm
19 aware with utilities, this is a significant benefit. For
20 us, it allows us to show our support for this, this wind
21 project directly. And for our benefit, we see it as a
22 commitment to continue to view it as a regional project
23 with how we benefit more renewable energy in the area.

24 Q. Okay. So you had this relationship with Apex as it

1 related to your single 500-foot wind turbine, correct, that
2 was first?

3 A. Correct.

4 Q. And they came to you and asked if you would have a
5 relationship regarding this wind turbine -- this wind farm;
6 is that how it went?

7 A. We have explored several options on this front.
8 None could guarantee that the energy was actually coming
9 from Illinois. And in the case of this project, Apex was
10 able to ensure that that was the case, but we had explored
11 other options before that as well.

12 Q. Okay. So you're not sure how it's getting from
13 this project to your site. It may go through the normal
14 grid and be part of the rest of the electricity before it
15 goes to your site?

16 A. Correct.

17 Q. Oh, okay. Are you getting any tax credits due to
18 this relationship here?

19 A. I'm not aware of that.

20 Q. Whether you are or not, that's not in your purview,
21 correct?

22 A. Correct.

23 Q. Okay. And just so the record's really clear,
24 Rivian has been operating a manufacturing plant without

1 this wind farm for several years at the least, correct?

2 A. The plant was purchased in 2017. Our operations
3 began in September of last year.

4 Q. And you've been putting out trucks since that --

5 A. Correct.

6 Q. Okay. And you'll still continue to put out trucks
7 whether there is a Goose Creek Wind farm or not, correct?

8 A. We're going to continue operations.

9 Q. Thank you. Nothing further.

10 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good. Thank
11 you, Mr. Luetkehans.

12 Any other questions from licensed attorneys in the
13 room?

14 Now questions from interested parties, members of
15 the public either opposed to the application or neutral on
16 the application, questions for Mr. Dietmeier from Rivian
17 from the public.

18 Yes, Ms. Coile.

19 MR. LUETKEHANS: Can I ask one more
20 question completely unrelated?

21 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Okay.

22 EXAMINATION

23 BY MR. LUETKEHANS:

24 Q. Do you know a Hay family in Aledo?

1 A. Possibly. It sounds familiar.

2 Q. Okay. That's my Godmother so I was just wondering.

3 A. Oh, okay. It's a small world.

4 Q. I was actually born in Galesburg. Always been in
5 the burbs. Just couldn't help myself.

6 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: All right. Ms.
7 Coile, could you please state your name and spell it for
8 the record.

9 MS. COILE: Sandra Coile. It's
10 S-a-n-d-r-a. And last name is C-o-i-l-e.

11 EXAMINATION

12 BY MS. COILE:

13 Q. Okay. So I'm kind of a layperson here and I'm not
14 really sure that I understand some of what we're talking
15 about. But, I guess, from what I'm understanding, your
16 power -- if this project is approved and if your contract
17 is signed -- is your contract already signed with Apex? I
18 guess that's my question, my first question.

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. So you've signed a contract even though this
21 proposal has not been accepted?

22 A. More of it is preliminary. Obviously it's, it's
23 totally based off of the approval of this process, but it's
24 a way for us to show our initial support. There are

1 alternatives if that doesn't carry forward.

2 Q. So if it turns out that this does not pass then you
3 will just revert back, I'm assuming, to --

4 A. Correct.

5 Q. -- to what you had before; is that correct?

6 A. That's correct, yes.

7 Q. Okay. And so when you talk about the grid that --
8 you know, maybe this is not your line of -- that I should
9 be questioning. But I'm interested in knowing if, if Apex
10 can send power to you through a grid, could they not also
11 send power to us locally through the grid? I mean, my
12 understanding is that most of this power is not staying
13 here. So do you have any thoughts along that line or any
14 information along that line?

15 A. Not too much deep beyond that.

16 Q. Uh-huh.

17 A. But everybody is connected to the grid, yeah.

18 Q. Okay. Okay.

19 And I think I had one other. Let me check.

20 Oh, yeah. I wanted to ask -- now I don't really
21 know about this but doesn't Bloomington have wind farms in
22 and around the area that would be closer to you than what
23 this proposal would be?

24 A. Certainly there are several in McLean County. Not

1 all of them are -- actually this one is closer than two of
2 them in particular. McLean County has the rough area of
3 Rhode Island as well. So there are some within site of the
4 building but they have existing purchase agreements already
5 aligned.

6 Q. So did you talk to them and you found out -- I
7 mean, was there a conversation with them?

8 A. Some of them existed well before we purchased the
9 property.

10 Q. Uh-huh.

11 A. But certainly we've explored several options.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. Uh-huh.

14 Q. All right. That's all you have. Thank you. I
15 appreciate it.

16 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Thank you, Ms.
17 Coile.

18 Any other questions from the general public, people
19 opposed to the application or people who are neutral on the
20 application? Any other questions for this witness?

21 Ms. Gallagher. And, again, could you please state
22 your name, spelling first and last.

23 MS. GALLAGHER: Kayla, K-a-y-l-a.
24 Gallagher, G-a-l-l-a-g-h-e-r.

1 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good. Thank
2 you, Ms. Gallagher. You may proceed.

3 EXAMINATION

4 BY MS. GALLAGHER:

5 Q. I don't want to beat a dead horse, and I promise
6 this is just a sinus infection. By the way, I work for the
7 Illinois Corn Marketing Board so I drive by the plant
8 pretty much every day on my way to work.

9 But can we go back to the grid. I know we've
10 talked about it a lot, but my understanding is that it
11 would be a complete surprise if there is some kind of a
12 transmission line planned from this farm directly to your
13 plant. That, that would be a surprise. So is it fair to
14 say that when you're purchasing energy from the grid that
15 you don't know if it's coming from this wind farm or from a
16 coal mine in Kentucky or from solar, that -- how, how would
17 you respond to that?

18 A. Again, I'm not an expert in the field but we do
19 work with our local infrastructure providers. For us at
20 the plant that's Corn Belt Energy and Ameren Illinois.
21 They primarily are the transmission lines and the
22 transformers for the facility. And they provide us with
23 readouts from where the power is coming from, and we do
24 have the ability to navigate through that process to, you

1 know, not fully lobby for other sources. But with Illinois
2 being at about 11%, that's something that we've certainly
3 pushed for more opportunity with. Corn Belt, being a
4 cooperative, is a little more flexible on that standpoint.
5 So we're always pursuing all avenues to increase the
6 renewable output directly to the facility.

7 Q. Would it be more accurate to say that you're really
8 purchasing carbon credits?

9 A. I don't believe so but, again, that's, that's not
10 my purview.

11 Q. Thanks.

12 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Thank you, Ms.
13 Gallagher.

14 Any other questions for Mr. Dietmeier?

15 Very good. Questions from Piatt County staff and
16 consultants.

17 Very good. Mr. Gershon, redirect.

18 REDIRECT EXAMINATION

19 BY MR. GERSHON:

20 Q. Just a couple. First, I do have a copy of -- as it
21 happens, I printed the press release from the Apex website.
22 I will submit as our Exhibit 22 a copy of the press release
23 -- I apologize, a copy of Exhibit 24 a copy of the press
24 release -- from the Rivian website which has Rivian's logo

1 at the top and bottom. But I'll, just for the record, I
2 will submit that as soon as it's printed.

3 I want to step back to the confusion that some
4 people have about how this power is going. Alan Moore
5 testified previously that electricity is like a water pipe.
6 The power gets put into the system and then is distributed
7 out. Typically the power goes to the closest locations
8 first, but you buy the power from there.

9 To your knowledge, is that what you're actually
10 talking about here? Your press release does not identify
11 any, any other power line nor have we identified?

12 A. That's correct.

13 Q. Yeah. So this power, to your knowledge, is being
14 purchased by Rivian through a power purchase agreement; is
15 that correct?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. And that means that that power is yours, you've
18 acquired it. But, again, like water, it goes to the
19 closest locations first, you simply receive the same
20 allocation?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Okay. And perhaps more -- better clarification on
23 that -- does -- to your knowledge, is this Apex committing
24 to put 50 megabytes -- megawatts, sorry -- of power on the

1 grid and you're acquiring 50 megawatts from that grid equal
2 to the amount they're putting on?

3 A. Correct.

4 Q. No further questions.

5 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good. Thank
6 you, Mr. Gershon.

7 Mr. Luetkehans. Nope?

8 And final questions for Mr. Dietmeier come from
9 members of the Zoning Board of Appeals. Gentlemen, any
10 questions?

11 All right. Very good. Thank you, Mr. Dietmeier.
12 You may step down and you are excused from any further
13 testimony unless you are recalled by your counsel or by
14 counsel for Apex or by the board.

15 Mr. Gershon, your final witness; is that correct?

16 MR. GERSHON: This was our final witness.
17 The only additional piece of our presentation will be when
18 I submit that Exhibit 24 that I just spoke of and, of
19 course -- well, there you go.

20 I apologize to the board. I will get more copies
21 of this. Again, this is Exhibit 24. It simply is the
22 press release printed off of Rivian's website instead of
23 Apex's, has their -- for those who don't have a copy has
24 their -- logos at the top and the bottom as the one from

1 Apex website had theirs from the top and bottom.

2 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good. Then
3 does the applicant rest its case?

4 MR. GERSHON: With the exception of our
5 closing and rebuttal closing, we rest our case.

6 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good. Thank
7 you.

8 All right. We're going to be in recess for just a
9 few minutes until we can get set up for Ms. Fox. She is
10 here on behalf of five residents who are in support of the
11 application. We need to take a few minutes to get her set
12 up and with any technology we need to get set up.

13 So we're in recess for five minutes, till 6:35.

14 (WHEREUPON, a brief
15 recess was had.)

16 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: All right. Now,
17 the applicant has rested its case it is time for testimony
18 for persons in support of the application for the special
19 use permit.

20 Professor Sarah Fox from Northern Illinois
21 University is here on behalf of 14 of her clients, and I
22 believe five of whom will testify in this hearing this
23 evening. It's my understanding that Ms. Fox has a
24 presentation initially and then we'll start calling

1 witnesses.

2 So, Ms. Fox, you may proceed.

3 MS. FOX: Great. Thank you very much,
4 and thank you so much to the members of the board. It's
5 wonderful to be here today.

6 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Can you check to
7 make sure --

8 MS. FOX: Mic? Thank you. All right.

9 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Is it on now?

10 MS. FOX: Better?

11 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Okay. Go right
12 ahead.

13 MS. FOX: Thank you for bearing with me.
14 Well, thank you again for having me. My name is Sarah Fox.
15 I'm a law professor at NIU, Northern Illinois University
16 College of Law in DeKalb. There I teach first year
17 property course as well as courses on state and local
18 government and environmental law. And tonight I'm here in
19 my personal capacity representing landowners who are
20 supportive of the Goose Wind project and really trying to
21 give them a voice here.

22 So thank you in advance for your time. I know that
23 this has been a very, very long process. I don't have to
24 tell any of you in the room that. And so our goal is to

1 kind of move through this as well.

2 You know, my goal here and my role here is pretty
3 simple, and that's to make clear the support that this
4 project has in the community among Piatt County landowners.
5 And I'm gonna go through the reasons for that support
6 certainly in much more detail, and you'll hear from some of
7 my clients as well. But at the outset I think it's worth
8 saying, and I'll emphasize this as well that, you know,
9 this project has 151 landowner agreements in place, right,
10 and those agreements and the individuals who are coming out
11 in support of this project and who have supported it along
12 the way, right, are a testament to the degree of support
13 that this project has within the community and that is
14 because of the great benefits that the community stands to
15 gain from the Goose Wind project.

16 So I'm gonna start with just a sampling of some of
17 the reasons why my clients support the Goose Wind project.
18 They are certainly not going to be comprehensive, but I
19 think you'll see a couple of trend lines as we move through
20 tonight's presentation. The first of which is economic
21 security, right, the importance of the project to the local
22 economy, the importance certainly of clean energy, and the
23 importance of planning for the future while allowing people
24 to remain in place, right, to remain in the place that they

1 call home in Piatt County and to plan a future here for
2 their families, right.

3 So what I'm gonna do is kick off just from letting
4 you get a sense of who my clients are and to hear a little
5 bit in their own voices why they support this project.

6 So if you could go to the next slide, please.

7 So this is John Jordan, right, many of you might
8 know him. He's certainly a longtime resident in the
9 community. And I'll let John speak for himself a little
10 bit later talking about his connections to the community.
11 But certainly, right, those connections are longstanding,
12 right, you can see kind of the quote up here. My
13 grandparents, great grandparents and my whole family have
14 grown up and lived in this county. I've lived here all my
15 life. I'm not going anywhere. I support the Goose Wind
16 Creek wind farm and I support the financial benefit that it
17 will bring to Piatt County.

18 And John, of course, will speak with all of you a
19 little bit later as well.

20 All right. If you can to go the next slide,
21 please.

22 All right. And here we have a quote and certainly
23 a letter from Ross Warsaw as well. I'm gonna read that
24 letter into the record as well as a letter from Pat Warsaw

1 as well. And you do, as I'm sure you know, you've seen a
2 sense of what these properties look like, right, of my
3 clients, who, again, have been kind of residing within the
4 community and have these deep connections.

5 So first I'd like to read Exhibit 2, which is a
6 letter from Pat Warsaw into the record. And it reads as
7 follows: Chairman Wax, Zoning Board of Appeals and Piatt
8 County board members, as a longtime resident and taxpayer
9 of Piatt County I write to express my support of Goose
10 Creek Wind proposed by Apex Clean Energy. My dad, Ross
11 Warsaw, is a participating landowner and our family also
12 supports the development of this wind project. I grew up
13 in Mansfield. I have three girls and several grandkids.
14 My family lives fairly close, right there in Farmer City.
15 My grandkids range from teenagers to a
16 three-and-a-half-year-old and another grandkid on the way.
17 My family is very blessed and we support my dad's decision
18 to participate in the Goose Creek Wind project. He told me
19 about the wind farm a couple months ago. I said it was an
20 opportunity that he couldn't pass up. Power generated by
21 wind turbines is a proven technology. The first wind
22 turbine used to generate electricity was developed in 1887.
23 There are already wind farms to the north and east of us.
24 My family and I live in Mansfield where we can see -- or

1 Mansfield, excuse me -- where we can see the new wind farm
2 by a different developer being built in McLean County. My
3 bother lives in Ford County where Apex Clean Energy is
4 building a wind farm. Harvesting energy from the wind is
5 where the future is going. I think we as a county should
6 grasp it and go. There are wind farms all around us that
7 are bringing reliable energy and revenue to those counties.
8 I believe that we should take advantage of the same
9 opportunity and approve the special use permit for Goose
10 Creek Wind. Sincerely, Pat Warsaw, Mansfield, Illinois.

11 I'd also like to read into the record a letter from
12 Ross Warsaw, also of Mansfield, Illinois. All right. And
13 that letter starts Chairman Wax, Zoning Board of Appeals
14 and Piatt County board members, as a longtime resident and
15 taxpayer of Piatt County, I write to express my support of
16 Goose Creek Wind proposed by Apex Clean Energy. I am
17 participating in the project by leasing my land and I am
18 thankful for this opportunity and I'm proud to participate
19 in the project. I have lived in Piatt County, specifically
20 Mansfield, for a long time. I raised my three sons here in
21 the house I still live in. In fact, one of my sons still
22 lives in Mansfield and another son lives in Ford County.
23 My family owns a small farm. I was a trucker for 40 years
24 and thankful for my three sons, six granddaughters and four

1 great grandchildren. There's a lot to be grateful for and
2 I'm happy to see my farm go on to my boys one day.
3 However, Social Security is not what it used to be and I
4 can't rely on it as much as I would like for a retirement
5 fund. Signing up for this wind farm and the consistent
6 revenue it will bring allows me to diverse my income
7 stream. It also increases the reliability of my finances.
8 The security gives me peace as I grow older and think about
9 the legacy I leave for my family. I continue to live in
10 Piatt County and invest in the community that I care about.
11 The Goose Creek Wind projects supports my family and the
12 many generations it now has. As you consider the special
13 use permit application submitted by Apex Clean Energy for
14 Goose Creek Wind, I ask that you keep in mind the many
15 individuals who are counting on this project for a stable
16 source of income and providing for their families. I
17 support the Goose Creek Wind project. Kindly regards, Ross
18 Warsaw, Mansfield, Illinois.

19 The Warsaws are sorry they couldn't be here to kind
20 of read those in person but wanted to make sure that their
21 support for the project is clear.

22 Okay. You can go to the next slide, please.

23 So I'd also like to read another letter, this one
24 from Tracy Wood of Sycamore, Illinois, daughter of

1 Catherine Crist who's a participating landowner and a
2 client as well.

3 Chairman Wax and Zoning Board of Appeals and Piatt
4 County board, my name is Tracy Wood, a daughter of a
5 landowner participating in the Goose Creek Wind project and
6 I'm writing to express my support of Goose Creek Wind
7 proposed by Apex Clean Energy. I am proud to participate
8 in this project. The land in Piatt County owned by mom
9 that is participating in the project has been in my family
10 for many years. My mom has Parkinson's disease.
11 Parkinson's is chronic perpetual disease that slowly robs
12 your loved one of the ability to walk, write, feed
13 themselves and talk. It was devastating when my mom was
14 diagnosed. My mom lives alone and I can't always be there
15 to take care of her. We hired a nursing service that
16 allows her to stay in the home she loves and gives peace of
17 mind for our family. In recent years, we've had to sell
18 ground to pay for the nursing service for my mom. The
19 additional revenue from participating in Goose Creek Wind
20 on top of the rent we already receive from farming helps
21 immensely to maintain these services for my mom. If we
22 were to get a turbine, the turbine and access road would
23 only take less than one acre out of production out of the
24 close to 1000 acres we farm. Our tenant farmer will still

1 be able to farm around the turbine, allowing the ground to
2 continue to be used as always and receive consistent
3 additional revenue. This financial security helps pay for
4 my mom's medical needs and will allow my sister and I to
5 keep the land intact when my mom ultimately passes the
6 property to us. Keeping the ground in Piatt County not
7 only continues my mother's legacy of love for the country,
8 but also the legacy of agricultural communities in general.
9 One of the things my mom has passed down to me is a love
10 for horses. I own Grandwood Stable, my own horseback
11 riding center in Sycamore, Illinois. My daughters love to
12 take care of the horses and ride too. Because of
13 participating in Goose Creek Wind, my family and I get to
14 continue our passions for riding horses, living in the
15 country and promoting the values of farming families and
16 community. My hope is that the legacy of my mom and her
17 values will continue for future generations. As you
18 consider the permit application submitted by Apex Clean
19 Energy for Goose Creek Wind I ask that you keep in mind the
20 many individuals who are counting on this project for
21 additional stable income and to assist in maintaining their
22 families' legacies.

23 Next slide, please.

24 Just to continue kind of the stream of support for

1 the project and to hear from additional landowners, I'd
2 like to read into the record a letter from Elaine Beasley
3 who's a resident of Monticello and a prior resident of
4 Mansfield.

5 Chairman Wax, Zoning Board of Appeals and Piatt
6 County board members, over the past 59 years I have been a
7 Piatt County landowner, specifically Mansfield and
8 Monticello, local taxpayer and a small business owner in
9 the county. I support the Goose Creek Wind project
10 proposed by Apex Clean Energy. This project brings many
11 benefits to Piatt County. I care about Piatt County and
12 have seen its people grow and develop. What concerns me is
13 the message from the county board that they might close the
14 Piatt County nursing home. This is one of the only nursing
15 homes in Piatt County and people get upset when they can't
16 go to a nursing home near where they live. If I were to
17 ever go to a nursing home this would be the one I would
18 expect to go to. Where is the county board going to get
19 the money to keep the nursing home open for all of us?
20 What is the county board's and zoning board's solution for
21 the challenges we face? Why can't this Goose Creek wind
22 farm be the solution? I want to challenge you, the county
23 and zoning boards, to have a better solution if you turn
24 this project down. As you consider the permit application

1 submitted by Apex Clean Energy for Goose Creek Wind, I ask
2 that you keep in mind the many individuals who are counting
3 on this project and the services provided by the county. I
4 support Goose Creek Wind and ask you to support it as a
5 potential source of tax revenue. Sincerely, Elaine
6 Beasley, Monticello, and prior resident of Mansfield.

7 I will also be submitting into the record, though
8 not reading another letter from Elaine Beasley.

9 MR. KEYT: Excuse me. Can I stop you
10 there for just a second.

11 MS. FOX: Of course.

12 MR. KEYT: You've handed me two exhibits
13 from Elaine Beasley.

14 MS. FOX: Yes.

15 MR. KEYT: Which one's 8 and which one's
16 9?

17 MR. FOX: Let me get my exhibit list
18 here.

19 MR. LUETKEHANS: Mr. Keyt, the one that
20 says Heartland Pathways on the top, that appears to be 9.

21 MS. FOX: Yes. I'm sorry. Let me just
22 -- I think I gave you all my copies of that exhibit list.

23 MR. KEYT: That was listed as Exhibit 5.

24 MS. FOX: That's -- all right. So

1 Exhibit 1 should be a letter from Pat Warsaw; 2, Ross
2 Warsaw; 4 --

3 MR. KEYT: Hold on. Hold on.

4 MS. FOX: Excuse me. Two, Pat Warsaw; 3,
5 Ross Warsaw; 4, Tracy Wood; 5, Heartland Pathways; 6, Phil
6 Holt; 7 --

7 MR. LUETKEHANS: Okay. I'm sorry. Can
8 you slow down --

9 MS. FOX: Sure. That's okay.

10 MR. LUETKEHANS: -- because that's not --
11 those aren't the numbers written on mine so I just want to
12 fix it and not screw this up so --

13 MS. FOX: Of course. Of course.

14 MR. LUETKEHANS: So 5 is the Heartland
15 Pathways?

16 MS. FOX: Correct.

17 MR. LUETKEHANS: Okay.

18 MR. KEYT: Are you -- can I -- you're
19 leading -- are you reading from this?

20 MS. FOX: I am, yes.

21 MR. KEYT: Okay.

22 MS. FOX: Do you have an extra?

23 MR. LUETKEHANS: I have that but I also
24 -- she wrote --

1 MS. FOX: I know, and I apologize. I
2 think I arranged it a little bit differently.

3 MR. LUETKEHANS: And that's fine. I just
4 want to make sure I'm gettin' the right ones.

5 MR. KEYT: Yeah, me too. So I think --
6 so keep going here. I think you're on 5.

7 MS. FOX: So I'm working off the same
8 list, right, that --

9 MR. KEYT: Yeah, I got you.

10 MS. FOX: So 5 is letter from Heartland
11 Pathways.

12 MR. KEYT: Okay.

13 MS. FOX: Six is letter from Phil Holt.

14 MR. LUETKEHANS: Okay. Give me a second.
15 Sorry. Okay.

16 MS. FOX: Seven is a letter from William
17 Bates. Exhibit 8 is the first letter that I just read from
18 Elaine Beasley.

19 MR. LUETKEHANS: Is that the one that
20 starts over the past 59 years?

21 MS. FOX: Correct.

22 Exhibit 9 is the next letter from Elaine Beasley
23 that starts as a longtime resident and taxpayer.

24 MR. LUETKEHANS: Thank you.

1 MS. FOX: Exhibit 10 is the letter from
2 Jeffrey Beasley. Exhibit 11 is a letter from Braxton and
3 Laura Bragg. Exhibit 12 will be a letter just from Braxton
4 Bragg. Exhibit 13, letter from Barb Lamont. And Exhibit
5 14, a letter from John Jordan.

6 MR. KEYT: Thank you.

7 MS. FOX: Everyone -- great. Sorry for
8 that confusion.

9 MR. KEYT: That's okay.

10 MS. FOX: All right. So I will be
11 entering into the record but not reading that second letter
12 from Elaine Beasley.

13 What I would like to do is read into the letter --
14 or read into the record, excuse me -- a letter from Elaine
15 Beasley's grandson Jeffrey Beasley. Chairman Wax, Zoning
16 Board of Appeals and Piatt County board members, I write
17 today to express my support for the Goose Creek Wind
18 project proposed by Apex Clean Energy. I grew up in Piatt
19 County and still have family living in the county such as
20 my grandma. These family members are participants in Goose
21 Creek Wind. I currently work for the feed department at
22 the University of Illinois. This work brought me recently
23 to live in Urbana but I still consider Piatt County home.
24 I studied ag business in college, we discussed wind energy

1 in a few of my classes and my fascination for the
2 advancement of clean energy was stimulated. There are a
3 lot of neat types of clean energy, one of them being wind
4 energy that are seeing advancements all the time. Even so,
5 wind energy is a proven technology to generate electricity.
6 I'm thankful for the revenue that my family will receive
7 from the Goose Creek Wind project as participating
8 landowners and I may be even more excited for how this
9 utility scale project will make clean energy more public.
10 More people need to know about the benefits of wind energy.
11 As you consider the permit application from Apex for Goose
12 Creek Wind, I ask you to approve it so that local families
13 and economies can benefit and more people learn about the
14 benefits of wind energy.

15 Next slide.

16 So Heartland Pathways, as you might know, is a
17 not-for-profit conservation organization that does have
18 activities in parts of Piatt County, including White Heath,
19 the Sangamon River area, Lodge, DeLand and Monticello, and
20 its goal to is develop abandoned river corridors into
21 trails for public use. Heartland Pathways, as I'll get
22 into in a little bit, is going to use some revenue from the
23 Goose Creek Wind project regarding or involving the
24 easement over the rail corridors in order to allow it to

1 carry on its work. And I'd like to read into the record a
2 letter from Phil Holt regarding some of those activities
3 but also some others as well.

4 I am writing this letter to the Piatt County board
5 and the Piatt County Zoning Board of Appeals to make you
6 all aware of some of the public community grants that Apex
7 Clean Energy has been providing to various nonprofit
8 organizations in east central Illinois to be able to
9 accomplish their goals. I am currently the president of
10 Heartland Pathways, but I am sending this as a personal
11 letter telling you about my gratitude for what I've seen
12 Apex is doing. I do not know of any other corporation that
13 is providing anywhere near what Apex is for community-based
14 organizations in this area. Let me tell you what I know
15 about how they are already at work doing good things in
16 three different counties, Piatt, Champaign and Ford. Back
17 in October, I got an e-mail from Tom Scott of the
18 Champaign, Havana and Western Historic Railways based in
19 Monticello the he received notice from Apex Clean Energy
20 that we'll be receiving a community grant for clearing
21 trees and brush from segments of the Heartland Pathways
22 rail trail formerly owned by the Illinois Central Railroad.
23 This will enable us to open a section of our trail for
24 public use. Many thanks to Apex Clean Energy for this.

1 When I was delivering banana boxes full of the last peppers
2 and tomatoes that I had harvested from my garden -- I had
3 to beat the frost -- to the Eastern Illinois Food Bank in
4 Urbana I saw the Apex Clean Energy logo on the side of one
5 of their reefer trucks. Actually the grant to the Eastern
6 Illinois Food Bank benefits much more than Champaign County
7 because Apex Clean Energy funded the food mobile which
8 enables food distribution to the food insecure residents of
9 21 counties in the region, including Piatt County. I
10 looked at the food mobile schedule for November and saw
11 that food pantries that are open to residents of Piatt
12 County are scheduled to take place in Bement, Cerro Gordo
13 and Farmer City. Apex is putting resources into food for
14 citizens of Piatt County even before the Goose Creek Wind
15 farm has been developed. Also in October, I met Jennie
16 Geiger, the conversation grant coordinator for Apex Clean
17 Energy when I went to Grand Prairie Friends dedication of a
18 nature preserve in Paxton which was purchased with some of
19 the funding coming from Apex. The prospect prairie
20 cemetery nature preserve is a project Grand Prairie Friends
21 have been working on for a long time and it's wonderful
22 that this patch of native Illinois prairie which dates back
23 to the ice age will now be protected in perpetuity.
24 Heartland Pathways is participating in the Goose Creek Wind

1 farm. The revenue from Goose Creek Wind farm will help
2 Heartland Pathways and its partners to continue our work in
3 the local area. One example is our work with the Champaign
4 Havana and Western Railway Historical Society, the Piatt
5 County Forest Preserve and Shady Rest and with the City of
6 Monticello and the development of the River Bridge Trail.
7 We are working with Monticello to further extended that
8 rail trail to over Oberland Park and extending towards
9 Allerton Park. We are planning to begin to clear brush
10 from White Heath to Lodge along the rail bed to make this a
11 passable hiking and biking trail. With their help we also
12 want to expand the rail trail development through DeWitt
13 County to Clinton, making this a regional rail trail. Apex
14 is aiding our work and this promotes health and recreation,
15 community development, tourism, environmental
16 sustainability and native prairie preservation and
17 education on local heritage. Apex is doing an amazing
18 amount of good in this area for nonprofits that I am
19 involved with and I am sure that they will continue to be
20 actively giving back to many other organizations in Piatt
21 County just as they are doing in the counties in which they
22 already -- or in which they already have operating wind
23 farms.

24 Okay. And next slide.

1 And we'll hear a little bit more from the Braggs in
2 just a bit so I won't read their letters into the record,
3 but they are also here tonight. They are residents and
4 have a long-term connection to the land as well and have
5 lots of interest in seeing this project move forward which,
6 again, I'll leave for them to tell you in their own, in
7 their words all the reasons for that support.

8 So next slide.

9 So I wanted kick off by having you hear in some of
10 my clients' own words why they would like to see this
11 project move forward. And, like I said, I think, you know,
12 some themes start to emerge, right. One of those themes is
13 certainly economic security, right, both individually and
14 for the community as a whole and the benefits that are
15 likely to come from this project. One of those things is
16 this idea of clean energy, right, and being part of that
17 move toward a more renewable future. And part of it is
18 this idea of stability and security and ownership over
19 property, right, and being able to do the things with your
20 property that you have the right to do because you are the
21 best person, you know, situated to know what is best for
22 that property.

23 And so I really want to, you know, bring home this
24 point that, again, Apex has 151 landowner agreements,

1 right. That's a lot of different agreements that Apex has
2 worked for many years now to kind of, you know, establish
3 those relationships, go through the negotiations that are
4 necessary to put those in place. And my clients feel
5 comfortable with that process, right, and they are, they
6 are people that you've already heard and that you will
7 continue to hear throughout tonight who know this land,
8 right, and who know what's going to be possible on that
9 land. They're comfortable that they're going to be able to
10 continue farming on their land, right, they understand that
11 each turbine is going to remove less than a quarter acreage
12 from, you know, farming production. They know all of that,
13 right, they've had those conversations and they've come out
14 the other side very comfortable with all of that. They
15 have their EMA agreements in place and they've seen this
16 process through to the end. And, again, they are the
17 experts, right, they've been here in many cases for a long
18 time and they've seen kind of the land in many different
19 circumstances and they would like this to be kind of the
20 next, the next phase.

21 You know, as I'm sure you're all aware, my clients'
22 interactions with Apex started in 2019, right, and here we
23 are 2022, right, many years, many years later. Through
24 those site visits, through community meetings, through

1 door-to-door conversations, through many other forms,
2 right, they have had a lot of opportunities to learn just
3 what it is that this is going to mean for their families,
4 the benefits, right, and maybe even, you know, what that
5 will mean for their property as farm -- like I said, that,
6 yes, a quarter-acre maybe is going to be removed but that's
7 it and they're going to continue to be able to farm, right.

8 Like I said, I think you'll hear more from those
9 clients as they testimony -- or as they testify, excuse me
10 -- about kind of their more particular knowledge of the
11 land, right. But for these clients, their vision of for a
12 path forward for themselves, for their families and for the
13 community as a whole is through this project.

14 Next slide.

15 And so that's really what I would like to touch on
16 next is not just the support from my clients but also the
17 support that my clients see the Goose Wind project bringing
18 to the community as a whole.

19 Next slide, please.

20 And those are lot of benefits, right. We know that
21 there are a lot of expected financial benefits, economic
22 benefits, expected to come with this project. You know,
23 personally I always hate the presenter who is just gonna
24 read you the text of the slide so I'll let you kind of, you

1 know, read that for some of the facts and figures, right,
2 but \$56 million in school district revenue, right. You
3 know, 3.2 million for fire districts. We are gonna see
4 property taxes increasing by \$13 million, right. We know
5 all of this would be a huge influx of revenue for the
6 county and for these individual taxing districts. And my
7 clients are very interested in that, right, and very
8 interested in that possibility of bringing the benefits and
9 also very concerned about the prospect of passing up that
10 amount of revenue that could do such good within the
11 community. And it's not only -- you know, it's certainly
12 school district revenue, property taxes that can be used in
13 various ways, right, employment prospects certainly within
14 the county and beyond.

15 We just heard right before I came on you just heard
16 from Rivian, right, talking about exciting opportunities to
17 connect with one of the region's largest employers. For
18 all of these reasons, my clients, again, just see this as a
19 path forward for, for the county.

20 We kind of heard letter -- you know, we heard some
21 questions raised in the letters about real financial
22 concerns, and I think you'll continue to hear some of that
23 tonight. And so I think there's a real sense, right, that
24 there are ways that this revenue could be spent well and,

1 you know, some challenges within the community that it
2 could be used to solve.

3 And maybe most importantly of all my clients see it
4 as a way to stay in the community, right, to bring revenue
5 into the community in a way that will allow them and their
6 families to stay and preserve the legacy that they have
7 created.

8 Next slide, please.

9 So I know you've heard some about the community
10 grant program already, but I'd like to kind of focus in
11 this on this a little bit because as you've heard in the
12 letters from Phil Holt, right, Apex is already very active
13 in making a lot of these grants throughout the community.
14 It's a long list. I'm not going to go through all of them
15 in enormous amount of detail but I did want to point out
16 some of these grants, in particular, just to show the
17 potential for the community grants to do a lot of good
18 within Piatt County. So, for instance, Blue Ridge School
19 District in January 2021 Blue Ridge School District
20 received a grant that funded online teaching tools and
21 technology that aided in the transition to online learning.
22 And in April of 2022, this year, Goose Creek Wind funded
23 new training equipment for Blue Ridge High School's
24 athletic department which will be used, you know, in a

1 variety of ways, primarily by the high school's track and
2 field team. So Blue Ridge School District is already
3 seeing those benefits.

4 The Piatt County Mental Health Center in October
5 2019, so several years ago at this point, the Piatt County
6 Mental Health Center received funding for staff education
7 and training, and that expense previously came out of the
8 employee's pockets, right, and so these are really concrete
9 ways that these grants are already being felt. The Piatt
10 County Mental Health Center also received a grant in August
11 of 2021 that funded new technology used by adults for
12 education and recreation purposes.

13 I'm gonna skip over a few of these here but if we
14 kind of look ahead to the Monticello Fire Department
15 received a grant in March 2020 to purchase new AED
16 equipment. The Monticello Police Department received a
17 community grant in January 2020 to fund their Shop With a
18 Cop program which took 65 local children Christmas shopping
19 and provided Wal-Mart gift cards for their families. And
20 the Northern Piatt Fire Protection District received a
21 grant in July 2022 that funded new lightweight
22 battery-powered equipment that will aid their volunteers in
23 emergencies. Piatt Tran, for instance, received an
24 emergency COVID relief grant from Goose Creek Wind in April

1 2020 that helped fund a temporary grocery delivery service
2 for high-risk populations during the pandemic. And in
3 January 2020 the Piatt County Soil and Water Conversation
4 District received a community grant to purchase new GIS
5 surveying equipment. So really varied grants going on
6 here, right, some for equipment, some for programming, some
7 for curriculum support, right, but all really manifesting a
8 commitment to community. And I think that's what you get
9 certainly from the letter from my client Phil Holt that I
10 read, right, is the sense of the interwoven into the
11 community already and really investing in that community
12 even before we have the turbines in place.

13 Next slide, please.

14 I'd also like to focus in on the conversation grant
15 program as well, right, which is the program of course from
16 Apex where, you know, a thousand dollars per megawatt will
17 be provided to support on-the-ground conservation
18 initiatives in the vicinity of the project. And, again,
19 some of these have already, you know, kind of been seen in
20 surrounding areas. As you can see, you know, I have the
21 various kind of categories up here for you to read but, you
22 know, these can support ecosystems and habitats to enhance
23 recovery and protection of wildlife populations, right, to
24 preserve certain grassland habitat, shrubland habitat,

1 wetlands, reptarian habitats, other unique habitats, right,
2 particularly for unique vegetation, bats and birds, other
3 wildlife species, supporting environmental programs and
4 projects that promotes sustainable agriculture and to, you
5 know, to support work that supports ranching and livestock
6 operations that can incorporate, you know, new practices
7 regarding raising and harvest sequestration and other
8 wildlife preservation management practices. And this is --
9 again, it's worth pointing out, right, separate and apart
10 from the community grant program, right, these are
11 specifically conversation grant programs which means that
12 in addition to all of the grants that I just talked about
13 and all the ones that, you know, are to come. And, you
14 know, we have an additional up to \$300,000 for conservation
15 initiatives on top of that. And so my clients really want
16 to make sure, again, that it's highlighted there's an
17 enormous of benefit coming to the community from this
18 project as Apex is committed to those benefits to the
19 community.

20 Next.

21 And as we know, neighboring communities have
22 already seen those benefits, right. As John Jordan put it,
23 we're surrounded here in Piatt County with wind farms in
24 Macon County, Champaign County and McLean County. Do we

1 want to watch our neighbors take advantage of increased
2 revenue and see how well it works for them and pass up this
3 opportunity. Without this project taxes are going to go up
4 and going to make farming more expensive, right. And this,
5 you know, if you talk to my clients, comes up again and
6 again, the fact that other communities surrounding Piatt
7 County are already doing this, right, it's very much true
8 that, you know, as you see Macon County, Champaign County,
9 McLean County, right, the turbines are already there and my
10 clients want Piatt County to realize the same benefits that
11 those communities are already seeing in terms of again
12 their schools, their police, their fire, these other, you
13 know, important, important community, community aspects of
14 community life.

15 Next slide.

16 And you'll see the same point in this slightly
17 different way here, right. You know, it says other
18 counties have used wind farms as a solution to increase
19 needs on the tax base and to -- excuse me -- and the need
20 for more electricity. What is the county board's and
21 zoning board's answer to the challenges we face, right, why
22 can't this Goose Creek Wind project be the solution. I
23 want to challenge you, the county and zoning board, to have
24 a better solution if you turn this down. And this is

1 again, something that comes up again and again as you talk
2 to my clients is if not this then what, right, then how,
3 how to make up for all of this revenue that is potentially
4 going to, you know, could potentially be there and would
5 not be there but for this project. And that's a real
6 concern to my, to my clients both because of the potential
7 for increased taxes, right, if this project does not go
8 through and what's being given up in terms of the potential
9 revenue and grants and all of the, all of the rest of those
10 benefits.

11 All right. Next slide.

12 So I'd like to really hone in for a moment on kind
13 of one of the themes that I think really came out in some
14 of the letters that I read, which is the need to plan for
15 the future, right. And as this letter, you know, as you
16 can see from Pat Warsaw says, harnessing energy from the
17 wind is the future, right, this is where things are going.
18 And my clients would like to see the county get on board
19 with that, right, while acknowledging that change is hard,
20 right, it is not easy to make these kinds of changes. But
21 it is also just true that change is happening all the time,
22 right. In this aerial shot you can see of Piatt County is
23 not frankly a state of nature, right, it's bisected by
24 property lines, it's bisected by roads, it's bisected in

1 various ways by power lines and highways that come through
2 and the railroads that come through and the landscape is
3 constantly changing. And so nobody is saying that turbines
4 won't be a change to the landscape but that's not something
5 knew, right, and that is something that my clients
6 understand and accept and want to be part of that move
7 toward this new future, right. Yes, they are a change, but
8 they're a change that will come with enormous benefits for
9 the community and for the environment. And we understand
10 that it can be hard to picture that future sometimes. But
11 my clients are taking on that hard work of picturing that
12 future, of imagining what that future could be like for
13 Piatt County. You know, in terms of all, again, the
14 benefits they stand to gain and acknowledging that nothing,
15 nothing ever stays entirely the same, right.

16 Next slide.

17 You know, just to point out, again, Phil Holt, one
18 of my clients is on the board of Heartland Pathways and
19 this is another example of kind of change and change in
20 infrastructure and change in landscape. The whole point of
21 Heartland Pathways is to convert old railroad
22 infrastructure into trails to be used, right. Technology
23 comes in, technology like railroads, that are
24 transformative and bring a lot of benefits to a community

1 and at some point, right, that's going to change again and
2 then it becomes something new for the community to use.
3 And so I just think that that is really a theme, again,
4 that's important to my clients to emphasize is this is part
5 of the future, this is looking to the future.

6 Next slide.

7 And really overall, right, the Goose Creek
8 signifies progress. Things change. It's time to take
9 advantage of positive change in our county.

10 All right. So, you know, really in just a few
11 moments we'll start hearing from my clients as witnesses
12 for tonight but for right now I'd just like to say, you
13 know, my clients do see this as the road forward for Piatt
14 County. This is a renewable source of energy. It stands
15 to bring a lot of benefits to the community and really a
16 remarkable opportunity to promote landowner stability,
17 support the economy and the employment market and to
18 bolster a number of community organizations.

19 All right. So at this time I will pause on my
20 presentation part of it and I'd like to first call John
21 Jordan as a witness.

22 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Mr. Jordan,
23 before you step up, I just want to make a comment.

24 Ms. Fox, thank you. We will consider that the

1 opening statement by Ms. Fox, not subject to
2 cross-examination. Much of what she has stated in her
3 opening statement was testified to on the evening of
4 November 22nd 2022 by Dr. David Loomis, the economic
5 analysis expert, remember the professor from Illinois State
6 University, and he was cross-examined not only by Mr.
7 Luetkehans but by eight members of the public on that
8 evening, as well as members of the Zoning Board of Appeals.

9 The other information provided in Ms. Fox's opening
10 statement were letters. Those will be received by the
11 Zoning Board of Appeals. And because they are not subject
12 to cross-examination they will be received for the limited
13 purpose of information and they can be considered by the
14 board. But because they're not subject to
15 cross-examination -- they will be considered as evidence,
16 but the board will give the weight that is generally
17 afforded to letters submitted to the board.

18 So with that said, now, Mr. Fox -- or Ms. Fox --
19 you may call Mr. Jordan.

20 MS. FOX: All right. I'd like to call
21 John Jordan as the first witness.

22 John, John, right here (indicating).

23 THE WITNESS: Right here (indicating)?

24 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: If you brought a

1 lawyer with you you get to sit by her.

2 MS. FOX: All right. We need to turn
3 this on; is that correct?

4 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Okay. Sir, would
5 you please raise your right hand to be sworn by the court
6 reporter.

7 (WHEREUPON, the witness
8 was sworn.)

9 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good.

10 Mr. Jordan, you may proceed and we need you to
11 start by saying your first and last names and spelling them
12 for the record, please.

13 A. John, J-o-h-n. Jordan J-o-r-d-a-n.

14 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good, Mr.
15 Jordan.

16 You may proceed.

17 EXAMINATION

18 BY MS. FOX:

19 Q. Well, Mr. Jordan, thank you very much for being
20 here tonight. Can you tell me a little bit about your
21 property and your family history with it?

22 A. My great grandparents wagon-trained down here from
23 Eureka, Illinois, back in the 1800s. And it was a large
24 family, German, and any money that they made before they

1 got married and was given back to mom, and that's how she
2 paid for a lot of the land they owned. They had a house
3 that they called the Weenen house, and I like this. When
4 you got married you got a horse and a buggy and a place to
5 live for a year. And after a year you were kicked out, you
6 had to do somethin'. And so that's about grandpa or
7 grandma and them.

8 My father -- or my grandfather -- sold his 80 and
9 moved up the road two miles, three miles maybe, I don't
10 know, right before the great depression. And they came out
11 to the house one time and they wanted to take his horses.
12 He told me this story. They wanted to take his horses.
13 And he told 'em to take the farm because he says if you
14 take the horses the farm's useless. I said what happened
15 grandpa. They didn't want the farm. They already had a
16 bunch of farms so I just kept paying and I finally paid it
17 off. So that's how long I been here. That's -- I was born
18 in a house up there. I built a new house. There's about
19 approximately -- well, there's 160 acres.

20 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Mr. Jordan, could
21 you please lean into the microphone so the folks in the
22 back can hear.

23 THE WITNESS: Yeah.

24 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Thank you.

1 A. There's 160 acres up there. Conservatively saying
2 it's probably worth 20,000 an acre, 3,000,000.

3 Q. And Mr. -- that's where you've raised your
4 children; is that correct?

5 A. That's right, and one of 'em's here tonight. There
6 was four girls. And that's where we all grew up. That's
7 where I grew up. That's where my sister grew up. And I've
8 been there most of the time. I was in the Marine Corps for
9 a while. I worked for International Harvester for a while.
10 I lived in the Chicago area and I worked at International
11 Harvester out of Chicago, and they transferred me to
12 Jonesboro, Arkansas, and that was quite a culture shock.
13 And my dad called me up one day and said do you want to
14 farm. He said I'm gonna retire. So I quit International
15 Harvester and I came home and I been there ever since and
16 it's just a nice place to live.

17 But unlike a bunch of people, I paid for my kids to
18 go to college. I didn't take out any loans. And I see
19 this windmill as a way of paying for my grandchildren going
20 to college.

21 Q. So can you tell us a little bit about that, like
22 why are you here supporting the Goose Creek project?

23 A. Because it will create quite an income for myself,
24 but the big thing is sometimes it's not how much money you

1 make, it's how much you save. Now it's projected that in
2 2024 that the Blue Ridge School District will get
3 \$1,672,000. That's not income to me, but it's money that I
4 don't have to pay in taxes because they've got money coming
5 in.

6 There's also same thing with the county taxes. The
7 county taxes, I think in 2024 they're predicting that they
8 will get \$631,000 extra. Don't sound like much but for
9 people that are on a fixed income you don't have to raise
10 their taxes probably. I think I can probably pay a tax
11 increase but there are people out here that cannot pay
12 that. They're on a fixed income. So this wind farm would
13 be a big boost. Any other --

14 Q. Yeah. I mean, do you see that -- how do you see it
15 as impacting your own family when you start thinking about
16 your future?

17 A. Well, I see it as having money for my grandkids to
18 go to college where we may not have to borrow money or my
19 daughters may not have to borrow money to send 'em. It's
20 -- and we get to keep the farm, you know, I don't want to
21 sell it.

22 Q. And I'd like to have -- let the board hear a little
23 bit more about your process with Apex, like how you came to
24 be, you know, here sitting in this chair. Can you tell me

1 a little bit about how that relationship started, how you
2 came to be a supporter of the project?

3 A. There was a gentleman stopped at my house one day
4 and he told me all about it, and he said you sign this
5 contract and we'll give 'ya so much money. And if you get
6 a windmill you'll get paid, I think it's 7.5 -- \$7500 per
7 megawatt. And at the time I said, you know, I thought they
8 were three and four megawatts. So I did a little math in
9 my head and I said, man, that's not -- that's pretty good
10 money for just watching a windmill turn around so I said,
11 yeah, I'm kina interested. And he came back the second
12 time and I signed the contract, my wife and I signed the
13 contract. I will say this. I've never been in pressured
14 in any way by 'em. I will say this. That they have shot
15 me some views of some things and they've always been
16 willing to negotiate. You know, they're flexible. You
17 tell 'em what you want and if possible they'll do it for
18 'ya. If not -- during this time I received a offer to put
19 a met tower up. And I don't know, do you guys know what a
20 met tower is, anybody?

21 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Mr. Jordan, this
22 is time for you to testify, not question the zoning board.

23 THE WITNESS: I know what it is
24 (inaudible) but if you want me to talk about it, I'd like

1 to make sure you guys know what one is.

2 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: If you want to
3 testify as to what a met tower is --

4 A. Yeah, it's a tower that measures wind. It sets out
5 in the field and measures wind. That's how -- I've also
6 supposed to be, if this project goes, I'm going to get the
7 laydown. It will be 15 acres right beside the house, you
8 know. I'll listen to those tailgates bang, I'll listen to
9 the tractors move stuff around and I'll listen to the
10 trucks come in.

11 Q. And Mr. Jordan, if I might, are you planning to
12 continue farming your land?

13 A. I cash rent to my neighbors.

14 Q. Uh-huh.

15 A. But I do farm 40 acres.

16 Q. Uh-huh.

17 A. And I'm planning on if I get the wind tower I'm
18 gonna buy a different bailer. And at 78 I'm pretty hard to
19 do it by myself but if I can buy accumulator I'm going into
20 the hay business big time.

21 Q. You know, you told us a little bit about why this
22 project matters to you certainly in terms of the money
23 coming in. Is there anything else you'd like to share
24 about why you're here supporting the project or what you

1 see the benefits as being?

2 A. Well, what I've seen from Apex is that they've
3 donated a lot of money to projects around, the Legion,
4 schools, just everything. And if you can find me somebody
5 else that's donating that kind of money to these projects
6 show 'em to me.

7 You know any, Kyle? I'm not -- I'm supposed to
8 testify, okay.

9 I don't know any. I just think it's -- the big
10 thing is we're gonna have them all around us. They're
11 gonna be at Bellflower, Farmer City, Argenta. Why
12 shouldn't we have one? Kind of like a new car. If
13 everybody's got a new car why can't I have one?

14 Q. Great. And do you feel like you understand the
15 impacts of this turbine on your land at this point?

16 A. Yes, I do. I've been on laydowns. I've been to
17 where the turbines set on different projects. I've seen
18 the mobile offices that they move in. They pay good money.
19 And when they're done they clean it up and it looks really
20 good. Some of the roads that they tear up -- and they do
21 tear the roads up -- but when they get done with 'em
22 they're better than what we had before. The county, the
23 county road commissioner, townships are gonna make out on
24 this deal.

1 Anything else?

2 Q. That's great. Well, that's a question to you.
3 Anything else you'd like to share with the board?

4 A. I think we need to get this thing goin' right away
5 because the nursing home, I've read two or three articles
6 with about the nursing home. One we got fined because
7 somebody got hurt because we didn't have enough personnel.
8 And if you want to see that article I can dig it up for
9 'ya.

10 The other one is there was talk about we need to
11 put more money into the nursing home in case we need to
12 sell it. Well, I don't mind you putting money into it but
13 I don't want to see you sell it. My grandfather stayed
14 there and at the time I didn't think it was very good but
15 I've looked around a little bit and it was a hell of a nice
16 place. Anything else?

17 Q. That's great. I think that's all the questions
18 that I have for you.

19 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Okay. Very good.
20 Thank you, Mr. Jordan. Please stay seated because it's
21 time for questions --

22 THE WITNESS: Okay.

23 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: -- that the board
24 can ask you. That's part of the process.

1 THE WITNESS: I'm ready.

2 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: All right. Are
3 there any questions for Mr. Jordan from members of the
4 Piatt County Zoning Board of Appeals?

5 All right. Very good. Now questions for Mr.
6 Jordan from members of units of local government including
7 school districts.

8 Questions from Mr. Jordan from interested parties
9 represented by licensed attorneys, Mr. Luetkehans.

10 EXAMINATION

11 BY MR. LUETKEHANS:

12 Q. Thank you, Mr. Jordan. You talked about a laydown
13 yard. Are you gonna have a wind turbine on your property?

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. How close to your residence?

16 A. About a quarter-of-a-mile.

17 Q. Nothing further.

18 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good. Any
19 other attorneys in the room with questions for Mr. Jordan?

20 Questions from other interested parties? That's
21 members of the public opposed to the application or neutral
22 on the application.

23 Ms. Fox, based upon the cross-examination questions
24 from Mr. Luetkehans, do you have any redirect?

1 MS. FOX: I do not.

2 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good.

3 Any final questions from the zoning board?

4 Very good. Mr. Jordan, thank you. You may step
5 down and you're excused as a witness. We appreciate your
6 testimony, sir.

7 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

8 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Ms. Fox, call
9 your next.

10 MS. FOX: I'd now like to call Tom Scott.

11 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: And just for
12 everyone's information, after Mr. Scott testifies then
13 we'll take a recess.

14 Tammy, your fingers doing all right?

15 THE REPORTER: Yes.

16 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Okay.

17 Sir, could you please state -- please raise your
18 right hand to be sworn in by the court reporter.

19 (WHEREUPON, the witness
20 was sworn.)

21 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Sir, could you
22 please state your name, spelling your first and last names
23 for the record.

24 THE WITNESS: Thomas Scott. It's

1 T-h-o-m-a-s and S-c-o-t-t.

2 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good. Thank
3 you, Mr. Scott.

4 Ms. Fox, you may proceed.

5 EXAMINATION

6 BY MS. FOX:

7 Q. Well, Tom, thank you for being here tonight. Can
8 you tell us a little bit about your connection to the area,
9 where you're currently living, how long you've been here,
10 that kind of thing?

11 A. Well, my, my connection to the area is actually the
12 Monticello Railway Museum. I started coming to the
13 community in 1970 when the museum located northeast of
14 town. My dad is a life member number 13. I'm life member
15 120. But I've been associated with the area since then,
16 primarily running locomotives and train operation and also
17 doing some track work out there, which is kind of aligns
18 with my college major.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And I -- we actually moved to the -- to Monticello
21 in 1997, so we've been here 25 years.

22 Q. Okay. Great.

23 And can you tell us a little bit about why you're
24 here tonight, why you support Goose Wind?

1 A. Well, over the years since I've been associated
2 with the area I've seen industry leave Monticello, in
3 particular, and also the area. It's kind of a slow bleed
4 out but not very much coming in. And I have seen over the
5 years that there have been various groups trying to promote
6 business coming in here and, you know, with some success,
7 some not.

8 I remember several years ago up in Sangamon
9 Township by the I-72/Route 10 interchange that there was a
10 corn milling factory proposed, and that was pretty much
11 shot down by the local residents because they didn't want
12 the smell. And, of course, the wind farm is something that
13 isn't gonna create any stink, like ADM or Staley would, or
14 something like the corn mill, would which would be similar
15 to those. And it's -- really has no emissions at all, and
16 it's just an opportunity, a pretty substantial financial
17 opportunity, for the county.

18 Q. And can you tell me about who your current employer
19 is?

20 A. I work for Chastian & Associates of Decatur,
21 Illinois. We're a consulting engineering company, civil
22 engineering.

23 Q. Okay. And in that capacity have you had the chance
24 to observe wind farms?

1 A. Oh, yeah. I am currently working on the Sapphire
2 Sky project around Bellflower and Sabina.

3 Q. Uh-huh.

4 A. Our company is engaged by the two township road
5 commissioners and I am there, kind of being their eyes and
6 ears on the project and monitoring and enforcing the road
7 use agreement.

8 Q. Okay. Great. Well, what's your experience been of
9 the wind farms you've observed?

10 A. Well, they've actually been really good for the,
11 for the local roads. The roads, when we started working
12 there, were -- some of them were in just terrible shape.
13 And there's a couple roads where we replaced thousands of
14 feet of subgrade and where we have to dig out 15 inches out
15 of the road and then replace it with about 15 inches of
16 rock and just build up the road from the bottom up.

17 Q. Uh-huh.

18 A. And the road commissioners would never be able to
19 afford that kind of a rebuild on their own and through tax
20 revenues.

21 Q. Great. Well, I mean, I think that gives us a
22 pretty clear picture of both your, you know, exposure to
23 wind farms and some of the reasons for support.

24 Any -- anything else you'd like to share about why

1 you're here tonight or on the project?

2 A. Well, I've heard some comments about the Sapphire
3 Sky over the course of the last couple of days, and one of
4 'em was concerns about damage to the roads, and in
5 particular like Route 136, for instance. And some of the
6 super loads that came in there did damage Route 136. But
7 IDOT invited them to repair it and they did and it's been
8 completely repaired. And several -- I think it's about
9 ten, ten miles or so of it's been repaired up there and
10 just completed the Wednesday after Thanksgiving.

11 Q. Great. That's all I have.

12 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good. Thank
13 you.

14 Thank you, Mr. Scott. Just stay seated. We've got
15 questions for you, perhaps.

16 Questions for Mr. Scott from members of the Zoning
17 Board of Appeals?

18 Questions for Mr. Scott from members of units of
19 local government including school districts?

20 Questions from Mr. Scott from interested parties
21 represented by licensed attorneys, Mr. Luetkehans?

22 EXAMINATION

23 BY MR. LUETKEHANS:

24 Q. Mr. Scott, thanks for comin' in. How close do you

1 live to the proposed project?

2 A. Well, I live in Monticello so the closest would
3 be -- I think there's some turbines proposed in
4 northwestern Sangamon Township which would probably be, you
5 know, probably six to eight miles away.

6 Q. Thank you.

7 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Questions from
8 any attorney, other attorneys in the room?

9 Questions from Piatt County staff and consultants?

10 Redirect?

11 MS. FOX: Yeah, just one.

12 REDIRECT EXAMINATION

13 BY MS. FOX:

14 Q. How close have you been or are you regularly to the
15 Sapphire Sky wind turbines?

16 A. Well, I'm right in the middle of 'em. And also
17 there's another -- of course Sapphire Sky is not
18 operational at this point in time. They're -- they've had
19 as many as eight turbines spinning up there so far in kind
20 of the southwestern area of the wind farm to, to test 'em
21 and see how, you know, if they're producing power and all
22 that stuff and everything is workin'.

23 But there's also another wind farm directly north
24 of us that is operational, has been there for probably ten

1 years. And occasionally I've driven up into those turbines
2 and actually set directly underneath the blades eating
3 lunch in my truck and I can't hear the things from inside
4 the truck.

5 Q. Uh-huh.

6 A. And I've gotten out just to listen to what they
7 sound like, and it's just kind of a soft whoosh, whoosh,
8 whoosh as the blades turn. And, I don't know, you know, if
9 you get more than probably two or three hundred feet away
10 from them you just can't hear 'em.

11 Q. That's all I have.

12 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good.

13 Any final questions, zoning board?

14 Very good. Thank you, Mr. Scott. You may step
15 down. You're excused.

16 The board is going to take a recess for 15 minutes.
17 It's 7:36. We will reconvene at 7:51. Thank you.

18 (WHEREUPON, a brief
19 recess was had.)

20 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: All right. We're
21 back on the record.

22 Ms. Fox, you may call your next witness.

23 MS. FOX: Thank you. And with the
24 Chair's indulgence, I'd like to ask Tom Scott to come back

1 up just very briefly to touch on one, one additional point.

2 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Mr. Luetkehans,
3 do you have any objection?

4 MR. LUETKEHANS: (Mr. Luetkehans shook
5 his head.)

6 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good.

7 Mr. Scott. All right. Mr. Scott, just a reminder
8 you are still under oath; do you understand?

9 THE WITNESS: Yes.

10 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good.

11 Ms. Fox, you may proceed.

12 MS. FOX: Thanks.

13 REDIRECT EXAMINATION

14 BY MS. FOX:

15 Q. Well, thank you for joining us again. I just want
16 to touch briefly -- I understand that you're connected to
17 Heartland Pathways; is that correct?

18 A. Yes. I actually made David Monk, who's the founder
19 of Heartland Pathways, back in the mid 1970s.

20 Q. Uh-huh.

21 A. He was out at the railway museum and admiring some
22 of the prairie that was growing along the museum's trackage
23 out there. And so I've known him quite a long time and
24 fairly -- and we, back in about 2008 or 9, somewhere back

1 in there, the county was working on a long-term plan. I
2 think it was published in 2010. And I was sitting in on
3 some of those meetings to see how they were, you know, how
4 they were talking about certain subjects and what the
5 planning was for the future of the county. And when the
6 presenter started talking about Heartland Pathways being an
7 asset to the county, one of the, one of the members on the
8 planning board said some fairly derogatory things about it
9 because by that time, you know, David was just one man and
10 he had, he had trouble maintaining the 33 miles of railroad
11 that he bought, railroad grade, and let some of it go,
12 including some past this gentleman's house.

13 MR. LUETKEHANS: Can --

14 Q. So do you --

15 MR. LUETKEHANS: I ask that we get to --

16 MS. FOX: Yes.

17 MR. LUETKEHANS: -- if we're gonna recall
18 him we get to the point, please?

19 MS. FOX: Yes.

20 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Yes. Let's,
21 let's get to relevant testimony only, please.

22 A. Okay.

23 Q. Can you tell us what you see the benefit of Goose
24 Wind being for in Heartland Pathways?

1 A. Well, so far there's been some grant money spent on
2 the pathway. The organization that I founded in 2009,
3 which was a Champaign, Havana and Western Railway
4 Historical Society, entered into an agreement with
5 Heartland for some of the -- some of their grade to
6 maintain. And we applied for a grant from Apex in the
7 third quarter this year and received it, so we were able to
8 hire a forester from Farmer City who came out and spent
9 eight hours on the part between Lodge and Shady Rest Road,
10 and he probably cleared in eight hours what it would have
11 taken us probably a year to clear.

12 Q. That's great. Do you think you would have been
13 able to do that without the money coming in from Apex?

14 A. Well, like I say, it would have taken us a year to
15 do it if we had not got the grant. Plus there were poison
16 ivy trees growin' out there that had probably
17 inch-and-a-half stems, and it was growin' six to eight feet
18 tall. And I'm pretty susceptible to that --

19 Q. Well, it sounds like --

20 A. -- and I was not looking forward to clearing that
21 out, but the machine did it, you know, just lickity split.
22 And I didn't have to wade into it.

23 Q. That's great.

24 All right. That's, that's all I have.

1 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Any questions for
2 Mr. Scott from the board with respect to this testimony?

3 Questions from members of units of local government
4 including school districts?

5 Mr. Luetkehans?

6 MR. LUETKEHANS: No, sir.

7 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Interested
8 parties, folks opposed to or in -- or neutral on the
9 application with request -- with respect -- to the grant to
10 Heartland Pathways from Apex.

11 Very good. Thank you.

12 Very good. Mr. Scott, thank you. You may step
13 down and you're excused.

14 Ms. Fox, call your next witness.

15 MS. FOX: I'd like to call Barb Lamont.

16 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Ma'am, could you
17 please raise your right hand to be sworn.

18 (WHEREUPON, the witness
19 was sworn.)

20 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Now, Ms. Lamont,
21 I have a question before you proceed. Your address, is
22 this Oreana?

23 THE WITNESS: Yes.

24 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: And in what

1 county does that lie?

2 THE WITNESS: Macon.

3 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good. Thank
4 you.

5 As a non-county -- non-Piatt County -- resident her
6 direct examination will be limited to 15 minutes.

7 Okay. Ms. Lamont, could you please state your
8 name, spelling first and last names for the record.

9 THE WITNESS: Yes, it's Barbara,
10 B-a-r-b-a-r-a. Lamont, L-a-m-o-n-t.

11 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good. Thank
12 you.

13 Ms. Fox, you may proceed.

14 DIRECT EXAMINATION

15 BY MS. FOX:

16 Q. Ms. Lamont, can you tell us about your connection
17 to Piatt County?

18 A. My grandparents started farming here when they got
19 married back in the '20s and they lived here and farmed up
20 around Mansfield until the late '60s when they required.

21 Q. Great. And so you still are a property owner?

22 A. Yes. I still own the property there. It was left
23 to me when my mom died, which was their daughter.

24 Q. I know that you wear a lot of hats in your, you

1 know, in your life now. Can you walk us through your
2 various professional titles and roles.

3 A. Yes. I'm an assessor in Whitmore Township and
4 Maroa Township in Macon County. I'm also chairman of the
5 Macon County Zoning Board.

6 Q. So, you know, those are areas that have seen wind
7 turbines go up in recent years. Can you tell us a little
8 bit about your experiences with those various wind
9 projects?

10 A. In Maroa Township we have 68 of the 139 towers that
11 are in the Radford Run farm. When the project was first
12 starting and the township got their first money, we was
13 able to build a new township building, heated concrete
14 garage and all new offices, which we had never had before.
15 The roads we have now, the wind farm have used have all
16 been repaired and they're back to about what they were many
17 years before that, just with lack of money and funds they
18 went down.

19 Each wind tower brings in approximately \$24,000 a
20 year in property taxes. We get over \$3 million a year in
21 revenue for the county off of the wind farm.

22 Q. And, I mean, it sounds like you've seen some
23 impacts from that money coming in. Anything else you'd
24 like to share?

1 A. I have not heard anything from any of our farmers.
2 They've all -- they're all real happy with it. They dealt
3 with the company real good. And it's not with Apex. We
4 had another company. We had E.ON. But every -- been with
5 us every step of the way and it's just been a good fit for
6 the townships that really needed the money because one of
7 the only source of money they have is they only have farm
8 ground in it.

9 Q. And in your assessor role, you've had to deal with
10 the wind farms in any capacity?

11 A. Not really because the state sets the values on the
12 towers.

13 Q. Uh-huh. Great. Have you had to deal with any kind
14 of complaints about property tax depreciations or
15 devaluations?

16 A. I have checked with McLean County. And since I
17 know our county, we have not had any property value
18 devaluation because of the wind towers. And we've had new
19 homes that have been built in close proximity to the
20 towers.

21 Q. That's great. Can you share with us about your own
22 personal experiences with the towers, living in an area
23 that has had wind turbines go in?

24 A. Well, before we even got ours down we went over to

1 Atlanta because theirs have been there for a long time. So
2 I could go out, walk out in the field and get close to the
3 towers so see what I could hear, which was just the whoosh,
4 and I was impressed. Bringing a lot of good money in and a
5 lot less land coming out of production.

6 Q. Okay. Great.

7 Can you elaborate a little bit on that last
8 statement, the land coming out of production.

9 A. There's only about an acre of ground that comes out
10 for each tower, which is minimal, compared to what solar
11 is.

12 Q. Okay. Great.

13 Anything else you'd like to share about the wind
14 turbine project or about your support for Goose Creek and
15 kind of the benefits you see to Piatt County?

16 A. Well, I -- right upfront, I am not getting a tower.
17 I am not getting transmission lines. But I just support it
18 because it's good for the county.

19 Q. Okay. All right. That's all I have.

20 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good. Thank
21 you, Ms. Lamont.

22 Questions for Ms. Lamont members of the Zoning
23 Board of Appeals?

24 Questions for Ms. Lamont regarding her testimony

1 from members of units of local government including school
2 districts?

3 Questions for Ms. Lamont from interested parties
4 represented by licensed attorneys?

5 Questions from Ms. Lamont from Piatt County staff
6 and consultants?

7 Very good. Ms. Lamont, thank you for your
8 testimony --

9 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

10 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: -- and for coming
11 over here?

12 MS. FOX: And I'd also like to make sure
13 that the letter from Barb Lamont, Exhibit 13, is entered
14 into the record.

15 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good. It's
16 been received.

17 Call your next.

18 MS. FOX: All right. I'd like to call
19 Laura Bragg.

20 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Good evening, Ms.
21 Bragg. Could you rise your right hand to be sworn by the
22 court reporter, please.

23 (WHEREUPON, the witness

24 Was sworn.)

1 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Ma'am, could you
2 state your name, spelling first and last names for the
3 record.

4 MS. BRAGG: My name is Laura Bragg. It's
5 L-a-u-r-a. Last name B-r-a-g-g.

6 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good. Thank
7 you.

8 Ms. Fox, you may proceed.

9 DIRECT EXAMINATION

10 BY MS. FOX:

11 Q. Ms. Bragg, can you tell us a little bit about your
12 connection to Piatt County?

13 A. Yes. I married my husband, who's a farmer, and I
14 have been living here for a few years.

15 Q. Uh-huh. Great.

16 And I understand you have statement prepared?

17 A. I do.

18 Q. Okay. And this is the exhibit that is on the
19 exhibit list from Braxton and Laura Bragg. It should be
20 Exhibit 11 that she's also going to read into the record.

21 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: All right. Very
22 good.

23 Ms. Bragg, if you could read it and go a little bit
24 slow because Tammy's taking down every word. You may go

1 ahead.

2 MS. BRAGG: Thank you.

3 Good evening, and thank you for the opportunity to
4 express my thoughts and my opinions here tonight. So here
5 I go. I want to express my support for the Goose Creek
6 Wind project. My husband and I are longtime residents of
7 Mansfield and taxpayers in Piatt County. Members of our
8 family are participating in the Goose Creek Wind project by
9 leasing land. We are happy to support our participation
10 and thankful for the opportunities that this project brings
11 to Piatt County.

12 I met my husband while we were both touring as
13 Peace Corps volunteers in the country of Mongolia.
14 Mongolia is an immensely beautiful country with a rich
15 history and culture. As a fun fact, there are more
16 livestock than human populations in the country. Mongolia
17 had traditionally been a herding culture. Excuse me.
18 However, as one of the coldest countries on earth it faces
19 challenges with a lot of its heating being produced by coal
20 burning. The levels pollution during the winter months
21 there is unbelievable, so much so that it surpasses the
22 safe -- excuse me, that surpasses the safe -- air quality
23 index recommended by the World Health Organization. Masks
24 during winter are not really a choice if one wants to stay

1 healthy. How lucky are we to enjoy the fresh air here and
2 to have access to resources for renewable energy to power
3 and heat our homes in a sustainable way that does not hurt
4 the earth or our health.

5 After Mongolia I went to work in the country of
6 Bangladesh for a couple of years then I had to make a
7 decision as to whether I would move to central Illinois to
8 be with my now-husband as he took over farming his family's
9 farm. His Midwest charms won me over and I moved. Now, to
10 be transparent, he did bring me for the first visit in the
11 month of August when it was warm, the birds were chirping
12 and there was lush greenery all around. While I patiently
13 still throw a fit about the cold winters I absolutely love
14 living in Piatt County. I love the beauty, the peace and
15 quiet of country life and the warmth of the community.

16 When I first moved here my husband offered to move
17 us to Champaign if I wanted to be closer to my work, but
18 Piatt County quickly became home for me and I simply cannot
19 imagine living outside of the cozy fields of Mansfield.
20 This is why we just bought a house in Piatt County. And,
21 in fact, one of the sited wind turbines is about a mile
22 west from our new home. We have a lot of dreams for this
23 house. We are not earning money from this wind turbine but
24 we are still happy to support the project. It is exciting

1 to know that Goose Creek Wind would generate 89 million in
2 total property taxes over 30 years. It's a comforting
3 thought as a homeowner because that means that it's less
4 likely for my taxes to increase. The county could receive
5 more revenue without placing -- excuse me -- a heavier
6 burden on its residents and constituents.

7 We consider our new house our forever home and,
8 therefore, Piatt County is and will be home for decades to
9 come. It is our hope and dream to have children and for
10 them to grow up like their dad did, in the open fields
11 playing in nature and enjoying the fresh air of the
12 countryside. Our kids would attend the local schools, the
13 same schools that Goose Creek Wind is going to generate tax
14 revenue for over the course of 30 to 50 years. This is
15 very important to us. Why? Because we want our children
16 to have and enjoy the same opportunities that other
17 children -- that other -- excuse me, I lost my -- similar
18 opportunities that children in other counties enjoy. This
19 includes excellent teachers, great after-school programs
20 and exposure to a variety of educational activities and
21 opportunities in areas like science, math, arts, et cetera.

22 I know a couple of families who after living in
23 Piatt County decided to leave to a different county because
24 of the school system, and I do not ever want to have to

1 think about leaving for this reason. This is why it's
2 comforting to know that the schools that our future
3 children would be going to are going to have new revenue
4 streams and additional resources for decades to come.

5 We also have family members who either teach in the
6 school district or serve on the school boards of Piatt
7 County. Knowing that their livelihoods are going to be
8 improved because of this wind farm strengthens our support
9 for its development. Over the next 30 years Goose Creek
10 Wind will generate 55 million in new revenue for our local
11 school district. This doesn't include the over 13 million
12 in Piatt County taxes that will also be brought to the
13 county in the near decades.

14 As we evaluate the special use permit application
15 for Goose Creek Wind, I ask that you keep in mind, not only
16 the main families who are counting on this project for a
17 stable source of income, but also the county as a whole and
18 future generations. Piatt County is our home and future.
19 Goose Creek Wind represents a continued investment in our
20 schools and future generations. We support Goose Creek
21 Wind. Thank you.

22 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Thank you, Ms.
23 Bragg.

24 Ms. Fox, do you have any other questions for your

1 client?

2 MS. FOX: No.

3 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good.

4 Questions from the Zoning Board of Appeals for Ms.
5 Bragg?

6 Questions from members of units of local government
7 including school districts?

8 Questions from interested party represented by
9 licensed attorneys?

10 MR. LUETKEHANS: No, sir.

11 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good. Thank
12 you.

13 Questions from Piatt County staff and consultants.

14 Ms. Bragg, thank you for your testimony and for
15 being here tonight. You're excused.

16 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

17 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Call your next.

18 MS. FOX: I'd like to call Braxton Bragg.

19 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Sir, could you
20 please raise your right hand to be sworn in by the court
21 reporter, please.

22 (WHEREUPON, the witness
23 Was sworn.)

24 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Sir, could you

1 please state your name, spelling first and last names for
2 the record.

3 MR. BRAG: Braxton Bragg. B-r-a-x-t-o-n.
4 Bragg, B-r-a-g-g.

5 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good. Ms.
6 Fox, you may proceed.

7 DIRECT EXAMINATION.

8 BY MS FOX:

9 Q. Mr. Bragg, could you tell us a little bit about
10 your connection to Piatt County and to your land in
11 particular?

12 A. I grew up here my -- pretty much my whole life.
13 I'm a fourth generation farmer on my father's side. On my
14 mother's side they ran grain elevators, including Harris
15 along 150. And my uncle started what was O'Malley Grain in
16 Mansfield, which is now the Andersons.

17 Q. Great. And you're currently living in Piatt
18 County; is that right?

19 A. Yes, I am.

20 Q. Great. Are you currently involved in farming?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

23 A. My father retired in 2017. I -- we had slowly
24 began the process of me taking over the farm probably in

1 about 2015. I officially took the reins in 2017, but he's
2 never that far away.

3 Q. Fair enough. Great.

4 Well, I understand that you also have a statement
5 prepared?

6 A. I do.

7 Q. Is that correct?

8 All right. I -- again, this is on the exhibit list
9 as a letter from Braxton Bragg. That's Exhibit 12. And
10 I'll let Mr. Bragg read it.

11 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good.

12 MR. BRAGG: Just to be clear --

13 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Mr. Bragg, you
14 may proceed --

15 MR. BRAGG: -- moved here. I know that's
16 a hard pill to swallow, but I was better looking ten years
17 ago so -- my name is Braxton Bragg. I was born and raised
18 in Piatt County. I graduated with the class of 2000 from
19 Blue Ridge and continued on to the University of Illinois
20 where I received a degree in Agri-Business in 2004.

21 After college, I moved briefly back to Mansfield
22 but wanted to see the world a bit so I joined the Peace
23 Corps. I was sent to Mali, West Africa, where I'd be
24 working with farmers. One of the areas of focus for

1 volunteers in this region, one of the primary areas of
2 focus in this region, was trying to mitigate the effects of
3 climate change on these people's way of life. Rains were
4 coming less and less frequently and the Sahara was slowly
5 closing in and swallowing the farm ground meter by meter
6 every year. I am certain there are some villages up in the
7 rocky cliffs of Dohan country where I worked that will have
8 to relocate in the near future because life in these places
9 will no longer be sustainable.

10 After college, I came back to Illinois but was soon
11 off again. This time I went to Mongolia, again working
12 with farmers. Although climate change wasn't the central
13 focus of my work, it played in the background of almost all
14 the work I did attempting to help the people navigate the
15 perils of an ever-changing world and continue their way of
16 life. I have worked with herders who are losing their
17 grasslands to graze their animals. And you have to
18 understand the Mongolians being herders is not just an
19 economical way of life, but it's a very cultural way of
20 life. This is central to their cultural identity. So even
21 young people who have moved into the cities are still very
22 connected to the herders out side. So to lose this is
23 devastating to them.

24 Both of these places are seeing an increasing trend

1 of people, especially young people, walking away from the
2 rural farming way of life to migrate to the urban centers
3 to look for jobs and opportunity which often times just
4 don't exist.

5 I met my wife in Mongolia. She was serving as a
6 health volunteer in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar. When
7 we finished our service, I came home to Illinois to take
8 over the family farm as my father was getting ready to
9 retire. She went on to a fellowship with the CDC in Dhaka,
10 Bangladesh. Over the course of two years, as we were
11 trying to figure out what was next, I convinced her that
12 Piatt County was a good place to live and she should give
13 it a shot. She agreed. This is a woman who has a master's
14 in public health, has completed a Peace Corps service and
15 has worked with CDC. The world was literally her oyster
16 and she could have gone anywhere, but she decided that
17 Piatt County would be a good place to call home. I thank
18 her for making that decision every day, probably not out
19 loud, but I do make it.

20 After arrival, she got a job in Champaign. I
21 offered to move to Champaign, being the good husband I am.
22 The commute for her would be shorter in winters, which, as
23 a California native, are her least favorite thing about
24 Illinois. Also, Champaign has more opportunity and more

1 things to do. And as a native city girl, I thought this
2 would appeal to her and make her feel more at home. But to
3 my surprise she said no, she really enjoyed her country
4 life and had no desire to move into town. So we bought a
5 small house out in the country near Galesville which we
6 plan to be in for many, many years to come. We've come to
7 the point now where children will hopefully be entering the
8 picture soon, and one of the biggest concerns for parents
9 are the quality of schools that their children attend. It
10 is very important that kids who will be attending Blue
11 Ridge have every opportunity that the kids from Champaign,
12 Chicago, Mahomet, Leroy, Monticello, et cetera have.

13 I remember sitting in my freshman orientation at
14 the University of Illinois surrounded by kids from Chicago
15 who would ask over and over again if their AP credits would
16 transfer to their college transcripts. I had to come home,
17 fire up the old family PC, get on the old dial-up Internet,
18 and I typed in what does AP credit stand for. This type of
19 classes were just not an option when I was at Blue Ridge.

20 It is very important to us that our children have
21 access to a quality education, robust list of
22 extracurriculars to partake in and a safe learning
23 environment so they will have every opportunity to succeed
24 in the world. Beyond that it is important that the place

1 we call home has a good fire and medical and other public
2 resources that ensure a good, safe quality of life.

3 As a farmer, it is very important to me that we
4 have good roads as that's how -- that's a big portion of
5 how I make my living, and it's very important to me that
6 the safety of the people I put in my equipment to drive
7 back and forth to the elevator every fall.

8 I told my wife a few years ago that Piatt County
9 was a good place to call home. It is something I believe
10 wholeheartedly. In my opinion, the wind farm only builds
11 on that. Thank you for your time.

12 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Thank you, Mr.
13 Bragg.

14 Ms. Fox, do you have any other questions for Mr.
15 Bragg?

16 MS. FOX: No, nothing further.

17 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good. Thank
18 you.

19 Questions for Mr. Bragg from members of the zoning
20 board?

21 Members of units of local government including
22 school districts?

23 Interested parties represented by licensed
24 attorneys?

1 Piatt County staff and consultants?

2 Very good. Mr. Bragg, you're excused.

3 MS. FOX: Great. That's all the
4 witnesses I have. I would like to move into my closing
5 argument, if I may.

6 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: You, you may.
7 We're reserving closing statements for --

8 MS. FOX: Oh, I, I mischaracterized
9 perhaps but --

10 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: We're, we're,
11 we're reserving closing statements for the end. But to
12 save you the trip down, how long are you planning?

13 MS. FOX: I think I have 10, 15 minutes.

14 MR. LUETKEHANS: No objection.

15 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Okay. All right.
16 You may proceed with your closing statement.

17 MS. FOX: Okay. And if -- you know, it
18 is really just part of the presentation for, for tonight.

19 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Sure. And, Ms.
20 Fox, if you could just go a little bit slower than your
21 opening statement.

22 MS. FOX: Of course.

23 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Thank you so
24 much.

1 MS. FOX: I received that comment many
2 times before. I will, I will endeavor to slow down.

3 CLOSING ARGUMENT

4 BY MS. FOX:

5 I would like to make sure at this point that all of
6 the exhibits are entered into the record, just in one kind
7 of fail swoop. I believe that I've touched on them. But
8 to the extent I have not, I think everybody has the exhibit
9 list. I'm happy to go through those again.

10 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Mr. Luetkehans?

11 MR. LUETKEHANS: No objection.

12 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: All right. They
13 will be admitted.

14 MS. FOX: Okay. Can we go to the next,
15 the next slide, please?

16 So I'd like to just bring us back --

17 MR. LUETKEHANS: I, I don't meant to
18 interrupt, but, Andy, do you mind -- do we have a client
19 list? Can we put that as Exhibit 15 just so I have it in
20 my record as to what we're doing with that?

21 MR. KEYT: Sure, as long as there's no
22 objection, I assume.

23 MS. FOX: No. No.

24 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: What number is

1 that going to be?

2 MR. KEYT: It will be Fox Exhibit 15.

3 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Exhibit 15 for
4 Ms. Fox.

5 MR. LUETKEHANS: Thank you. I'm sorry.
6 I apologize for the interruption.

7 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good. Thank
8 you.

9 Okay. Ms. Fox, the floor is yours.

10 MS. FOX: Thank you.

11 You know, we've heard from my clients. We've heard
12 all the reasons that they think that this project is a good
13 one. We've heard all the benefits that it's going to bring
14 to the community.

15 And so I want to bring us back to really what we're
16 doing here, right, which is certainly not debating the
17 benefits, the pros and cons of wind energy, right. I know
18 you've been there, right. I know there has been a very
19 long process of doing that, right, for the past several
20 years. And the fact is that Piatt County does have a wind
21 ordinance already in place, right.

22 Next slide, please.

23 I have here, you know, just the purpose statement
24 from that Appendix A, right, and we see the ordinance was

1 adopted for the following purposes. All right. Number
2 one, to assure that any development and production of wind
3 generated electricity in Piatt County is safe and
4 effective, of course, and to facilitate economic
5 opportunities for local residents, right.

6 And my clients are interested in both, right, they
7 want wind energy, they want wind energy that is safe and
8 effective, and they think that Apex has plans to make that
9 true. And they want to have those economic opportunities
10 which are part of the purpose of the wind ordinance that is
11 already in place to be given effect.

12 Next slide.

13 So the focus of these hearings, again, is on the
14 special use permit. And I know at this point that, you
15 know, everyone here is familiar with this list of items,
16 right, that the board can, you know, look to in terms of,
17 you know, as the ordinance says, before we're recommending
18 the issuance of such a special use permit the board may
19 prescribe such conditions within the board's judgment that
20 ensure that the following, right. And so I'd just like to
21 walk through those briefly, the first one being the
22 establishment, maintenance or operation of the special use
23 will not be detrimental to, or endanger the public health,
24 safety, morals, comfort or general welfare, right. Well,

1 we've heard testimony from my clients regarding the
2 importance of, of the funding coming in because of the
3 Goose Creek project to the police, for instance, right, to
4 the fire department, to other basic public services, right,
5 that really speak to this. We've heard time and time again
6 why revenues matter in terms of the school district, in
7 terms of the nursing home, in terms of all the good that
8 can be done in the community.

9 We've heard concerns expressed about renewable
10 energy and the importance of moving toward that kind of
11 technology, the importance for the community and for the
12 broader environment as well. And kind of on the flip side
13 of that, we've heard about, you know, what happens if Goose
14 Creek doesn't come in, right, what are we going to do with
15 that, you know, that revenue that may not materialize in
16 other ways and the cost of that to, you know, these public
17 services that my clients rely upon.

18 All right. Looking to, you know, the special use
19 will not be injurious to the use and enjoyment of other
20 property in the immediate vicinity for the purposes already
21 permitted nor substantially diminish and impair property
22 values within the neighborhood.

23 We've heard from several of my clients who have not
24 felt those impacts, right, who have been around wind

1 turbines and have not felt these kinds of negative impacts,
2 right. The establishment of the special use will not
3 impede the normal and orderly development and improvement
4 of surrounding property for uses permitted in the district.
5 We've heard that my clients are going to continue to farm,
6 right. They're not, they're not giving up any kind of uses
7 of their property. They're continuing on. And in some
8 cases, right, they're actually able to continue on in those
9 uses because of the wind project, right, because they're
10 not going to be forced to sell off their land as they might
11 otherwise be.

12 Adequate utilities, access roads, drainage and/or
13 other necessary facilities. I'll certainly rely on, you
14 know, the other testimony that you've heard on that in
15 detail, right, but you have heard several times, right,
16 that my clients are comfortable, for insurance, with
17 regards to roads, that Apex is going to, you know, not only
18 repair any roads that are damaged but that actually Piatt
19 County is going to end up with better roads after, after
20 this project is done.

21 Adequate measures taken to provide ingress and
22 egress. You know, again, I'll rely on the testimony that's
23 already been submitted, of course. But, again, this is not
24 a concern to my clients. And my clients have been engaged,

1 again, for many years in negotiations with Apex on these
2 points, right.

3 The establishment, maintenance and operation of the
4 special use will be in conformance with the preamble to the
5 regulations of the district in which the special use is
6 proposed to located.

7 If you could go back just one slide.

8 I take that to mean this preamble, right. These
9 are the overall goals of the ordinance that, again, has
10 been thoroughly hashed out already. And my clients really
11 want these -- this purpose, this preamble to be given
12 effect by the board in considering the special use permit.

13 You can go back to that. Thank you.

14 And then finally, the special use shall in other
15 respects conform to the applicable regulations of the
16 district in which it is located and the board shall find
17 that there is a public necessity for the special use.

18 Well, this public necessity is something that my
19 clients feel very strongly, right. They feel it very
20 strongly, again, because of the economic benefits. They
21 feel it very strongly in terms of their own connections to
22 the land, their ability to stay there and, frankly, their
23 ability to, you know, do the things that they want to do
24 within their property rights as owners. And they feel it's

1 a public necessity in terms of the renewable energy
2 elements. And for all of that, right, they really see this
3 as a necessary project and good project. And so I would
4 submit that, you know, my clients bolster all of these kind
5 of factors on behalf of the Goose Creek project.

6 Next slide.

7 And really, just to bring us back and recenter, you
8 know, my clients who are property owners here, this freedom
9 of use is the baseline. This language comes from the Piatt
10 County zoning ordinance, right. It comes from Article
11 B(4)(h), right. It says each of these regulations has been
12 assigned to work in harmony with the others, with the
13 totality providing that the minimum degree of land use
14 control essential to the realization of the optimum land
15 use environment, right.

16 The wind control ordinance is, of course, to be
17 read in harmony with this, this overall Piatt County zoning
18 ordinance. And I just want to bring us back to this as the
19 baseline, right, the minimum degree of land use control
20 essential. And that's what clients are asking for. They
21 are experts on the land. Many of them have been on the
22 land for many generations. They understand it. They
23 understand the impacts that might come from these turbines.
24 They're comfortable with it. And they really want to move

1 forward to get all of these benefits that the Goose Creek
2 project really promises.

3 In conclusion, Goose Creek wind farm will support
4 Piatt County, my clients believe. And because of that,
5 these Piatt County landowners support the Goose Creek wind
6 farm. And so we ask that you vote in favor of the granting
7 of the special use permit in favor of Goose Creek Wind.

8 Thank you.

9 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good. Thank
10 you, Ms. Fox, for your closing statement.

11 Now it's time for folks not represented by counsel
12 who are in support of the application.

13 Shane -- is it Ater, A-t-e-r?

14 MR. ATER: Yes, sir.

15 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good.

16 Sir, if you could please raise your right hand to
17 be sworn by the court reporter.

18 (WHEREUPON, the witness
19 was sworn.)

20 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Mr. Ater, you've
21 written that -- or it is written that -- you are from
22 Mahomet?

23 MR. ATER: Yes.

24 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: And in which

1 county is that located?

2 MR. ATER: That is Champaign.

3 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Champaign County.
4 Then as an out-of-county resident you will have 15 minutes
5 to testify.

6 MR. ATER: Okay.

7 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: All right. Very
8 good. You may proceed.

9 BY MR. ATER:

10 Good evening. My name is Shane Ater and I am here
11 representing Laborer's Local 703. Our local employs nearly
12 500 construction laborers, 47 of which live in Piatt County
13 alone. These members could benefit from this job putting
14 money in their pocket. I am here this evening to relay our
15 local's strong support for the Goose Creek Wind farm
16 project. This project would provide good-paying jobs and
17 ensure steady work for a substantial amount of time for our
18 members. This project would also especially benefit our
19 Piatt County members by allowing them to work closer to
20 home which would in turn help them save money amongst the
21 rising gas prices and cost of living and give them more
22 time at home with their families. These savings would also
23 benefit the community in which they live.

24 In closing, I hope that you will join me and my

1 brothers and sisters of Local 703 in the support of Goose
2 Creek Wind farm project. Thank you for your time.

3 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good. Thank
4 you, Mr. Ater. Before you go, we have questions for you,
5 perhaps.

6 Questions for this gentleman from Zoning Board of
7 Appeals?

8 Very good. Questions from members of units of
9 local government including school districts?

10 Mr. Luetkehans?

11 Other interested parties, persons who are opposed
12 to the application or neutral on the application?

13 Questions for Mr. Ater from interested parties?

14 Piatt County staff and consultants?

15 Very good. Thank you, Mr. Ater, for your time.

16 MR. ATER: Thank you.

17 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Next witness Sara
18 Livesay.

19 Good evening, ma'am. Could you please --

20 MS. LIVESAY: Good evening.

21 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Could you please
22 raise your right hand to be sworn by the court reporter.

23 (WHEREUPON, the witness

24 was sworn.)

1 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Could you please
2 state your name, spelling first and last names for the
3 record.

4 MS. LIVESAY: Sarah, S-a-r-a-h. Livesay,
5 L-i-v-e-s-a-y.

6 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: And the
7 indication is you're from Urbana?

8 MS. LIVESAY: I'm here tonight
9 representing Grand Prairie Friends of Urbana, Illinois.
10 I'm a resident of St. Joseph, Illinois. Both in Champaign
11 County.

12 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Okay. Therefore,
13 you, as a nonresident you have 15 minutes, and the clock
14 can start now. You may proceed.

15 MS. LIVESAY: Thank you so much. Thank
16 you, everyone, for this opportunity to talk tonight.

17 I am here on behalf of Grand Prairie Friends, a
18 conservation organization, nonprofit, based across six
19 counties of east central Illinois. We range across 130
20 miles of this grand prairie division we all live in. Of
21 course about 86% of where we live was originally tall grass
22 prairie. Where we live today is 1/100th of 1% of original
23 prairie.

24 As our mission, we preserve and protect the

1 properties that do still remain across these six counties,
2 being central Illinois, and we have been doing this since
3 1984. And with this work we work in and among townships
4 and watersheds and water districts and communities across
5 all of these areas that we partner with to do good
6 conservation work. And with that, as many of you are
7 likely aware, or maybe not, where these prairie remnants
8 lie are two places in your back yard. Those are railroad
9 right-of-ways and where we bury our dead, our cemeteries.
10 And so part of the work that we do is maintaining and
11 managing five cemeteries at this time. That is where the
12 tall grass prairie seed bank has not been disturbed and we
13 can still restore these special areas.

14 Part of the beauty in managing these cemeteries for
15 your local communities are that there's also historical and
16 descendent care and your -- these are your local relatives
17 that are still in -- put to rest in these special areas.
18 So just 40 miles from here in Paxton, Illinois, we were
19 able, over the last 30 years, to help them take care of
20 Prospect Cemetery prairie, and that is in Patton Township,
21 again, about 40 miles northeast of here in Paxton. The
22 township owned this site. And as a pioneer cemetery, they
23 have done their best to care for the site but they did not
24 have the expertise or the background to take care of this

1 special, unique ecosystem. It had been named as a nature
2 preserve in Illinois because there are over 121 endangered
3 and threatened plants in that space and, of course, many
4 descendents of the Paxton area. So there was a huge
5 population of the community that wanted it preserved for
6 the historic value and for their family culture. And then,
7 of course, there are so many people caring about the plant
8 and animal life in that prairie.

9 But the township did not have the funds to take
10 care of this site. And Grand Prairie Friends has been
11 allowed to give our time and talent on the site, at no
12 charge to the township, of course, for over 30 years, as I
13 said. But at some point it became evident that it needed
14 to change hands for the perpetuity of the site. But the
15 township, as a government body, needed funding to divest of
16 that six-acre tall grass prairie. And Grand Prairie
17 Friends, as a conversation nonprofit, would have to raise
18 that fund from our donors and members. We are not a taxing
19 body. We are purely a 501(c)(3). And so for years we were
20 at this crossroads of the township wanting to do what's
21 right but not having the funding, and Grand Prairie Friends
22 wanting to do what is right but not having the funding.

23 Last year Ford Ridge Energy, one of -- or Ford
24 Ridge Wind -- one of Apex Energy's projects, came online

1 and offered a conservation grant, much that you've heard
2 the same -- you heard about it tonight, and there is a
3 certain formula per megawatt. And it looks like at the
4 Goose Creek juncture they have said something in the ball
5 park of \$300,000. That was different obviously for us in
6 Ford Ridge. But when the opportunity came about, Grand
7 Prairie Friends took advantage and, of course, applied for
8 that funding. And luckily we received that funds.

9 So just this past fall, about three months ago,
10 thanks to Apex Wind Energy and this conservation grant,
11 Prospect Prairie is now saved and the township was able to
12 get the funding they needed to divest of that property and
13 now Grand Prairie Friends wrote -- have also had the
14 support we need to protect and restore that and the
15 conservation value of that property in perpetuity.

16 So I wanted -- I know it's one thing to see it on
17 the screen and to hear that term, conservation grant, and
18 to see a dollar sign, but I wanted you to see it in flesh
19 and blood today that we are a product, just 40 miles up the
20 road, of how that impacted that entire community for both
21 cultural and historical and family culture in Patton
22 Township up in Paxton.

23 So thank you for your time. Thank you.

24 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Okay. Thank you,

1 Ms. Livesay.

2 Questions from the zoning board?

3 Members of units of local government including
4 school districts?

5 Mr. Luetkehans shakes his head no.

6 Other interested parties, members of the public who
7 are either opposed to or neutral on the application?

8 Piatt County staff and consultants?

9 Very good, ma'am. Thank you.

10 MS. LIVESAY: Thank you.

11 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Next is Amanda
12 Pankau. Did I say that right?

13 MS. PANKAU: No, but nobody does.

14 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Help, help me
15 out.

16 MS. PANKAU: It's caw, caw like a crow.

17 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Pankau. Okay.

18 Very, very good.

19 Could you please raise your right hand to be sworn
20 by the court reporter.

21 (WHEREUPON, the witness
22 was sworn.)

23 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Okay. Ma'am,
24 could you state your name, spelling first and last names

1 for the record.

2 MS. PANKAU: Amanda Pankau. A-m-a-n-d-a
3 P-a-n-k-a-u.

4 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: And you are from
5 Monticello?

6 MS. PANKAU: Rural Piatt County.

7 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Rural Piatt
8 County. But you do live in Piatt County?

9 MS. PANKAU: Yes.

10 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Then I have good
11 news for you. You get 45 minutes.

12 MS. PANKAU: Everybody excited about
13 that?

14 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: You may proceed.

15 BY MS. PANKAU:

16 So as I said, my name is Amanda Pankau, and I am a
17 resident of rural, north central Piatt County. I have a
18 bachelor's degree and a master's degree in ecology from the
19 University of Illinois and Southern Illinois University
20 respectively. I work professionally on energy issues for
21 an environmental nonprofit in Illinois, I manage the
22 Monticello farmer's market here in town, and I'm on the
23 board of the local land trust, the land conservation
24 foundation.

1 I'm here tonight as a Piatt County resident that
2 cares about our land, our water and our community. So I'm
3 an ecologist that has worked for nearly 20 years in the
4 energy sector. I've been to nearly every active coal mine
5 and coal-fired power plant in the state of Illinois. I've
6 seen firsthand the pollution and the impacts that fossil
7 fuel energy generation have on our water, our land, our
8 people and our communities.

9 So, for example, polluted acidic water is flowing
10 off the Murdock mine near Tuscola. This is a coal mine
11 that was abandoned by a bankrupt coal company. It still
12 remains and is polluting water in that area. We have coal
13 ash leaching heavy metals into the Middlefork of the
14 Vermilion River in Vermilion County. Right here on the
15 edge of Piatt County in Champaign County we have natural
16 gas storage that has leaked and polluted the Mahomet
17 aquifer.

18 So I could fill my 45 minutes today talking about
19 land, water, pollution, impacts to communities from
20 lighting coal and gas on fire for energy. So I support the
21 Goose Creek Wind project because I'm excited that Piatt
22 County can be part of a future where we produce energy and
23 renewables in clean ways. So those words, clean and
24 renewable, we hear them all the time, they sound like buzz

1 words, but they're real, they mean things. Wind energy is
2 clean. It is free of toxic emissions that pollute the air
3 we breathe. It is free of waste streams that pollute the
4 water we drink. It will not impact the Sangamon River or
5 the Mahomet aquifer here in Piatt County. It does not
6 provide toxic, hazardous or radioactive waste. Wind energy
7 is clean energy. Wind energy is renewable energy.

8 It goes without saying that harvesting the wind is
9 something we can continue to do forever and it won't run
10 out. And kind of along those same lines, we hear local
11 energy. Its price doesn't go up and down based on what
12 Russia does. And, you know, we also hear about local
13 energy and I hear people talk about, well, it doesn't all
14 stay here. We don't live in a bubble here in Piatt County.
15 We don't get all the food we need, the cars we drive,
16 everything we need here in Piatt County. That energy is
17 flowing to an economy that we all rely on that goes past
18 our country boundaries.

19 So even Thomas Edison knew that there was a better
20 way to produce energy to power the light bulb that he
21 patented in 1880. He is quoted as saying we are like
22 tenant farmers chopping down the fence around our own house
23 for fuel when we should be using nature's inexhaustible
24 sources of energy: sun, wind and the tide. He personally

1 even had a wind turbine at his house back in the early
2 1900s.

3 So we are so lucky today that clean and renewable
4 ways of producing energy, namely solar and wind, are among
5 the cheapest ways to produce energy, if not the cheapest.
6 So they are without a doubt the future of energy
7 production. And it's happening here and we can be in
8 support of it.

9 So I also support this project because I support
10 Piatt County. I was raised here in Piatt County and I
11 moved back in 2017 to raise my family here. I've been a
12 long supporter of local economies and local resilience
13 through my work with food systems, particularly here in
14 Piatt County as the manager of the Monticello farmer's
15 market. So while environment issues are what bring me to
16 this work on clean energy, I'm also excited about the idea
17 of producing energy here, creating jobs here and bringing
18 economic opportunity here to Piatt County.

19 So I've taken some time to review the habitat and
20 wildlife portions of the Goose Creek Wind project. As I
21 had hoped, the project -- the proposed project -- has
22 implemented -- or proposed to implement -- the
23 recommendations from both the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
24 through their consultation process and the recommendations

1 of the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. I'm
2 particularly pleased to see the setbacks from forest and
3 stream corridors and also the post-construction monitoring
4 plans for birds and bats. When it comes to avoiding
5 potential habitat and wildlife impacts from wind energy, I
6 think northern Piatt County is a great place for a project.

7 I'll close by saying that, as many of the zoning
8 members know, I attended most of the zoning meetings
9 related to establishing our Piatt County wind ordinance.
10 I'm thankful to all of you, the county board, the State's
11 Attorney, the drainage districts, to Keri and many other
12 people who spent all that time developing that ordinance,
13 and I'm confident that an application that is in line with
14 that ordinance will be a benefit to Piatt County.

15 Thank you also for this monumental task that you've
16 been undertaking and will continue to undertake to bring
17 this opportunity to our community. Thank you.

18 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Thank you, Ms.
19 Pankau.

20 Questions for the witness from members of the
21 Zoning Board of Appeals?

22 From members of units of local government including
23 school districts?

24 Mr. Luetkehans?

1 MR. LUETKEHANS: No, sir.

2 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Other interested
3 parties, members of the public, any questions for this
4 witness?

5 Piatt County staff and consultants?

6 Very good. Thank you, Ms. Pankau.

7 MS. PANKAU: Thank you.

8 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: You're excused.

9 Next it looks like Meg Miner. Did I get that
10 right?

11 MS. MINER: You did.

12 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Could you please
13 raise your right hand to be sworn as a witness.

14 (WHEREUPON, the witness
15 was sworn.)

16 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Would you please
17 state your name, spelling first and last names for the
18 record.

19 MS. MINER: Meg Miner. M-e-g M-i-n-er.

20 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: And you are a
21 resident of Mansfield; is that correct?

22 MS. MINER: I am.

23 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: And that is in
24 Piatt County?

1 MS. MINER: It is.

2 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: And you get 45
3 minutes.

4 MS. MINER: And you'll be happy to know
5 I'm not taking it.

6 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good. Thank
7 you, Ms. Miner.

8 MS. MINER: Thank you.

9 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: You may, you may
10 proceed.

11 BY MS. MINER:

12 I moved to Piatt County 22 years ago. I lived in
13 the Village of Mansfield for seven years before moving to a
14 rural property in Sangamon Township. I know that still
15 makes me a newcomer, but it has become home for me and I
16 envy the people who lived here all of their lives.

17 Early on in the public comments someone raised the
18 question about how many people are participating landowners
19 that actually live in the county. I'm not a participating
20 landowner, but I can't shame or blame any of the people who
21 are no matter where they live. I understand farmers are
22 business people and operate in a constant cycle of invest
23 and reinvest. I feel fortunate that my nearest neighbor
24 alerted me to the news that he signed a contract with Apex,

1 though. That heads-up gave me some time to get used to the
2 idea but I was still grieving, thinking of the changes to
3 come.

4 We've watched the line of turbines move steadily
5 south towards I-74 for years. This can't have been a
6 complete shock for anyone, but it still didn't really feel
7 real to me until this package with a notice of these
8 hearings arrived.

9 I've got a family member who thinks turbines are
10 beautiful. On the other hand, I just today was arguing
11 with a friend about how much better solar is because it
12 doesn't disturb the land the way wind farms do. That
13 friend is from a farm family and wants to know why
14 industries don't do more with installing solar in smaller,
15 unproductive parcels before digging up the rich soil in
16 Piatt County. Frankly, I prefer solar, too. I'm not an
17 economist or an engineer, but I can imagine what amount of
18 infrastructure would be involved if we did small parcels
19 and a lot of tying things together. I think it would just
20 take -- for solar it would be too much to be both useful
21 and profitable, and profit is where we live, right, this is
22 the nature of the world that we live in. And I'm speaking
23 as someone who, for my own power needs, have solar. And I
24 produce enough to sustain just my own needs, but I

1 understand we're talking about scale here.

2 I'll admit I was kind of hoping all this would just
3 go away, but I am grateful to have gotten this impressive
4 package and to learn more about this project. I've really
5 been impressed by this process. Attending these hearings
6 has even been kind of therapeutic for me. There's
7 absolutely no doubt in my mind that we've had a thorough
8 vetting of the different aspects of this plan.

9 My main concern going forward is the effect the
10 wind farm will have on property taxes. And if I understood
11 the real estate expert correctly, we're supposed to feel
12 good that our property values may increase because of this.
13 I don't understand the benefit of that unless you're gonna
14 sell, and I don't have any intention of doing that, but I'm
15 I would be really interested in hearing from someone in
16 local government about how anyone who received this
17 impressive packet might apply for some portion of the tax
18 benefits that are coming to the county. I don't know if
19 anybody wants to join me in those hearings, I definitely
20 will be here.

21 Along with the time that everyone is taking to
22 discuss this issue, I've also been grateful to hear the
23 depth of the questions from the board and from the people
24 in this community. It's heartening that everyone is

1 concerned for the effect that this new industry will have
2 on the habitat that supports us and the rest of the natural
3 world. In fact, it is this concern for the natural world
4 that leads me to ask this board to approve this project.

5 I don't like change, but I like climate change even
6 less. It seems like it's been many years since I started
7 hearing about shifting hardiness zones across the country.
8 Growing seasons and migration patterns have changed.
9 Climate change has already affected this county. The most
10 visible evidence of this change in my part of the county is
11 a family farm, one that's been here for generations, that
12 installed an irrigation system a few years ago.

13 And, incidentally, I really would be interested to
14 know if there's any governing authority that would be able
15 to hold public hearings about that kind of decision in the
16 future. Large-scale irrigation operations seem likely to
17 impact everyone who relies on the Mahomet aquifer.

18 The question about wildlife impacts have also been
19 very interesting. When considering future impacts of these
20 wind turbines on wildlife, I couldn't help thinking about
21 the past. Imagine what Piatt County would like a couple of
22 hundred years ago and think about the impact that farming
23 itself had on the millennia-old prairie ecosystem. Family
24 farms addressed people's needs then. Wind farms are a

1 sensible way of addressing today's needs. Across the world
2 people are losing land and seaways to projects like this
3 because globally and locally we haven't done the work of
4 conserving energy. We haven't prioritized alternatives
5 like sustainable agriculture and transportation systems.

6 My friend today was quick to remind me about how
7 much better farming practices have become in the past
8 decades, and I have no doubt about that. But to me this
9 also comes down to business decisions and the economies of
10 scale. If we have environmental concerns we are going to
11 have to become much more efficient at meeting our needs.

12 I've also heard the argument that the power
13 generated here isn't being used here. Even if these
14 turbines don't directly contribute to the needs of the
15 broader Piatt County population, they are going to lessen
16 the needs for unsustainable sources of energy elsewhere.

17 I am truly grateful that we aren't here discussing
18 a neighborhood nuclear power plant or one that relies on
19 coal. Let's remember, though, we are all still downwind of
20 Clinton and many of Illinois', waterways, as we just
21 recently heard, are threatened by coal ash. It's also a
22 comfort that we aren't facing the prospects of the sights
23 and smells of the natural gas production that takes place
24 further south of here. All of these alternatives have

1 consequences that I would hate to see in this community.
2 As big as these turbines are and as much as the they will
3 change the land that we all so clearly care about, I can't
4 see that we have a better alternative. Regardless of the
5 decision on this project, we have got to work on
6 conservation. We will run out of land for wind turbines,
7 too, eventually. But hopefully the board will keep this in
8 mind if there are industries that are high-energy users
9 that want to come into Piatt County. I hope that these
10 turbines will be ever present reminders of the price that
11 we are paying for our energy needs.

12 I appreciate the chance to comment here tonight,
13 and I look forward to hearing that you approve this permit.
14 Thank you.

15 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Thank you, Ms.
16 Miner.

17 Questions for Ms. Miner from the Zoning Board of
18 Appeals?

19 Questions from members of units of local government
20 including school districts?

21 Mr. Luetkehans?

22 MR. LUETKEHANS: No, sir.

23 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Other interested
24 parties, persons who are either opposed to or neutral on

1 the application?

2 Piatt County staff and consultants.

3 Thank you, Ms. Miner, for your time and your
4 presentation.

5 MS. MINER: Thank you.

6 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Next witness
7 Denny Jordan.

8 Sir, could you please raise your right hand to be
9 sworn.

10 (WHEREUPON, the witness
11 was sworn.)

12 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Sir, could you
13 please state your name, spelling first and last names for
14 the record.

15 MR. JORDAN: My name's Denny Jordan,
16 D-e-n-n-y J-o-r-d-a-n.

17 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: And you are a
18 resident of Gibson City?

19 MR. JORDAN: That's right.

20 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: And in what
21 county does that lie?

22 MR. JORDAN: That's Ford County.

23 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good. You
24 have 15 minutes, sir. You may proceed.

1 BY MR. JORDAN:

2 I appreciate the opportunity. I hope you bear with
3 me. I don't have a very good voice. I'm not sick. It's
4 just my voice.

5 I'm Denny Jordan from Gibson City-Sibley area.
6 Some of you may know me as a land agent for Goose Creek
7 Wind. However, I've been a farmer and a resident of Gibson
8 City-Sibley area all my life. I've also raised registered
9 cattle.

10 First, I'd like to commend the county board and the
11 Piatt County Zoning Board for their professionalism and
12 efforts to conduct these meetings in a manner that lets all
13 parties express their feelings and professional comments.
14 I have one farm that's in the part of the Ford Ridge wind
15 project which was developed by Apex, and I've got another
16 farm in the Sibley wind project that's part of the Apex
17 future plans. Ford Ridge is now an operating wind farm.
18 Personally I do not have a wind turbine on my farm.
19 There's one directly across the road and I do receive an
20 annual land payment and I'm happy to be part of the
21 project. Construction began late in 2021. Turbines were
22 developed -- or delivered -- and built from about November
23 of '21 until March of '22. Admittedly, during the
24 construction process there were inconveniences with the

1 roads, dirt work and traffic pattern, and by all means not
2 every day. By now, all of the roads are better than
3 before, all covered pipes are new, all field entrances are
4 brand new. They're wider and better marked and entrances
5 have gravel. As of September '22, less than a year later,
6 all of the roads are improved and finished and that
7 completes the construction process.

8 During these hearings I've heard a lot of questions
9 and concerns. Bear with me as I give my personal
10 observation about these things. As long as our government
11 mandates that a certain percentage of our electricity must
12 come from clean energy we will see more wind and more solar
13 farms. There have been questions about sound. Frankly,
14 some days it is negligible, but it's not a quality of life
15 factor.

16 For the local economy it was recently printed in
17 our local news that the Ford Ridge project alone added \$16
18 million to the local EAV. This has been a giant impact on
19 the Gibson City-Melvin Sibley School District, three
20 different townships, two local fire departments, emergency
21 personnel and countless other organizations.

22 Habitat and migratory birds and as well as the
23 domestic animals. As I said, I raise registered cattle.
24 We do some pretty ridiculous things to gain an advantage in

1 performance and development. If I thought for a second
2 that a wind turbine would affect cattle, I would be one of
3 first ones to oppose them.

4 Wildlife. A lot of people have heard that wind
5 turbines chase wildlife away and the numbers deplete within
6 a few years. Well, there's been a wind turbine within a
7 quarter of a mile of my house since March, and one day last
8 week my wife took a picture of a real nice whitetail buck
9 in a corn field right along my driveway. And he didn't
10 seem to be worried about the turbine.

11 So far I've not witnessed anyone cleaning up birds,
12 bats or butterflies under the turbines. Birds are killed
13 by many things. Automobiles, cats, power lines and windows
14 kill far more than wind turbines.

15 In a recent meeting the safety of the underground
16 aquifer was questioned. This is a legitimate concern. The
17 foundation of the turbine would be the deepest structure of
18 a wind turbine -- or of a wind farm. Off the top of my
19 head -- and I'm not professional at this -- I would
20 estimate that the depth would be somewhere around 20, feet
21 give or take a little. Underground collection lines are
22 specified at 60 inches. Nothing is pumped into the ground.
23 I see no danger whatsoever to the aquifer.

24 This is greatly different than underground natural

1 gas storage or carbon sequestration. With these, natural
2 gas and CO2 are pumped -- massive amounts of these are
3 pumped -- deeply in the earth with unknown later
4 consequences.

5 There are about 47 wind turbines in the Ford Ridge
6 project. There are approximately that many hog finishing
7 buildings in the same area. If you ask me which I would
8 prefer, I would answer by saying this. You don't have to
9 pump the waste away from a wind turbine and you don't put
10 it in the ground.

11 My own experience and opinions are my own.
12 Anybody's welcome to come to Ford County. I'll show you
13 around, show you our wind farm, and I would encourage you
14 to build one in Piatt County. Thank you.

15 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Thank you, Mr.
16 Jordan.

17 Questions for Mr. Jordan from the zoning board?

18 Mr. Harrington.

19 EXAMINATION

20 BY MR. HARRINGTON:

21 Q. Did say you're land agent?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. For who?

24 A. Apex.

1 Q. Oh, for Apex?

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. Okay. Not --

4 A. In Piatt County.

5 Q. Okay. Thank you. That's what I was looking for.

6 Okay.

7 A. That's my virgin voyage as a land agent.

8 Q. So what do you do as a land agent?

9 A. I farm and raise cattle.

10 Q. For Apex?

11 A. No, for -- that's for myself.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. I work for Apex. I signed people up, talk to
14 landowners, explain to them the benefits to being part of
15 the wind farm.

16 Q. Gotcha. No, I get it now. I just was looking for
17 the clarification. Thank you.

18 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Any other
19 questions from the zoning board for Mr. Jordan?

20 Very good. Questions from members of the units of
21 local government including school districts?

22 Mr. Luetkehans?

23 MR. LUETKEHANS: No, sir.

24 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Other interested

1 parties?

2 Piatt County staff and consultants?

3 Very good. Thank you, Mr. Jordan.

4 MR. JORDAN: Thank you.

5 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: You're excused.

6 All right. It's 9:00. We stayed over last night.
7 We're gettin' out of here tonight.

8 Okay. Now, at the conclusion of meetings of
9 sessions of this public hearing we would always ask Mr.
10 Gershon who his next witnesses were coming up, but that's
11 over with.

12 So what we have tomorrow night will be further
13 testimony from individuals from the general public who are
14 in support of the application for the special use permit.
15 If we get through all of those then it will be time for Mr.
16 Luetkehans to begin his presentation on behalf of folks who
17 are opposed. However, I think we are going to have a
18 substantial number of folks tomorrow night, but we may move
19 through it rather quickly.

20 So, Mr. Luetkehans, would you be ready to have a
21 witness available tomorrow night?

22 MR. LUETKEHANS: I am not gonna bring one
23 of my experts for the possibility to set that up tomorrow
24 night. Excuse me. I should turn this on.

1 We may have residents who testify, and that may be
2 the best way to handle the evening. And, honestly, I'm
3 somewhat questioning whether I'll come down just to hear
4 people speak and charge my clients money. So we're working
5 through it, but I would -- we will not have an expert for
6 -- testify at all.

7 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Okay. Very good.
8 I understand that and respect that.

9 So, if you could, maybe have some of your clients
10 at the ready to testify should we get through all of the
11 individuals in support of the application.

12 MR. LUETKEHANS: We will try to make sure
13 that you do not have an evening of an hour of empty time
14 here. We understand that, and I would not -- I'll do
15 everything I can to avoid that for the ZBA.

16 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good. Thank
17 you, Mr. Luetkehans.

18 Anything further, Mr. Gershon?

19 MR. GERSHON: Nothing further. Thank
20 you.

21 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Thank you.

22 Ms. Fox, anything else?

23 MS. FOX: No, nothing further. Thank
24 you.

1 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: Very good. Thank
2 you.

3 Mr. Luetkehans, anything further?

4 MR. LUETKEHANS: No, sir.

5 HEARING OFFICER KAINS: The board is in
6 recess until tomorrow night at 6 p.m. in this building.
7 Thank you.

8 (WHEREUPON, the hearing
9 was adjourned for the
10 evening.)
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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

I, Tammy Greenfield, CSR# 084-004214, an Official Court Reporter for the Circuit Court of DeWitt County, Sixth Judicial Circuit of Illinois, reported in machine shorthand the proceedings had in the above-entitled cause and transcribed the same by computer-aided transcription, which I hereby certify to be a true and accurate transcript of the proceedings had before the Piatt County Zoning Board of Appeals.



Official Court Reporter

Dated this 17th day
of January, 2023.

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