

**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 BRUNS
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 Bruns. My home address is 5205 Stonelick Williams Corner Road
3 Batavia, Ohio 45103 in Stonelick Township. I am mostly retired, but I continue to
4 manage a 39-acre parcel of land in Jackson Township, about eight miles away from my
5 home, which I am currently renting out to a farmer.

6

7 **Q-2. Please describe your connection to the Clear Mountain Energy Center.**

8 **A-2.** I have entered into a lease agreement with Savion to rent out most of the land on my 39-
9 acre property in Jackson Township to be included as part of the Clear Mountain Energy
10 Center.

11

12 My wife and I purchased the property in 2008, which we own together through a
13 company called Bruns Jackson Pike LLC. The property includes about 37.5 acres of
14 farmland that we will be renting out to Savion if the project is approved, as well as a
15 house that will not be part of the project.

16

17 I am currently renting out the farmland to another farmer, Dennis Christie, who is
18 currently farming the land. However, Dennis and I are both in our 70s, and we are both
19 getting older. I agreed to lease the 37.5 acres of farmland to the Applicant to provide a
20 more stable and more substantial income to my family, including my three daughters.

21

1 **Q-3. Can you describe your family's connections to the area?**

2 **A-3.** I have deep roots in Clermont County. I have lived in Stonelick Township for 35 years
3 and raised my three daughters there. My wife's family has roots in the area going back a
4 century. Two of my daughters live in the area, each of them less a 20-minute drive away.

5
6 My wife's grandmother bought a small farm in Stonelick Township where I currently
7 reside back in the 1960s. They resided on the farm for several years before retiring. When
8 they passed away, the farm was broken up into parcels and left to their five children,
9 including my wife's mother. When my wife's mother passed away, she left her parcel to
10 her three children. My wife and I then bought out her two siblings. We also purchased the
11 parcel adjacent and built a house; we moved into our new home around Easter time in
12 1988.

13
14 In 2008, my oldest daughter started looking for a house to purchase for herself. This led
15 her to the 39-acre property on Jackson Pike in Jackson Township that we are now
16 planning to lease out for the project. When she found it, the property consisted of one
17 parcel with a house on it and seven parcels of farmland. Each of these parcels was being
18 sold separately.

19
20 While my daughter was interested primarily in the house, I felt like it would be a shame
21 to split the property, so I purchased all the parcels plus the house in 2008. Being raised on
22 a 220-acre farm in southeastern Indiana was a driving factor in my decision to keep the

1 property whole. My daughter rented the house for a year and then decided against buying
2 the house from me.

3
4 The 39-acre property on Jackson Pike was originally owned by the Christie family as
5 their homestead. When the owners passed away, the farm was put up for sale. At that
6 time, the son of the owners, Dennis Christie, was continuing to farm the land. I asked him
7 if he would be interested in continuing to do so, and he said he was. We agreed to work
8 out our arrangement where I would lease the farmland back to him. He and I have been
9 working together for the past 16 years.

10
11 **Q-4. Can you describe your decision to participate in the project?**

12 **A-4.** Originally, I was having difficulty deciding on doing this. One of the main reasons was
13 that I was considering selling my farm, which would have eliminated the burden on our
14 children in the event of our death. It just so happened that Savion approached us at that
15 same time.

16
17 I was approached by Savion in April of 2021, and had many discussions with them over
18 two years. As I mentioned earlier, I am in my mid-70s, and Dennis, my tenant, is in his
19 early 70s. My wife and I did not want to sell the land, because of our family's ties to the
20 area. We preferred to lease it out, and when we researched the economics of a solar lease,
21 we found that we could earn a steady and significant income by participating in the
22 project. This made more sense for our family than any of the alternatives.

23

1 **Q-5. Did you have any reservations about leasing out your land?**

2 **A-5.** I had some initial reservations about the long-term impact that solar development might
3 have on the farmland. As I mentioned earlier, I grew up on a farm. My dad was a farmer,
4 and all of his family was involved in farming. At the age of 10, I began helping my father
5 with the crops; I also helped take care of livestock. This experience gave me a deep
6 appreciation for farming.

7
8 Because of my family background, good stewardship of the land is extremely important to
9 me. For that reason, it was important to me that Savion agree to restore the land, at the end of
10 the lifespan of this project, to a condition like its present condition. Savion agreed to do this,
11 which helped me to get on board with the agreement.

12
13 **Q-6. What is the purpose of your testimony?**

14 **A-6.** I am testifying in support of the Clear Mountain Energy Center because I believe it will
15 bring significant benefits to my family and to Clermont County.

16
17 **Q-7. What are those benefits?**

18 **A-7.** At an individual level, if the project is approved, the lease payments will provide
19 financial benefits and security to my family, including my three daughters. I will not
20 receive any of these benefits if the application is denied.

21
22 At a higher level, I believe the project offers many economic benefits to Clermont County.

23 The project will help to bring in new tax revenues, which could benefit local schools and
24 other public services. I also believe that approving this project will send a signal to the

1 business community that the county is open to economic development. And we need the
2 energy.

3
4 I also believe that Savion's plans to allow simultaneous use of the property for solar
5 generation and agricultural activities, such as sheep grazing and beekeeping, will be
6 beneficial to the farming industry in the area compared to selling the land to a private
7 developer for housing or commercial development. Even more so, I believe Savion's
8 commitment to return to the land to a condition like its present condition at the end of the
9 lease will help to protect agriculture in the region in the long term.

10

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

12 **A-8.** Yes, but I reserve the right to update this testimony to respond to any further testimony in
13 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 Bruns electronically filed by Mr. Trent A. Dougherty on behalf of Bruns, Gregory Mr. and Vestring, Gregory Mr. and Vestring Family Preservation Trust.