



Cooperative Solar Farm 2 – Fayette County PUBLIC COMMENTS SUMMARY

Jan. 7, 2025

Overview

In April 2024, East Kentucky Power Cooperative announced that it had filed with the Kentucky Public Services Commission its plans to build two new solar farms in Kentucky – one in Marion County and one in Fayette County.

EKPC announced that the Fayette County facility, known as Cooperative Solar Farm Two, will have capacity to generate 40 MW of electricity and will be located on 387 acres in eastern Fayette County, between Interstate 64 and U.S. 60.

EKPC held an open-house informational meeting for Lexington/Fayette County residents and other interested parties on May 16, 2024, to provide details about the project, answer questions and gather feedback and written comments. Individuals also have had the opportunity to submit feedback online through the Public Services Commission's website and via email.

To date, 95 people have submitted official feedback/comments on Cooperative Solar Farm 2 in Fayette County. (88 respondents either emailed the PSC or used the form on the PSC website to leave a comment, and 7 respondents filled out surveys at an EKPC open house).

58 respondents (61.1%) expressed opposition to the Fayette County project. Of the 58 respondents who expressed their opposition, 38 came from residents of Lexington. Respondents who expressed opposition said they were from nearby towns such as Versailles, Paris, Midway and Lawrenceburg. One respondent was from Colorado, and another was from California.

37 respondents (38.9%) were supportive of the Fayette County project. Of the 37 supportive responses, 13 came from residents of Lexington. One supporter said he is from Canada. Others are from Paris, Richmond, Manchester, Pikeville and Franklin County. The rest of the supportive respondents did not indicate their residence.

1 respondent (1.6%) did not express support or opposition to the project. Several respondents who oppose the project expressed they do not understand why EKPC is building the solar array on USDA Prime farmland at a time when farmland is becoming harder to come by. Many other respondents said they believe solar panels should be installed on top of buildings, in parking lots, on top of abandoned strip mines, and not on farmland. Additionally, opponents of the project said that one major appeal of

Lexington is the unique ability to drive from downtown to farmland in a short period of time, and that if projects like EKPC's are allowed to move forward, farmland all over Lexington will be developed – stripping Lexington of a prized commodity.

Representatives from the Kentucky Thoroughbred Association, the Fayette County Neighborhood Council, and Bluegrass Land Conservancy wrote letters to oppose the projects, as well as Lexington Mayor Linda Gorton.

Respondents who support the project noted the many benefits of solar energy for the environment, and said they were happy that Kentucky homes would be powered with solar energy. Additionally, supporters stated that this new solar array would increase the reliability of power in Lexington and Kentucky as a whole.

Examples of responses from both sides of the issue are provided below:

Examples of Opposition Comments

- “I am writing to protest the proposed application for a solar farm in Fayette County. As a member of the LFUCG Rural Land Management Board, I try very hard to protect our Fayette County farmland and identity. We have some of the best soils in the world in Fayette County and we should not cover them up with solar panels. You should look for land that is less fertile, such as reclaimed strip mines or landfills. You should also consider installation above sprawling parking lots. Obviously flat, non-rocky land is the cheapest place to install solar panels, but you must consider the long-term interests of the region.”- Philip G. Meyer
- “I am against any use of solar power on farmland in Fayette County. Solar power should be used in areas where the land is unusable, such as along highways. It should not be in rural areas where production of other crops/livestock can be produced.” – Shannon Garner
- “Solar is a splendid choice for ameliorating the effects of climate change; however, it is irrational to cover the best soil in America with solar panels when KY has a wealth of lesser productive and effectively ruined soil. The smart move is to pitch a plan to equity groups to finance power transmission lines from lands that were, in the past, ruined by mining.” – Alan Moorer
- I strongly urge the rejection of the proposed 387-acre utility-scale solar development by East Kentucky Power Cooperative (EKPC) in Fayette County's Agricultural-Rural zone. This project not only fails to align with our local priorities but also undermines the long-term sustainability of our rural lands, which have significant economic and agricultural value. While I am supportive of renewable energy development, particularly solar on rooftops, brownfield sites, industrial areas, and already built environments, I am not supportive of this development on our prime agricultural land. Limited Local Benefits EKPC's service area extends well beyond Fayette County, with only 2% of EKPC's customers residing here. It is clear that the primary benefits of this development will be felt outside our community, while our residents bear the cost of lost farmland and altered rural landscapes. Furthermore, EKPC's own estimates suggest the creation of only 2-3 full-time jobs over a 40-year span. This negligible job creation offers little economic boost to our local economy. Prime Farmland at Risk The proposed project site consists overwhelmingly of prime farmland — 98% of the land designated as prime soils or of statewide importance. These soils are not only highly valuable for agricultural production but are also irreplaceable resources. The recent unanimous recommendation by the Lexington-Fayette County Planning Commission to prohibit utility-scale solar development in our agricultural zones underscores the importance of preserving this land for food and fiber production. The potential

billion-dollar economic impact of agriculture in our region further justifies protecting these rural areas for current and future generations. Misalignment with Comprehensive Planning Our Comprehensive Plan highlights the need to prioritize and protect our rural lands, ensuring that they remain available for agriculture and sustainable land uses that align with our community's character and economy. Utility-scale solar development, with its large physical footprint and minimal local benefit, is incompatible with these long-standing priorities. In light of these factors, I respectfully urge decision-makers to prioritize policies that preserve our agricultural land and support locally beneficial, sustainable energy solutions that respect the character and needs of Fayette County residents. – Misty Fenech

- Solar panel farms are NOT the best use for land zoned as agricultural. This makes the surrounding areas property values go down and they aren't very attractive to look at it. Please DO NOT ALLOW this CALIFORNIA company invade the bluegrass state and what it is known for which is horses and bluegrass! Keep the commercial out of the agriculture. Thank you. – Karole Northrup
- A great big NO to covering our farm land with solar units...We have no idea what these units will do to the land. – Phyllis Robinson Hasbrouck

Examples of Supportive Comments

- “I fully support the construction of solar panel facilities in Fayette County. We need ways to generate power that have a lower impact on the environment and are less likely to contribute towards climate change. Please approve these projects as soon as possible.” – Abigail Stephens
- “I’m writing to strongly support the two proposed solar developments near Winchester Road in Lexington. This is a great way to create more electricity closer to Lexington, increase renewable infrastructure, and put underutilized land just outside Lexington to use for tens of thousands instead of the dozen owners of horse-farms. The Fayette Alliance is utilizing tried-and true climate-denier tactics of “needing more research”, while NIMBY-ing much-needed infrastructure to diminish our dependence on coal-electric generation. They are acting in bad-faith, and are leveraging their deep pockets to build a grass-tops campaign to protect their property values, their only real concern.” – Nick Lyell
- “There are good ways to do utility scale solar that preserve the land while providing the kind of power (solar) that preserves a livable climate - that preserves LIFE. So I urge you to act in the best interest of everyone everywhere by taking advantage of the funding and the opportunity to move ahead with utility scale solar relying on the best advice on exactly how to undertake it. Thank you from all of us (including creatures who have no voice)-from all who desire to do all we can to protect our climate!” – Margaret Stewart
- I am a Blue Grass Energy member who lives in rural Madison County, and I am emailing in support of this proposal. As a cooperative member-owner, I want to see my utility invest in clean, renewable energy, not more fossil fuels. This project is an example of community owned solar, not industrial solar, which I do not support, and it will be a low-cost way for rural Kentuckians like me and my neighbors to get more clean, renewable energy onto the grid. I am also looking forward to participating in the New ERA mandated community engagement process to ensure that the project is designed, implemented, and decommissioned using sustainability best practices to minimize the impact on the future use of the land. – Nancy Crewe
- As a grandfather I would like to do everything possible to avoid a global climate catastrophe in my granddaughter's lifetime...a condition we are certainly headed for if we don't find cleaner ways to use this world. I see no better clean solution to our electricity needs than Solar. I have

rooftop solar myself that provides 110% of my family's needs here on the farm and have grown quite familiar with that technology. I'd like to see more and more rooftops covered with solar panels, and more of the general demand in Ky provided by larger scale solar. I'd also like to see PSC return to their earlier program of a 1 for 1 exchange rate for Net Metering (delivered vs received) as that will result in more homeowner utilization of Net Metered solar systems. Solar gets better and better, year after year. PSC needs to keep up and encourage more solar in every possible venue, especially distributive. I'd actually like to see medium sized commercial arrays incentivized and going up on family farms all over the countryside. That would buoy up our sagging farm economy while keeping energy production as local as possible. And retain that money within the community. Farmers have been bundling sunshine into valuable products for human use since the first seed was planted. We can do the same with electrons energized by the sun. You have a lot of power in your grasp with these decisions. For my sweet granddaughter's sake, and all those others in her generation, do the right thing here. Embrace solar like our lives depend on it. They, in fact, do. – James Gash

- I fully support the solar farm activities East KY Power Coop proposes. Although this development occurs in what some call "prime farmland", this is really just a misnomer for horse farms and their extremely rich owners. KY and surrounding areas need new forms of energy generation. And this greatly exceeds the revenue these individual horse farmers provide to residents. – Rivers