

January 29, 2019

AEP Ohio Solar Farm Hearings Near Conclusion: Week 2 Recap

Clearer than ever: Ohio needs historic renewable energy developments

Monday was the final day of expert witness testimony in the evidentiary hearing at the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO) offices, which began January 15, 2019 but may resume Friday morning depending on the outcome of various standing motions by case participants. Throughout the last two weeks, numerous expert witnesses provided compelling testimony in support of the largest clean energy project in Ohio's history. The case will determine if American Electric Power (AEP) Ohio's application to prove the need to build at least 900MW of Ohio renewable energy projects, which include 400 megawatts of solar powered generation to be located in Highland County, will be approved.

Throughout week one of the hearing, AEP Ohio, Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), Ohio Partners for Affordable Energy (OPAЕ) and the Mid-Atlantic Renewable Energy Coalition testified in support of the proposal. These experts explained in detail all of the benefits that would be brought to Appalachian Ohio and AEP's electricity customers.

In this second week, opponents to AEP's plan attempted to argue their case. **It was clear throughout the hearings, however, that more investment in Ohio renewable generation facilities is needed, and that these solar projects provide the necessary catalyst for a strong start.** These projects will stabilize and reduce customers' electricity bills, diversify Ohio's generation mix, promote economic development, help the state prepare for future environmental safeguards against pollutants such as carbon, and bring jobs to Ohio's Appalachian region.

Notable Actions

Among the testifying witnesses for opponents to the project was Jonathan A. Lesser, adjunct fellow at the Manhattan Institute, a policy think tank. Mr. Lesser testified on behalf of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel and is well-known for his written articles that indicate a negative bias against renewable energy, including his challenging of climate science and the benefits of clean energy. Mr. Lesser was questioned at length about his opinion on climate change and the supporting science, highlighting the long-standing work Mr. Lesser has performed to oppose clean energy initiatives and climate science on behalf of fossil fuel interests that fund the Manhattan Institute. Articles include: <https://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/green-new-deal-reality> and <https://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/new-york-insane-zero-carbon>.

Nearly every witness has now taken the stand with the exception of one of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel's witnesses, Dr. Noah Dormady. Dr. Dormady was asked to leave the witness stand because his testimony was alleged to present a conflict of interest as he is currently participating in an active case before the PUCO on behalf of a state agency while also seeking employment as a PUCO Commissioner. Dr. Dormady was asked by the hearing examiners late Friday to leave the stand as they consider written arguments from the parties to the case, which have now been filed and can be found [here](#). If his testimony is permitted, he will likely take the stand this Friday, after which the initial phase of the case will conclude.

Next Steps

AEP Ohio is expected to seek an opportunity to file rebuttal testimony where the company will respond to arguments asserted by opponents to the projects. If granted, this process is expected to take only a matter of days and ultimately, it is up to the five PUCO commissioners to make the final decision and determine renewable energy's role in Ohio's energy future. The AEP solar project has brought together stakeholders from across the state who believe in using renewable energy to improve our economy and to improve Appalachia Ohio.

Related News

A Special Order of Business passed by the delegates of the 2019 Ohio Farmers Union (OFU) annual conference in Lima January 25-26, 2019 urged the PUCO to "...provide prompt regulatory approval for AEP's Highland County solar generation project..."

The second largest general farm organization in Ohio, OFU represents more than 8,000 family farmers in the state. This Order in support of the project will be filed with the PUCO for inclusion in the docket of the case and is **attached**.