

Perquimans resident: Wind energy not good fit

BY REGGIE PONDER
Editor

A Perquimans County resident told the Hertford Rotary Club last month that industrial wind energy is not a good fit for rural communities. But a spokesman for a company planning a large wind energy project in Chowan and Perquimans counties defends the company's plans and says the counties will benefit from wind energy development.

In a presentation to the club at its Dec. 8 meeting, Alan Lennon said wind energy facility developers are motivated by an opportunity to cash in on green energy mandates.

Lennon said a wind energy facility developer's strategy is to:

Get landowners to sign lease agreements and gag orders.

Approach a small rural community with an emphasis on economic development.

Help the community develop a wind energy ordinance that best suits the developer's profits.

Kevin Chandler, a spokesman for Apex Clean Energy Inc., which is the company planning the Timbermill Wind Project in the Bear Swamp area in Chowan and Perquimans counties, said when contacted by the Chowan Herald that Apex has never required any kind of gag order.

"We have not required a gag order, nor would we



Alan Lennon speaks about wind energy facilities to the Hertford Rotary Club at the club's Dec. 8 meeting. ever require one," Chandler said.

Lennon said developers of large-scale wind energy generation facilities chose this area because it has close proximity to high-voltage lines, large tracts of privately owned land with limited use, no established regulations governing wind energy facilities, and little to no citizen involvement in local government, Lennon said.

"They love this one," Lennon said, referring to minimal citizen involvement in local government.

Chandler cast the relationship between the wind energy developer and the community in a very different light.

"We see our relationship with this community and

our landowners as a partnership," Chandler said. "We chose Perquimans and Chowan Counties because of the area's strong wind resource, existing transmission line infrastructure and expansive farmland.

Lennon said the state's model wind ordinance advocates for developers and does not protect citizens.

The biggest concerns in terms of protecting the safety, health and welfare of residents are setbacks and maximum turbine heights, he said.

Lennon said if an industrial wind energy generation facility is going to be built in a community, then the following safeguards for public safety, health and welfare should be in place:

A setback of one mile from the property lines of property owners who aren't participating in the project, from occupied buildings, and from roads.

Adequate property value protections.

Guarantee from sound and shadow flicker.

Adequate decommissioning plans.

He said he hadn't met anyone who wanted to live near a 600-foot wind turbine.

Lennon said Apex has been disseminating misleading information.

For instance, he said, the company's website claims 53 projects, but only three have been completed.

The Hoopston project ran into significant community opposition

The Balko project was sold to another company before it was completed.

Canadian Hills was too close to homes and there have been lots of complaints.

Chandler said the total number of projects in Apex's portfolio is based on those that are in operation, under construction or in various stages of development.

"Apex built more new wind energy in 2015 than any other company in the country, and our 2016 and 2017 project pipelines both total more than 1,000 megawatts of energy," Chandler said.

Lennon said people tell him they wouldn't have supported the Desert Wind project had they known about the 65 percent reduction on average in the amount of property tax being paid on the project.

But Dave Goss, the economic development director for Perquimans County, said the Desert Wind project is the biggest property tax payer in the county — even at the reduced rate of taxation agreed to by the county commissioners. The project is generating about \$500,000 a year in property taxes, he said.

In addition, the lease payments to landowners associated with the Desert Wind are bringing a great deal of money into the local economy, he said.

Goss said he worked on the Desert Wind project

for five years and was very proud of it.

Lennon contested Goss's figures, arguing the property tax generated by Desert Wind was only about \$250,000, which was half the figure Goss had cited.

But Goss stood by the \$500,000 figure.

Chandler said the Timbermill project would generate \$10 million in tax revenue for both counties over the life of the project, subject to local, state and federal regulations.

A club member said tall wind turbines are destroying the beauty of the land. He said he had seen on trips out west how wind turbines had marred the beauty of what had been pristine landscapes. The same thing could happen to the landscape in Perquimans County, he said.

Chandler insisted the proposed wind energy facility is a good fit for the counties.

"We're very proud of the work we're doing and the partnerships we have with local communities," Chandler said. "Wind energy is historically a great fit for rural communities in particular. By helping farmers and other rural landowners diversify their enterprises, wind energy helps families maintain ties to the land. The additional tax revenue also helps bolster budgets in rural counties, boosting local education, first responders and other government services."

USDA announces \$23M in grants

From staff reports

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack recently announced that USDA is investing \$23.4 million in 75 projects across 31 states and the Western Pacific to expand distance learning and telemedicine opportunities in rural areas.

"Rural communities often lack access to specialized medical care or advanced educational opportunities necessary for stronger rural economies," Vilsack said, noting that the announcement was being made on National Rural Health Day. "These grants will help increase access to health care and many other essential services."

The grants are being provided through USDA Rural Development's Distance Learning and Tele-

medicine program. They may be used to purchase equipment to provide educational and telemedicine services to rural communities.

One of the recipients, the North Slope Borough (Alaska), is receiving a \$420,027 grant to purchase video equipment to link six Native Alaskan clinics, four end-user sites and Samuel Simmonds Memorial Hospital. The project will increase access to emergency medical care, examinations, and behavioral health and specialized services.

Another recipient, the Baptist Healthcare System, Inc. in Corbin, Ky., will receive a \$182,566 grant to install teleconferencing and telehealth equipment for five facilities in medically underserved areas in rural southeastern Kentucky

and east Tennessee.

The awards were announced on National Rural Health Day to highlight work underway in the private sector, academia and in state and federal rural health offices to address the unique health care needs of rural communities.

The Alabama Fire College and Personnel Standards Commission is receiving a \$453,604 grant to provide emergency services training for rural emergency responders. Oklahoma's Redlands Community College will use a \$481,401 grant to increase educational opportunities and workforce development for 29 sites, including 19 Tribal schools and three high schools. The high schools are in a county served by USDA's StrikeForce for Rural Growth and Opportunity Initiative. Through StrikeForce, USDA leverages resources and collaborates with partners and stakeholders to improve economic opportunities

and the quality of life in communities that need its services the most.

Funding of each award announced last week is contingent upon the recipient meeting the terms of the grant agreement.

Since 2009, USDA has provided more than \$213 million in loans and grants for 634 distance learning and telemedicine projects in rural areas nationwide.

One of the projects USDA has funded through a Distance Learning and Telemedicine grant is improving medical care in rural Arkansas. Baptist Health received two USDA grants to establish a critical care network connecting six rural medical centers to a hospital in Little Rock. High-resolution audio and video equipment enables teams of specialists in Little Rock to conduct virtual rounds in participating hospitals. This technology enables rural patients to receive specialty care significantly sooner than they might otherwise.

CRIMEWATCH

Edenton Police

ARRESTS

• Dec. 31 — John Junior Parker, 34, of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, was arrested on one misdemeanor count of drunk and disruptive behavior and one misdemeanor count of misuse of the 911 System.

• Dec. 28 — John Jay Douglas III, 29, of Creek Court South, was charged with one misdemeanor count of driving while license revoked.

• Dec. 28 — Tony Fitzgerald Stokley, 54, of Cabarrus Street, was charged with one misdemeanor count of criminal damage to property (vandalism).

• Dec. 26 — Vondell Norman, 58, of East Gale Street, was issued a criminal summons for one misdemeanor count of failure to complete work after being paid.

• Jerry Wayne Midgett, 29, of Morris Circle, was charged with one misdemeanor count of larceny from Subway of Edenton.

• Dec. 22 — Vondell Norman, 58, of East Gale Street, was issued a criminal summons for one misdemeanor count of failure to pay fine for loud noise and one misdemeanor count of failure to pay fine for speeding.

• Dec. 21 — James Anderson Slade III, 45, of Melonie Street, was issued a criminal summons for one misdemeanor count of failure to pay loud music fine.

• Dec. 21 — Crystal Stallings, 31, of Badham Road, was charged with one misdemeanor count of injury to personal property.

• Dec. 21 — Tameeka Darlene Griffin, 32, of Dr.

Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue, was issued a criminal summons for one misdemeanor count of failure to pay fine for speeding.

• Dec. 21 — Cyntara Sherike Bembury, 23, of Tyler Run 1, was issued a criminal summons for one misdemeanor count of failure to pay fine for left turn to park.

• Dec. 21 — Cedric LaDale Holmes, 30, of North Granville Street, was issued a criminal summons for one misdemeanor count of failure to pay fine for speeding.

• Dec. 21 — Tamara Renee Drew, 39, of Seashell Lane, was issued a criminal summons for one misdemeanor count of failure to pay fine for speeding.

INCIDENTS

• Dec. 28 — Communicating threats at Woodwood Apts.

• Dec. 26 — Larceny at Subway of Edenton on Virginia Road.

• Dec. 25 — Assault on a female and assault on a child under 12 on Ann Street.

• Dec. 25 — Vandalism on East Albemarle Street.

• Dec. 20 — Vandalism on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue.

• Dec. 16 — Assault by pointing a gun and injury to personal property on Badham Road.

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• Dec. 30 — Aggravated assault on Dogwood Drive.

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