



Hollidaysburg Community Watchdog

511 Allegheny Street, Hollidaysburg PA
814-696-2606 * info@hwatchdog.org

April 5, 2022

Bedford County Squanders \$900,000 Solar Power Grant

A \$900,000 taxpayer-funded solar project in Bedford County, touted by county commissioners as model for green energy development in the region, appears to have been abandoned, with hundreds of uninstalled high-end solar panels left to deteriorate in a field adjacent to the Bedford County Jail.

In a “groundbreaking” ceremony for the project held in December 2018, the commissioners claimed the new power array would provide 90% of the electricity used by the County Courthouse, the County Jail and the County Library, saving taxpayers more than \$5 million over the life of the array. The project, funded entirely by the Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), was to be completed by June 2019 and generate \$100,000 in savings the very first year. Instead, not a single solar panel has been installed.

“The project stalled well before Covid hit, but the commissioners have still not seen fit to explain what happened,” said Bryan King, the Watchdog’s Public Affairs Officer. “While there’s no immediate evidence of graft, kickbacks or other forms of corruption, there has clearly been a colossal waste of taxpayer resources and a betrayal of the public trust.”

None of the three Bedford County Commissioners — Barry Dallara, Deb Baughman and Alan Frederick — responded to the Watchdog’s request for information. Calls to RER Energy in Reading PA, the company that won the installation contract, also went unreturned.

The only mention of the project in the public record after 2018 was a brief reference in the August 27, 2019 commissioners meeting minutes — two months after the project was to be completed — by former Bedford County Commissioner Josh Lang noting unspecified “logistical” issues affecting the project.

While it is unclear precisely how long the panels have been left in the field, they were apparently delivered in late 2018 or early 2019. The attached photo shows the panels on the ground in their original strapping, fully exposed, with some bundles of panels lying flat and others standing vertically. While the panels are nominally water-tight, they are designed to be arrayed at an angle to facilitate rain run-off. Depending on how long they have been abandoned, many panels are likely to show water infiltration.

The Watchdog has filed a formal complaint with the PA Inspector General's office alleging waste and misuse of taxpayer funds. It has also alerted DCED that its \$900,000 grant has apparently been squandered.

Hollidaysburg Community Watchdog, established in 2015, is a citizens' group dedicated to deterring corruption, increasing transparency and encouraging public participation in local government.

#30

Contact: Richard Latker 814-207-1360 info@hcwatchdog.org