

STATEMENT, Continued from Page A1

and Zoning Director, who explained that because our county has no land use ordinance, we had little to no authority over the project. Furthermore, we cannot selectively restrict certain types of projects without a land use plan in place.

I also met with landowner Troy Robertson, who shared how the project came to be. I continued to follow up with Geenex Solar and asked them to make every effort to engage with neighboring property owners. They told me they sent certified letters and even went door-to-door. We later shared information about the project on the County Facebook page to promote transparency.

They asked how they could support the local community, and I provided contacts for schools, nonprofits, and the Chamber of Commerce. They ultimately made several public donations, including:

- \$10,000 to Beautify Barren County, a nonprofit I helped establish with 14 other women. We all contribute our own funds to support local beautification efforts like signage, mowing, and landscaping. We have no paid staff, and all funds go back into projects voted on by the board. This donation was photographed and reported publicly in the newspaper.

- Donations to Barren County High School, the Chamber of Commerce, and a \$2,000 unsolicited contribution to Helping the Hardworking, another community nonprofit.

- At no time did I ever receive personal funds or compensation from Geenex Solar or any landowners. I've never accepted any private trips, meals, or gifts from the company.

It has been claimed that I voted on or influenced this project. That is absolutely untrue. I have never voted on this project, and I never will. The only issue that came before Fiscal Court was a property owners' request to remove internal lot lines between participating parcels—a procedural matter

unrelated to the project's approval. I only vote in Fiscal Court when there's a tie, which did not occur in this instance.

Some confusion also arose when the PSC mistakenly listed me as a representative on their panel. That was incorrect—by law, the Planning and Zoning Board Chair represents the county in PSC matters when zoning exists. The PSC quickly corrected the error.

After that, I was no longer not permitted to communicate with the PSC about the project.

I did communicate with the company at the request of local stakeholders:

- The Mammoth Cave National Park Director personally asked me—twice at BRADD meetings—to reach out to Geenex Solar, and I did so with him present.

- Local Fire Chiefs and EMS asked me to help arrange training discussions, which I facilitated.

- A local community advocate asked me to submit her questions to the company, which I did, despite her later claiming I should not have communicated with them at all.

Additionally, when I noticed the PSC had listed the wrong address on a public notice for their local public hearing, I alerted them so that the public would be properly informed.

To further address public concern, I introduced and passed a Solar Ordinance in May 2023. This ordinance was designed to create standards and give neighboring landowners a voice by requiring their agreement to reduce setback distances. While it does not apply retroactively to existing or grandfathered projects like Wood Duck, it has already affected two other proposed projects in the Hiseville and Temple Hill areas that had not yet progressed far enough to be grandfathered.

This solar project has deeply divided our community. It's painful to see neighbors turn against each other, especially when

some who oppose zoning altogether are now demanding to control how others use their land. I truly feel for everyone impacted—on both sides. There are no easy answers and no perfect outcomes.

But let me say this clearly once more:

- I have never voted on this project.
- I have never received personal financial benefit.
- I have never acted unethically.

- This project is entirely in the hands of the Public Service Commission, not Barren County Fiscal Court.

I hope this helps clarify the facts. It's time to stop the misinformation and the politics of division. Let's work together—with honesty and respect—for the future of Barren County.

Sincerely,
Jamie Bewley Byrd
Barren County
Judge/Executive

Publisher's Note:

- The reference of Mammoth Cave asking for assistance in connecting with individuals associated with the project has been confirmed through email with Barclay Trimble.

- South Barren Fire Chief Wes Kinslow confirms he and others did request help in planning for training.

- Text messages of Judge-Executive Byrd confirms her following through with the community activist (Paula Ratliff) asking questions not only from officials but in having a podcast with Kevin Myatt and a property owner. This same individual continues to misrepresent truth in various "press releases" and has been permitted to share them on a "Glasgow Voice" Facebook account.

- The BCP has also confirmed that JE Bewley Byrd has had a well known conservative from the community denied in regard to being placed on the Public Service Commission representing Barren County. This leads the BCP to believe she is not in any position of control of this project.



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