

Green County adopts wind farm siting law, reviews Sugar River Project

By Tony Ends
CORRESPONDENT

Green County supervisors last week took regulatory control of large wind power system siting within provisions state lawmakers enacted 10 years ago.

Supervisors voted overwhelmingly in their regular monthly meeting last Tuesday, March 12, to adopt a new Wind Siting Ordinance. The vote was 27 to 2, and replaces Green's previous Wind Generator Ordinance that was repealed back in 2014.

"That ordinance did not meet the requirements of (state) Public Service Commission Code 128," said Adam M. Wiegel, Green County's zoning administrator in response to the Independent Register last week. "State law makes it clear that if a political subdivision like our county is going to regulate wind, it cannot be more restrictive than that code.

"Basically, we regulate based on PSC 128, or we do not regulate energy systems at all," Wiegel said. "The county believes that it is in the best interest of the citizens to regulate wind energy to the extent that the state allows."

Had not county supervisors adopted the state siting requirements last week, setbacks to a wind turbine would be the same as any property's main structure in an agriculture district, he said. Those setbacks are 10 feet to a side lot line and 25 feet to a rear lot line.

"The ordinance that was just approved by county board requires a setback to a non-participating residence to a wind turbine to be the lesser of 1,250 feet or 3.1 times the maximum blade tip height," Wiegel said.

County supervisors had since last October to review the new 16-page wind ordinance, which the county posted to its website in a PDF file. Citizens filled up more than half the gallery of supervisors' meeting space in the historic courthouse in Monroe last week, according to Erica Roth, supervisor for Albany residents.

"There was no public comment on the agenda, so none of the public commented," Roth said following the vote. "The board has been receiving a fair amount of emails over the last several months, mostly against. The few days before the vote, we started receiving another influx, but there were vastly more pro emails.

"Most of the discussion was about possible health issues," Roth said. "Paul Beach (who represents all of Clarno Township) was concerned mostly about infrasound and sonic waves, and Jerry Guth (who serves Ward 4 in the City of Monroe) raised questions about flicker of lighting required of wind towers and glint from their lights' flashing," she said.

Independent Register attempts to reach other supervisors for comment

last week were unsuccessful. "I am glad that Green County has an ordinance for wind system siting," Roth said. "It may not be perfect, but we can work with it. If we want more local control of the stewardship of our land, not just for wind and solar but all aspects, everyone needs to be talking with our state legislators.

"The county can only exercise what control the state gives us. On the bright side, I am excited that renewable energy is coming to Green County. Our state's dependency on fossil fuels, the vast majority of which is purchased from out of state, needs to come to an end."

Supervisors cannot amend an ordinance on the floor, only at committee, so the land use and zoning committee must take up any changes suggested. "Legal counsel and zoning said that the place to be able to control those kinds of issues is in the application process, not the ordinance," Roth said.

Pressing decision on a wind energy siting ordinance in Green County has come from strong interest in siting turbines here. "In spring 2017, the zoning department had three wind energy companies contact the office in regards to wind energy," Wiegel said.

"The county is in the process of reviewing the Sugar River Wind Project application. The Public Service Commission allows the county to hire outside consultants and charge those fees back to the applicant; the county is exploring this option," he said.

Wisconsin's PSC Code 128 gives a county until the first day of the fourth month after it receives an application to enact an ordinance.

Sugar River Wind Project is a 65 megawatt wind farm that filed a 236-page application to build 24 turbines in Jefferson Township on Jan. 29. The towers, more than 275 feet tall, would populate about 5,870 acres surrounding unincorporated Twin Grove, about 6 miles' drive southwest of Juda.

Sugar River Wind LLC is a subsidiary of EDF Renewables North America, which in turn is an independent power producer and service provider with 30 years' renewable energy experience. The company delivers grid-scale power as a subsidiary itself of the "Electricite de France Energies Nouvelles," which operates primarily in Europe and North America.

When up and running, the project has a potential \$550,000 per year impact for the

local economy, according to EDF's permit application to Green County.

"More specifically, benefits would accrue for participating landowners and neighbors in the

project area, local governments, and area businesses," the application states.

"The Applicant has provided "wind rights only agreements" to all neighbors with residences situated within one half a mile of proposed turbines and offered compensation 1.5 to 2.5 times the state's guidelines so that landowner payments are spread more broadly and equitably," according to the company's project application.

"As of the application date, roughly two-thirds of the eligible neighbors have signed agreements or verbally committed to signing. Of the remaining eligible neighbors, 12 are still considering signing and 9 have declined to participate."

The Project will generate more than \$250,000 annually under the state's utility revenue sharing program for Green County and Jefferson Township, starting the year the project becomes operational. Jefferson Township will receive roughly 42 percent of those funds, which is equivalent to roughly 39 percent of the Town's 2019 tax levy, company documents stated.

Pending county approval, the company hopes by its detailed timeline to develop and construct the wind generation site toward commercial operation to begin in August 2021. The project will create approximately 70 to 100 temporary construction-related jobs and 3 to 5 full-time operations and maintenance positions.

"A political subdivision may not unreasonably deny an application for a wind energy system or impose unreasonable conditions," reads the PSC 128 administrative code.

Green County residents will get a chance Monday, March 25, to hear from town and city representatives about their experience with Quilt Block Wind Farm in neighboring Lafayette.

The meeting at the Super 8 Motel at 6th Street and Highway 69 in Monroe runs from 5 to 7 p.m. Dick Anderson and students from Kid Wind will give a demonstration.

Tyler Huebner from RENEW Wisconsin will share speaking duties with Darlington Mayor Dave Bruening, Seymour Town Board Chair Tim McComish and Steve Pickett, also of Darlington.

At the end of the project's life, financial securities will guarantee responsible decommissioning and removal of the turbines. Sugar River Wind Project's proposed substations are adjacent an existing 69kV South Monroe to Brodhead transmission line. Only short spans of 69kV lines will loop into and out of a Jordan Substation, according to the project application.

RENEW Wisconsin's non-profit staff circulated information supporting the wind ordinance and wind generation last week. "Wind farms have no impact on surrounding property values," they stated.

"Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, winner of 13 Nobel Prizes, was asked by the United States Department of Energy to conduct a comprehensive review of property values near wind turbines. The institution conducted studies in 2009 and 2013, reviewing 50,000 home sales records near 67 wind farms in 27 counties across 9 states. They found zero impacts from wind farms," RENEW literature stated.

"Numerous studies, including a comprehensive 2015 review by the Wisconsin Department of Health, have shown that wind turbines do not create any negative effects on human health,"



TONY ENDS PHOTO Brodhead Independent-Register

Quilt Block Wind Farm turbines turn along Highway 81 west of Darlington. Green County residents will get a chance Monday, March 25, to hear from town and city representatives about their experience with Quilt Block in neighboring Lafayette as another company proposes a project near Juda.

the nearly 20-year-old renewable energies advocate stated.

The powerful 110-year-old Public Service Commission is charged with overseeing and facilitating efficient, fair utility service across the state. It adopted wind siting rules in 2010, and they took effect exactly 7 years ago

this past weekend.

Wisconsin's PSC has three, full-time, governor-appointed commissioners, who serve staggered 6-year terms. They review and decide cases brought to the commission for changes in utility operation, rates and construction.

Bowling scores

Thursday Afternoon Ladies at Albany Lanes
High 3-game series (First 5)

Barb Chapman - 521; Sheryl Johnson - 423; Laurie Thommen - 422; Virginia Schliem - 419; Joyce Nipple - 400

Splits

Linda Reilly - 2-7; Barb Chapman - 2-7; Joyce Nipple - 3-10; Debbie Williams - 3-10; Lorraine Williams - 5-6-8; Sheryl Johnson - 2-7; Shirley Sutherland - 5-6; Priscilla Kaderly - 3-10; Tana Klitzman - 4-5-7; Cora Ball - 5-6

High Single games (First 5)

Barb Chapman - 190, 186, 145; Laurie Thommen - 176; Marian Taylor - 166; Virginia Schliem - 165; Priscilla Kaderly - 145; Cora Ball - 145; Sheryl Johnson - 145

Team Scores

Albany Lanes - W25-L7; Mike's Flooring - W20-L12; Huntington Plumbing - W18-L14; Ball's Installation - W17-L15; Knute's - W13-L19

High Team Game

Ball's Installation - Score - 574

High Team Series

Mike's Flooring - Score - 1554

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