

**BEFORE
THE OHIO POWER SITING BOARD**

In the Matter of the Application of Clear)
Mountain Energy Center, LLC for a)
Certificate of Environmental Compatibility) Case No. 23-0045-EL-BGN
and Public Need to Construct a Solar-)
Powered Electric Generation Facility in)
Clermont County, Ohio

**DIRECT TESTIMONY OF GREGORY VESTRING
ON BEHALF OF GREGORY BRUNS, GREGORY VESTRING, AND THE VESTRING
FAMILY PRESERVATION TRUST**

1 **Q-1. Please state your name, home address, and business address.**

2 **A-1.** My name is Gregory Vestring. My home address is 9807 Cedar Knoll Drive Mason, Ohio
3 45040 in Deerfield Township, and I work from home.

4
5 **Q-2. What is your occupation?**

6 **A-2.** I work for the federal court system as a cybersecurity specialist. I have been with the
7 federal court system since 2000 after graduating from Northern Kentucky University with
8 an MBA.

9
10 **Q-3. Please describe your connection to the Clear Mountain Energy Center.**

11 **A-3.** I have agreed to lease out some of my family's land for the project if it is approved.

12
13 My sister Beth Fischer Reinhart and I are trustees of the Vestring Family Preservation
14 Trust, which owns and manages 66 acres of land in Clermont County. This includes a
15 31.7-acre parcel in Williamsburg Township and a 34.5-acre parcel in Jackson Township.
16 My father set up the Vestring Family Preservation Trust to keep this land in the family
17 before he passed away in 2023.

18
19 My sister and I signed a lease agreement with the Applicant to allow this land to be used
20 for the Clear Mountain Energy Center. Under the terms of the lease agreement, the
21 owners and operators of the Clear Mountain Energy Center will manage our land
22 throughout the 35-year lifespan of the project. The land will be used for solar generation

1 and other agricultural activities that may include sheep grazing or beekeeping during that
2 time.

3
4 **Q-4. Can you describe your family's connections to Southwest Ohio?**

5 **A-4.** My sister and I grew up in West Chester, Ohio, and I have lived in Southwest Ohio for
6 almost all of my life. The farthest away I have ever lived was Toledo, where I worked for
7 about one year in my first job after college. I currently live in Deerfield Township, about
8 45 minutes away from the project site. My sister lives in West Chester Township, also
9 about 45 minutes away from the project site. In addition, both of my parents grew up in
10 the Cincinnati area. My father lived there until he passed away in 2023, and my mother
11 still lives there.

12
13 The land that we are planning to lease out for the project has been in the Vestring family
14 for three generations. My grandparents, William and Ruth Vestring, moved into a house
15 adjacent to the project site in 1987. They were in their early 70s at the time and wanted to
16 retire in the country. During those years my grandparents boarded horses and enjoyed the
17 land and surrounding community. The farm became a family meeting place, where aunts,
18 uncles, cousins and friends would gather, and my grandmother would cook large meals
19 on Sundays. My grandmother had a very large garden in which she grew vegetables that
20 she shared with neighbors and family. Several years in a row there were so many banana
21 peppers that it often took me two hours each week just to pick those.

1 My grandfather passed away in 1994, and my grandmother continued to live at the
2 property until she passed away at 101 years old in 2017. She was an active community
3 member and knew all her neighbors, even though it was a very rural community where
4 houses were far apart. My grandmother was also an avid reader and a frequent visitor of
5 the public library. She was very concerned about the decline of honeybees and would be
6 very supportive of the Applicant's plans to include beekeeping as part of the project.

7
8 Around 2011, I took over grass cutting duties for my dad and uncles and became more
9 involved in maintenance of the property.

10
11 After my grandmother passed away in 2017, I spent about a year working with my father
12 and uncle to prepare the house for sale. We visited the property every Sunday to haul
13 away personal property in my uncle's pickup truck. My parents sold the house in 2018
14 but held onto the surrounding land.

15
16 **Q-5. Can you describe your decision to participate in the project?**

17 **A-5.** My parents were first contacted by a representative for Savion about the possibility of
18 leasing out the land in 2021. After speaking with that person several times, and discussing
19 the matter with me, my sister, and my brother-in-law, my parents concluded that it would
20 be better to lease the land and participate in the project rather than sell it to a real estate
21 developer.

1 At my parents' request, my sister, my brother-in-law, and I took the lead in negotiating
2 the lease. We hired an attorney and spent nearly twelve months negotiating with the
3 Applicant before entering into an agreement. During those negotiations, we made clear to
4 the Applicant that it was very important to us that the land be tillable after the end of
5 lease term. In response to these concerns, the Applicant agreed to add certain provisions
6 to the lease to ensure that the land will remain suitable for farming upon
7 decommissioning. For example, the Applicant agreed to remove all facilities or conduits
8 buried in the soil above 48 inches in depth as part of the decommissioning process and to
9 provide drawings specifying the location of all facilities or conduits buried in the soil
10 below 48 inches in depth.

11
12 We did not rush any part of this process. Even though I am not a lawyer, I read through
13 the entire lease by myself several times, because I knew the land was so important to my
14 grandmother, and I wanted to do this the right way.

15
16 **Q-6. What is the purpose of your testimony?**

17 **A-6.** I am testifying in support of the Clear Mountain Energy Center.

18
19 **Q-7. Why do you support the project?**

20 **A-7.** The project will allow my sister and me to keep this land in our family while providing us
21 with a consistent and predictable income through annual lease payments. These annual
22 lease payments, if the project is approved, will go a long way toward helping to support
23 my mother, who now lives in a retirement community. The lease will also generate more

1 income than what we are receiving now through farming alone. I believe that the terms of
2 the lease, as well as the conditions proposed in the Staff Report of Investigation, will help
3 to ensure that the land can be farmed again at the end of the lease term. This will allow
4 future generations of the Vestring family, including my sister's daughter, to enjoy the
5 land for years to come, as my grandmother would have wanted. It will also allow future
6 generations of our family to decide whether the land should be farmed again or put to
7 some other use when the lease expires.

8
9 **Q-8. Does this conclude your testimony?**

10 **A-8.** Yes. However, I reserve the right to update this testimony to respond to any further
11 testimony in this case.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify that The Ohio Power Siting Board's e-filing system will electronically serve notice of the filing of this document on the parties referenced on the service list of the docket card who have electronically subscribed to the case on this 3rd day of September 2024.

Trent Dougherty

Trent Dougherty

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Case No(s). 23-0045-EL-BGN

Summary: Testimony Testimony of Gregory Vestring electronically filed by Mr. Trent A. Dougherty on behalf of Bruns, Gregory Mr. and Vestring, Gregory Mr. and Vestring Family Preservation Trust.