To the editor:

A public meeting will be held at 9:15 am on February 15 at 105 S. Market Street, Lisbon to gather comments regarding requests to “bar large scale solar and wind farm facilities from building in unincorporated areas of Fairfield, Franklin, Perry and West townships.

The county commissioners went on record last year against the 145 MW Kensington Solar project. Resolutions from trustees said the construction of any type of large wind warm or solar facility “would not be in the best interests of the residents.”

Unfortunately, misinformation, ill-conceived laws, and politicians catering to the fossil fuel industry are all contributing to many Ohio counties missing out on economically and environmentally beneficial renewable energy projects.

In 2021, the Ohio legislature passed HB 52 which allows county commissioners to restrict areas for the development of large scale wind and solar projects. The bill is “specific to wind and solar and places no restrictions on any other types of energy” such as fracked methane gas.

According to the International Energy Agency report, solar now provides the cheapest electrical energy in the world. Major companies are investing in solar for its economic value and to lessen their impacts on the planet.

While other states move forward with renewable energy projects, Ohio remains in the past. Sadly, there are many misconceptions about renewable energy and groups are using pseudoscience to slow down the transition away from fossil fuels and towards renewable energy.

Universities, including Ohio State, are studying how crops can be grown under solar panels in a process called agrivoltaics. Plants like tomatoes, kale, beets, garlic, carrots and lettuce actually grow better in the shelter of panels that help hold moisture and protect the plants from intense rain and hail events. Sheep can graze under solar panels, solar panels actually create more plant diversity for endangered pollinators and help bee populations, and solar panels can provide habitat for wild animals.

Solar panels are not toxic and contain only trace amounts of metals which are sealed into the panel itself. New technology shows that both glass and trace metals can be recycled from solar panels.

I live in Harrison County, where we recently welcomed the construction of the Nottingham 100 MW solar farm in Athens Township. This project will provide clean, renewable energy to the Ohio bulk transmission system. During the public meeting held by the Ohio Power Siting Board on May 18, 2022, local trade unions came out to support the project which could bring up to 400 projected local construction jobs. No one who was in attendance expressed opposition.

It was announced recently that Nottingham Solar and the county commissioners entered into a payment in lieu of taxes agreement. The county school district, Belmont/Harrison JVS, county libraries, health department, and Athens Township will be receiving $29 million ($700,000 to $900,000 per year) from the 35-year agreement.

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