FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 7, 2022

**City Council says No to solar field development**

After much debate, the Muncie City Council voted 5-4 against the proposed Ross Energy Park, which would turn the former GM Chevy site into a solar field. The site, currently classified as an Environmental Brownfield, is limited in use until RACER Trust completes the remediation plan approved by IDEM. The solar field would not interfere or postpone the current agreed-upon remediation efforts, which include monitoring the soil, preventing public exposure to the site, and allowing the ground to restore itself over time.

The project was estimated to cost $11 million, to be paid in installments for a total cost of $18 million. This funding was to be provided from the EDIT funds. 100% of the revenue, projected between $500,000 and $700,000 per year, would go to the city’s General Funds and could be used for streets, infrastructure, fire, police, or other emergent needs. The American-made panels were to be insured and under warranty for 25 years, and frequently continue to produce energy for up to 40 years.

When the idea was first introduced in 2020, the council voted unanimously to request solar proposals. Performance Solar’s proposal was selected by a committee of five, and in January, 2022, the council again voted unanimously to continue examining the project.

On the morning of the June 6 City Council meeting, The Star Press published a statement from Mr. Hare, cleanup manager for RACER Trust, expressing the opinion that the site could be used for other projects than solar. The article also laid out a few of the environmental restrictions placed on the site, which had already been made public by the city. These restrictions prevent the site from being used for any agricultural or residential use, and prohibit groundwater extraction or soil excavation at any depth. Any work space placed on the site must include a vapor mitigation system, and individuals spending more than 335 hours per year onsite must wear dermal and respiratory protection.

Neither Mr. Hare nor any city council members suggested any alternate projects that would comply with the environmental restrictive covenants. Lacking viable solutions, the city has no immediate plans for the site, which has sat vacant for more than 15 years.