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### Frequently Asked Questions

## Regulating Large Solar and Wind Facilities

*Wayne County, Ohio, Commissioners*

**Q: Why is the issue of regulating large solar or wind-generating farms being considered by the county government?**

Landowners are being approached by companies that want to build solar facilities that would take many hundreds of acres of farmland out of food production. Elected officials take into consideration the balance of landowners' rights to use their land as they see fit versus the effects a landowner's land use may have on the neighbors and the county at large.

While the notice given contemplates prohibiting large facilities throughout the unincorporated territory of the county, the commissioners' intention is to alert the public to the scope of this developing issue, as well as develop public understanding and discussion on this issue. It is also possible that, if passed on June 7, the regulation could be modified or repealed in the future.

The Wayne County Commissioners take this decision very seriously. To be clear, we aren't debating solar or wind energy versus traditional energy production.

**Q: Why are the Commissioners including all unincorporated areas of Wayne County, and have they communicated with other local elected officials?**

State law only gives authority to regulate the unincorporated areas. Commissioners have reached out to the Townships as we considered making the restriction. Their responses reflect similar support for restricting these installations.

**Q: Do the Wayne County Commissioners oppose solar and wind energy?**

No, we encourage alternative energy generation, provided that it is well thought out, avoids the use of prime farmland, and is properly planned from beginning to end.

**Q: Are the Commissioners prohibiting all solar and wind facilities in Wayne County?**

No, Ohio law only authorizes county regulation of large solar or wind facilities. State law only authorizes regulation of solar installations of 50 megawatts and larger, which require 350-500 acres of open land. Wind installations could be regulated at 5 megawatts or larger. In both cases, regulation is limited to unincorporated county territory.

**Q: What are the pros and cons of solar and wind renewable energy?**

**Pros:**

- Solar and wind generation are examples of renewable sources of electricity that operate without producing carbon dioxide emissions.
- Solar and wind sources for electricity have become more economically feasible through large-scale production, manufacturing advances, and governmental inducements.

**Cons:**

- Solar and wind are best suited as supplemental to primary sources of electric generation since they cannot produce electric power in response to fluctuating load demand from consumers connected to the power grid. Although this can be addressed by adding batteries or other means of storing the electric power, this introduces additional efficiency losses and increases costs.
- Large solar installations cover many hundreds of acres that may otherwise continue in agricultural production.
- Wayne County is not well situated to efficiently capture sunlight or wind to generate electricity on a large scale. It appears that this county is only a target for industrial-scale solar because of government mandates and subsidies that are passed on to power customers and because Wayne County has convenient connections to the electric power grid.

**Q: Isn't renewable energy the future?**

There are conflicting reports about the efficiency and effectiveness of renewable energy operations, though there appears to be more consensus around it being an environmentally friendly asset in a full portfolio of electric energy sources, where it would be a supplemental source alongside more cost-effective and reliable sources.

**Q: Why aren't the commissioners regulating oil and gas transmission?**

Recent changes to state law only give county government the authority to regulate renewable energy farms. Counties have no authority to regulate fossil fuel electric generation.

**Q: Why do the commissioners want to regulate large-scale solar and wind operations?**

Large-scale solar or wind operations run counter to the vision for Wayne County. In 2019, a major update to the Wayne County Comprehensive Plan, Wayne Onward, was adopted. The plan culminated 18 months of work by more than 1,700 volunteers to help author the plan that will serve as a guide for Wayne County for years to come.

The goal of the Wayne Onward process was to create clear and compelling recommendations that align with community-supported ideas and values. The Comprehensive Plan envisions well-planned and managed development, abundant farmland, and greenspaces, a full range of housing opportunities, and economic prosperity. Four themes emerged through the development process:

- Balance rural character with growth
- Improve land use tools
- Provide housing
- Support parks and trailways

There are 38 objectives and 149 action items contained in the plan to support those four themes and raise concern that large solar or wind installations would run counter to this vision for the use of our land resources.