

384-acre solar farm approved in eastern Fayette County despite some opposition

BY AUSTIN HORN
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A 380-plus-acre solar farm in Eastern Fayette County is coming to fruition after all.

Despite opposition from local figures like Lexington Mayor Linda Gorton, the Kentucky Public Service Commission granted approval to East Kentucky Power Cooperative's plan to build a 40-megawatt facility on two parcels between Interstate 64 and U.S. 60, near the Clark County line.

In the same order, the commission also approved the power cooperative's plan to build a larger, 635-acre, 96-megawatt facility in Marion County, according to a press release from the commission. Utility officials estimated the cost of developing both solar farms is \$335.4 million.

"The PSC has found that these projects meet the statutory criteria, as set by the Kentucky General Assembly, that the facilities are necessary to ensure reasonable rates



An aerial image of the plot between I-64 and U.S. 60 where East Kentucky Power Cooperative is proposing to build a 384-acre solar farm.

and services for Kentucky electric customers and will not result in wasteful duplication of services," the release read.

The Fayette County project ignited intense debate over the use of agricultural land, a long-time hot topic in local

Lexington politics.

In a public hearing in late October, Gorton characterized the plans from East Kentucky Power Cooperative as a "new threat" to Fayette County's "irreplaceable farmland" in a statement delivered to the commission

earlier this year.

Gorton also said Friday the city is considering appealing the commission's order.

"While we support sustainable energy projects, like solar, this plan does not benefit the people of Fayette County.

We can find ways to develop solar projects that do not sacrifice our irreplaceable farmland," Gorton said.

Opposition was not unanimous, however, as some community members at the hearing voiced excitement at Fayette County's involvement in the green energy transition via this project.

The Fayette County solar farm is estimated to provide power for around 4,558 homes, according to East Kentucky Power Cooperative. The cooperative is owned by 16 smaller nonprofit utility co-ops around the commonwealth. It provides power to more than 1.1 million people and in 2023 it generated more than \$1.1 billion in revenue, according to its latest nonprofit filing.

The commission's approval marks the end of the project's regulatory process. Electric utilities like East Kentucky Power Cooperative are not subject to local planning and zoning for generation projects like this one.

The land for the site is owned by Fayette Partners LLC, a company controlled by members of the Gay family — that includes Anne Gay Donworth, a representative-elect who will replace retiring Rep. Ruthann Palumbo, D-Lexington, in the new year.

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PEOPLE

Megan Fox 'can't wrap her head' around MGK split

In Touch Weekly

It should've been one of the happiest times of Megan Fox's life. Instead, the pregnant actress is nursing a broken heart after reportedly finding text messages from other women on Machine Gun Kelly's phone over Thanksgiving.

"Megan's devastated," a source exclusively tells *In Touch*. "Yes, she's the one who ended things, but that doesn't mean she doesn't still love him. She does. She just can't trust him."

This isn't the first time the couple has called it quits. Fox, 38, also broke off their engagement in 2023 amid rumors MGK, 34, cheated. "You can taste the dishonesty, it's all over your breath," she'd captioned a selfie before deleting all of the musician's photos from her Instagram account at the time.

This time, the source tells *In Touch*, "Megan feels so betrayed. She can't quite wrap her head around the idea that it's really over, even though she says she knows it has to be."

On Nov. 11, days before Fox and MGK's split, the "Transformers" actress announced she was pregnant and expecting her first child with the "Home" singer. Fox shared the news via Instagram.

Fox and MGK, whose real name is Colson Baker, share children from previous relationships.

Lexington startup wants to deliver healthy school lunches your kid will eat

BY JANET PATTON
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Pretty much every parent is familiar with school lunch drama. Maybe you don't like what the school has. Or you kid isn't eating it ... Or if you forgot to pack a lunch.

A Lexington start-up company from someone familiar with the food business wants to help solve those dilemmas and many more.

Packed is a new company that makes nutritious, delicious (kid-tested and approved) boxed school lunches.

It was pioneered by FoodChain founder Becca Self, who has partnered with entrepreneur Wes Murry, co-founder of Castle & Key Distillery, and is now president of Hunsicker, the venture studio that created Packed.

Self, in an interview, said that as they looked at the school lunch landscape, she was struck by the fact that about 40 percent of students bring a lunch from home, even when the schools offer free or reduced-price options.

"Could we provide something convenient, wholesome and tasty for them? An alternative for a brought-from-home lunch, a school lunch subscription," Self said.

In the fall of 2024, they tested idea of delivering the lunches to three private schools in Lexington.

Between Providence Montessori, Redwood Cooperative and Lexington Christian Academy, Packed is delivering about 400 lunches a week, according to Packed CEO Liza Green.

Families that sign up for a subscription go online and chose from a diverse menu of options and the food is prepared on Sunday in the Julietta Market kitchen inside Greyline Station on North Limestone and Loudon Avenue.

It's delivered to the school, labeled with the child's name, in time for lunch.

But in January 2025, Packed will launch a direct-to-consumer option: Families can sign up to receive up to five days of lunches delivered to their homes for students to take in as they choose.

WHAT COMES IN A PACKED LUNCH

The lunches are priced about \$6.50-\$9, depending on the school and portion size.

"From a price perspective, the fast-food vended options in the Lexington market are in the \$5-\$7 range," Green said.

"Lunch packed from home is typically in about the \$2 range, but with this you get value and convenience. ... The subscription is well-received by parents because they set it and forget it and never have to think about it again. There's significant value in that."

Self said that they piloted the lunches last spring to test demand and discovered that elementary age was "the sweet spot." They expanded in the fall and are now serving about 40 percent of the potential school population, Green said.

Kids can pick from items such as Saucy Noodles, which is basically cold pasta with a meatless tomato sauce, chicken fried rice, beef burrito bowl, turkey sandwich and chicken wrap.



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"Packed" Manager Mikaili Sturges joins the assembly line after performing food preparation, moving into packaging with her team at Greyline Station's Julietta Market Kitchen early in the morning on December 3, 2024, in Lexington, KY

There are more vegetarian options such as a sweet potato burrito bowls, veggie fried rice and superfood salad. And there's even a snack plate with things to graze on. You can pick two side items from a selection of sweet and savory options including fresh fruit, crudite, salad, cocoa bites, pita chips and hummus and salty crunch.

What you don't see on the menu: Pizza or nuggets.

The most popular item is the Saucy Noodles, which were actually suggested by kids.

Parents can let their kids make choices from the menu and know that

all the options are good. Kids feel empowered by making their own decisions and are invested in what they eat, Green said.

Self said they'd like to work with more schools but getting into public schools is a challenge. Selling directly to homes is "a way to expand our customer base and our exposure. There's a lot of inertia that has to be overcome in this space. If we can show parents it's an appealing option, that provides momentum for schools," she said.

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