

# Making Your Voice Heard - How to Write Letters and Speak Out Against That Renewable Energy Project Coming to Your Community

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There's a new renewable energy project coming to your community. Maybe it's a large solar farm or another expansive development. For some, it may seem like progress. But for others, like yourself, it feels a bit too close for comfort, bringing up concerns about property, environment, and the community's way of life. Now, you might be feeling torn. It's not easy to publicly object, especially when you know that close friends, neighbors, and even family members may feel differently. But here's the thing—this isn't about creating division or confrontation; it's about calmly and thoughtfully speaking up for the place and people you care about.



When it comes to important community decisions, numbers matter. Officials are more likely to listen when they see a unified response. And while it may feel daunting to be part of that response, there are ways to express your thoughts that don't require raising your voice or stepping on anyone's toes. With a bit of patience, a steady approach, and support from neighbors who feel the same, you can make sure your perspective is considered. So, if you're a little nervous about getting involved, don't worry—you're not alone. Grab a cup of coffee (or an adult beverage, if it helps!) and let's explore how to make your voice heard respectfully through letters and public speaking.

## **Writing Letters in Opposition**

*Why Letters Matter* - It might surprise you, but a thoughtful, well-written letter can go a long way. Decision-makers value letters as a direct expression of local concerns, and each letter is like a vote in favor of your perspective. When officials see that the community is united in its concerns, they take notice. A stack of letters doesn't just say, "I disagree." It says, "We're here, and we have valid concerns that can't be brushed aside."

*Submitting Public Comments to the Ohio Power Siting Board* - In Ohio, the Ohio Power Siting Board (OPSB) oversees the approval of major energy projects, and one of the ways the public can formally weigh in is through submitting "Public Comments." According to the OPSB, public comments are an essential part of the review process and provide a direct way for community members to express concerns, share information, and highlight potential impacts of a proposed project.

Public comments submitted to the OPSB become part of the official project record and are taken into consideration as the board reviews the proposal. These comments are not only reviewed by the OPSB but are also visible to the developers and other stakeholders, adding transparency and demonstrating community sentiment. By submitting a public comment, you're contributing to a documented trail of local input that the OPSB must consider, alongside technical and environmental evaluations, in their decision-making.

Making your voice heard through a public comment means that your perspective, along with others from your community, is formally recorded. It's a way to ensure that local voices are part of the official process and that the board is aware of the range of community perspectives before making a decision.

*How to Write a Strong Opposition Letter* - Writing a letter might feel challenging at first, especially if you're not used to putting your thoughts into words. But don't worry—here's an easy structure that can help you get started:

## Say Hello and Introduce Yourself

Begin with a respectful greeting, addressing the recipient by their title—whether it’s “Representative,” “Senator,” “Commissioner,” “Trustee,” or the name of the agency, like the “Ohio Power Siting Board.” Tell them who you are, and mention that you’re a local resident who has thoughts about the project. This makes it clear that you’re not just any letter-writer but someone who is directly invested in the community’s future.

*Share Your Concerns* - Describe your specific worries, whether it’s about property values, environmental impact, or the changes to the landscape you’ve come to love. People respond to specific examples more than general statements.

*Stick to the Facts* - It can be tempting to repeat rumors or speculations, but relying on solid, factual information gives your letter credibility. Decision-makers want to hear real concerns, not hearsay. If you’re unsure about something, it’s okay to leave it out.

*Make a Respectful Request* - Close by asking the officials to take your concerns into account when they make their decision. This shows that you’re not just objecting but inviting a thoughtful dialogue.

*Who to Send Letters To* - In addition to sending your letter to the OPSB, consider writing to local officials like township trustees or county commissioners. You could even submit a letter to the editor in your local newspaper to help spread awareness and encourage others to join in.

*Tips for Maximum Impact* - If you feel comfortable, encourage friends and neighbors to write letters, too. You might even host a casual letter-writing session—over coffee, cookies, or whatever brings folks together. Not only does this make the process more enjoyable, but it also shows unity and builds support among neighbors.

Who are we kidding? We’re country folk, and unless you’re in a “dry county,” there’s a good chance we all have a favorite local bar where we can meet up, share a pizza, and responsibly chase it down with a few adult beverages. Better yet, talk to the bar owner—they’re probably an old friend, neighbor, or family member. See if they might be willing to help out by donating a portion of the night’s sales to your “Letter Writing & Self-Care Night.” Maybe they could add a small amount to each drink or set aside a percentage for the cause. It’s a great way to bring the community together, get those letters written, and make the whole experience a little more enjoyable.

## **Speaking Out at Public Meetings**

*Why Public Speaking is Worth It* - Public speaking is often a big hurdle; for many people, it's right up there with a fear of heights. But speaking up at a town hall or community meeting can make a powerful difference. When decision-makers see a room full of concerned residents, it sends a clear message that the community is engaged, and that this issue is too important to ignore.

*Putting Fear (and Pride) Aside* - It's perfectly normal to feel nervous. This isn't about showing off or making a big statement—it's about standing up for what's best for your family, friends, and community. Remind yourself of what's at stake, take a deep breath, and let that purpose carry you through. Your voice matters here, and your words could encourage others who feel the same way. In fact, your words may even be the very ones that sway the opinion of the person you're addressing, helping them see the issue from the community's perspective.

*Presenting Public Testimony to the Ohio Power Siting Board* - If the OPSB holds a public hearing on the project, it's your chance to directly communicate with the decision-makers. According to the OPSB's guidelines, public testimony allows residents to provide input, share concerns, and make their voices part of the official record. Each speaker typically has a limited time to present, often around 3–5 minutes, so it's important to be concise and prepared. The OPSB advises speakers to focus on the specific impacts of the project on their lives, properties, and community, rather than general opposition.

If public speaking makes you nervous, it's perfectly acceptable to type out your speech and read it directly. The administrative judge knows that most of us feel that public speaking “sucks eggs” and won't hold this against you. Just be sure to give the clerk transcribing your testimony a copy of your written speech—it helps ensure accuracy and gets your words on the record. And remember to speak up, even if they have a microphone!

When preparing your testimony, keep it clear, factual, and respectful. Share how the project might affect your life, your home, and your daily routine. The Board values genuine, grounded perspectives, so be honest about your concerns. Avoid speculation, focus on tangible impacts, and let your voice be part of the official decision-making process.

## **Building Community Support for Letters and Public Speaking**

*Encouraging Others to Participate* - It can be intimidating to speak out alone, so encourage friends, neighbors, and family members to join you. Host a gathering,

whether in person or online, to share tips and support each other. When people see that they're not alone, they're often more willing to get involved.

*Creating a Consistent Message* - When everyone's on the same page, it makes your community's concerns stronger and clearer. Agreeing on a few shared talking points keeps the message unified and shows officials that your concerns are organized and widespread.