

Speakers praise turbines as listeners raise questions

By Matt Surtel
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PERRY — Tensions arose after a wind farm was proposed for the Town of Fenner in 1997, said Ann Jones on Thursday.

Some people supported the project that would place 20 wind turbines in the town. Others adamantly opposed it, predicting the destruction of the local goose population and other problems.

"It was neighbor against neighbor," she said. "It was people deciding about (what side) they wanted to go."

Eleven years later, the world hasn't ended for Jones and nearby residents. She was one of three people who spoke about the issue at the forum sponsored by Citizens for Wind Energy, and Citizens Campaign for the Environment.

The evening featured talks from Jones, along with Gene Parzych of Sardinia and Judy Foote, town assessor for Eagle, Wethersfield and Gainesville. Each described their experiences with wind turbines.

Jones and her husband operate a dairy farm located near the wind farm. Although they don't have any of the 328-foot-tall structures on their land, five are visible from their house in winter, and one is 3/4 of a mile away.

But disasters haven't occurred. Jones — who supports wind turbines as a form of renewable energy — said Fenner's developers did a few things wrong, and a lot of things correctly.

One of the first turbines installed created some shadow flicker, she said. But it was a "learning tool" which helped improve placement for the farm's remaining turbines.

A blade also fell off a turbine once, and nobody got hurt, she said.

"Actually it was out in the middle of the woods," she said. "It weighs seven tons and was moving 11 to 20 revolutions per minute. (The broken blade) is not going to become a projectile.

"The blade did exactly what it was supposed to do. It broke, it fell to the ground, and it stopped."

Parzych said he grew up in Lackawanna, at a time when it was one of the most polluted environments imaginable. He said he was born in the shadow of that city's steel mills, and his father worked for 30 years, dumping slag into Lake Erie.

But Parzych now lives in Sardinia, Erie County, and also supports windmills. He was approached by developers in Sardinia, and now has four such turbines on his Eagle property.

He described the "tooth and nail" arguments that erupted around Sardinia's proposed project which was ultimately rejected. He said he was threatened by neighbors, and had to install security systems.

That kind of atmosphere is happening now in Perry, Parzych said.

He also read an excerpt from a protester Web site, describing a visit to the Mendota Hills Wind Farm in Illinois. The report alleged "there is no life" and seemed to hint the town that existed there was an elaborate hoax.

It generated laughs from audience members, and Parzych said the author's one of his Sardinia neighbors.

"That's all emotional fantasies or whatever they want to create," Parzych said. "I don't know what drives them."

He estimated the four turbines on his property have generated \$36,000 for the Town of Eagle. He said he encountered heavy competition to buy his land there.

Foote said "not a lot" has happened to Wethersfield's property values since a wind farm was installed there seven years ago. But Eagle, she said, was "a shock" in terms of what happened.

She cited Wing Street, which she said had been mostly abandoned fields, but now contains turbines.

Properties previously sold for \$500 to \$600 per acre, but are now selling

for \$1,600, \$2,000, or even \$2,400 per acre "if they are available," Foote said.

Small acreage such as house lots is now consistently selling for about \$5,000, she said.

"I have properties (in the windmill footprint) that are being sold at double what they are assessed for," she said. "People want something for free I'm telling you people are coming out and buying properties like crazy. That's my experience with the windmill project."

Construction on a second wind farm in both Eagle and Wethersfield is set to start in April, Foote said.

"I'm pretty sure the values will be going up, and I have not seen any negative reactions to the wind projects."

Jones, Parzych and Foote participated in a brief question and answer session immediately afterward. Resident Hans Kunze doubted Perry the proposed Dairy Hills Wind Farm would eliminate the town's taxes, while other residents asked if Jones had encountered turbine-induced insanity or other claims.

Kunze debated briefly with Town Supervisor James Brick and Councilman Brian Parker, who said the town hasn't started negotiating with Horizon Wind Energy for its project, and any guessing as to Dairy Hills' impact on tax rate is speculation at this point.

He said the company's initial offer of \$560,000 would cover 92 percent of the town's tax levy, but negotiations haven't started.

Kunze said the project wasn't appropriate given the town's population density.

Jones said she hasn't seen any change in Fenner's rural character, and property values "continue to be fine." She suggested those interested contact other communities with wind farms, and ask what they did and didn't do correctly.

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By Tom Rivers
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ALBION — A new alder's, a veterinary office, wind turbine regulation all were supported by the Orleans County Planning Board.

The 17-member board approved the village Planning Board site plan to tear down McDonald's and rebuild a restaurant at a different west end of 112 West Street. The store would slide over to a parking lot.

The new 3,295-square-foot alder's would have 44 parking spaces in the drive-through building. The new drive-through will have two windows, one for picking up food and one for parking. The new building will be spaced 42 feet from the street.

"It really increases traffic in the drive-through area," said Randy Bebout, project manager for FRA Engineering in Holland.

McDonald's will meet with the Village Planning Board Monday for approval. Bebout said the company has 90 days to demolish the building, built in 1979 and build the new building by July.

County planners backed the plan but asked the village Planning Board to consult with the fire department on the layout. Village officials also want to have McDonald's pay for bus parking.

The Ridgeway village plan allows industrial turbines under certain conditions, including at least 1,000 feet from other buildings and 500 feet from public roads.

The proposal limits turbine heights to 100 feet and turbines that peak at about

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