

Changes made to Chowan wind ordinance

BY REGGIE PONDER
Chowan Herald

The Chowan County Board of Commissioners voted 5-1 Monday to make three changes to the 2013 wind energy ordinance.

Following a public hearing on a text amendment to the ordinance that had been recommended by the planning board, the county commissioners did not adopt the planning board's recommended text amendment. But the board did vote to amend the county's 2013 wind energy ordinance by requiring a \$50,000 escrow account to cover county expenses related to the project; removing salvage value of materials as a consideration in the ordinance's decommissioning requirements; and eliminating "letter of credit" as an alternative to a cash

bond in decommissioning. Commissioner Alex Kehayes, who expressed concerns about the health effects of low-frequency sound and infrasound — very low-frequency sound that can't be heard but can be felt — cast the lone dissenting vote.

Commissioner Emmett Winborne made the motion to adopt the three amendments to the existing wind energy ordinance.

Kehayes supported a noise limit of 35 decibels that had been recommended by the planning board in April. He said the current limit of 55 decibels would not be adequate to protect residents from the health effects of noise and especially of low-frequency sound.

He said the 55-decibel limit and 1,500-foot setback were not adequate to protect public health.

"We're putting people at risk by not having suitable setbacks and sound restrictions," Kehayes said.

He said he was concerned about the effect on both human health and property values of "incessant, annoying wind turbine sound."

Kehayes cited several medical studies on the health effects of wind turbine noise and low-frequency sound, and noted the setback requirement in Germany had been set at 1.25 miles.

"This is a real thing," Kehayes said of the health effects of sound. He cited a World Health Organization recommendation that nighttime levels of noise should be lower than 30 decibels in order to protect the health of children.

Kehayes, who is a retired physician, said he would stake his medical reputation

on the reality of the health risks posed by wind turbines.

Responding to speakers at the public hearing who said they weren't anti-wind energy but rather pro-Chowan County, Winborne said he, too, is pro-Chowan.

"Everything I have got is in Chowan County," Winborne said.

There was extensive discussion by the commissioners at the meeting regarding the conditional use permit process.

The process allows for adding conditions, explained County Planner Elizabeth Bryant. She said her opinion was that it would not be permissible to decrease the noise limit as part of the conditional use permit, but it would, for instance, be permissible to increase the setback requirement.

Kehayes said he was very concerned about the decibel requirement, the setback requirement and the lack of a property value guarantee in the ordinance.

He said there was a "world of difference" between what the planning board recommended in April and what it had recommended now.

Bryant acknowledged there were differences, but noted the commissioners had been provided all the various versions of proposed text amendments that the planning board had looked at.

"You've seen it all," Bryant said. "You know what the subcommittee recommended and what the planning board recommended. You see the difference."

More than 25 members spoke during a public hearing on the planning board's

recommended text amendment.

Tommy Castellone, who said he was a hunter and was speaking on behalf of a group of hunters, said he has met with Apex Clean Energy representatives and believes the proposed Timbermill Wind Energy Project would benefit hunting.

Even those citing eyewitness experience offered vastly different perspectives. Frank and Lueta Sellers spoke of seeing many wind turbines on a trip to Scotland and talking to people who lived nearby — learning the neighbors had no objections to the turbines. But Earl Alexander said he had seen large wind energy projects firsthand and was familiar with the sight of large numbers of non-functioning turbines being left in a field to rust.

WIND POWER

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ordinance.

"I thought it was a great meeting," Lassiter said of the Sept. 10 event. "People let the planning board know how they feel. It was a great opportunity to learn from one another. We need to get all the parties in the same room."

Lassiter did defend the previous commission and planning board that adopted the current ordinance. Some opponents have tried to paint a picture that the county simply took a draft ordinance provided by the wind industry and adopted

it. "They did not just go in blindly and approve it," she said.

Commissioners and planning board members loaded up in a van to drive to Pennsylvania to see an actual wind farm in action. Lassiter was unable to attend because of a death in the family. The county is planning a similar trip for the commissioners and planning board — this time to West Virginia — sometime in October.

Lassiter also admits the original project — Iberdrola's Desert Wind — and the new proposed project — Timbermill — are different. There was little public

opposition to Iberdrola. Participating landlords liked the project because roads would be improved and they'd get lease payments. The Desert, where the project is being built, is also sparsely populated.

"What little opposition that came in, came in late in the process," she said of the Iberdrola project.

Opponents of Timbermill have packed meetings. Crowds once again packed a county commission Monday night and commissioners agreed to consider a temporary moratorium on wind projects at their next full meeting in October.

Opponents also have a website with information

<http://wiseenergy.org/timbermill/>

Apex has stepped up efforts to spread its message as well. A direct mail effort touted the community aspects of the project as well as employment benefits and economic opportunity. Apex added a website to show what the project would look like after completion. It's located at timbermillwind.com/viz-sim. The mailing includes two postcards for people who want to show their support for the Apex project. They ask if the person will attend a meeting, write letters, speak at a hearing or contact local officials.

The flyer addresses one

issue that has been brought up often — what happens when the turbines reach the end of their useful life.

The flyer says county permitting requires a sufficient decommissioning bond to guarantee the wind turbines are removed and the ground is restored.

It also disputes that grants or federal money will be used on the project. Apex contends it will be developed and constructed entirely with private capital.

Lassiter wants to know there is actually enough wind in the area to make the project viable.

"I believe one of the disadvantages of wind energy

is that wind can never be predicted. I'd like to see the data on the winds strength to see if it is even strong enough to support wind turbines. I'm speaking of not only the data collected thus far for the (anticipated) proposed project but also the data that is available now on the project underway in the desert, which is with Iberdrola.

"The last thing we need in this county are turbines sitting idle. It is one thing to have a project that is beneficial, but to have a project that isn't successful and creates a negative, useless impact on this county and our citizens and residents is irresponsible."

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JACKSONS

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charges were added. John Jackson has been at Craven Correctional Institute. Both wore green prison jumpsuits to the hearing in the Perquimans County Courthouse Annex.

The family had lived in a two-story house on Chapanoke Road where the abuse took place. The children were home schooled.

Five of the six brothers have already accepted plea agreements and are in prison.

The latest was John Marc Jackson, 26, who pleaded guilty in July to two counts of taking indecent liberties with a child. He got a minimum sentence of 10 months in prison to a maximum of 21 months.

In May four of his brothers accepted plea bargains. Agreeing to plead guilty to first-de-

gree sex offense were Eric Jackson, 28 and Matthew Jackson, 23. Superior Court Judge Walter H. Goodwin Jr. sentenced both to minimum prison sentences of 12 years.

Nathaniel Jackson, 22, pleaded guilty to two counts of felony incest, while Benjamin Jackson, 20, pleaded guilty to three counts of felony incest. Goodwin issued both Jackson brothers two sentences, each for a minimum of 20 months, that will run concurrently.

Goodwin suspended a third 20-month sentence against Benjamin Jackson on the condition he cooperates in any future trial in the case.

Aaron Jackson, 20, rejected the District Attorney's plea offer and will stand trial. It was not clear when a trial will be scheduled.

The victim apparently still lives in Colorado and was not in court Monday. She did attend the hearing in May.

GOALS

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in the UNC system. "We're number one on Washington Monthly's list of 'Best Bang for the Buck,'" Goodson said.

Step two — making ECSU into a community of scholars is underway. "It's no secret that enrollment has declined over the years," Goodson said. However this year's freshman class is 30 percent larger than the year before.

The final step is creating ECSU as a model interdisciplinary science university.

"It's important that we engage faculty and staff as well as the community," he said. "We have to reach out to the community and the community needs to reach back."

To that Dave Goss said he was involved in a project with ECSU about five years.

"A lot of people spent a lot of time on that and we never heard anything back," Goss said.

Goss said he suspects it may have been a case that the administration at the time "got ahead of the faculty."

Goodson said that shouldn't happen again.

"When we take on an initiative, we will complete it," he said.

Newkirk also encouraged businesses to consider hiring interns from ECSU. All students in the business program are required to intern for 150 hours. The program requires a GPA of 3.0 and the student must be a junior or a senior.

The positions can be paid or unpaid Newkirk said.

"We have a lot of students interested but we have a limited number with transportation," Newkirk said.

He suggested if enough Perquimans County businesses showed an interest and if the times could be coordinated, ECSU would consider providing transportation. He also suggested an internship career fair would be a possibility if enough businesses were willing to participate.

"We're always looking for opportunities for our students," he said.

ECSU is working to create dual-enrollment as well as agreements for "other programs" with public school systems in the university's 21-county service area, Jones said. Agreements to date have been made with five — Hertford, Martin, Beaufort, Washington and Warren.

Notice of Municipal Election For The Town of Hertford and The Town of Winfall

The Perquimans County Board of Elections will hold a Municipal Election on Tuesday November 3, 2015.

Voters who are already registered need not re-register. Residents of Hertford and Winfall who are eligible to vote and not registered must register by October 9, 2015. This is the deadline for all voter registration changes.

The East Hertford, West Hertford and Parkville polling places will be open from 6:30 A.M. until 7:30 P.M. on election day.

Registered voters may apply for absentee ballots. Absentee voting by mail begins October 2, 2015. The deadline for requesting absentee ballots by mail is 5:00 P.M. on October 27, 2015. Request forms must be completed and mailed to the Perquimans County Board of Elections at P.O. Box 336 Hertford, NC 27944. GS 163-230.1 Forms are available on the North Carolina State Board of Elections web site and in the Perquimans County Board of Elections Office. Absentee ballots must be returned to the board of elections office by 5:00 P.M. Tuesday, November 3, 2015.

One Stop absentee voting at the Board of Elections office will begin October 22, 2015 at 8:00 A.M. and end October 31, 2015 at 1:00 P.M. The hours are 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. October 22, 23, 26-30, and 8:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M. October 31, 2015.

Beginning in 2016, North Carolina will require voters to show a photo identification (photo ID) when they present to vote in person. This change is a result of the Voter Information Verification Act or "VIVA." (S.L. 2013-381). Until 2016, most voters will not be required to show any form of identification when they vote.

The Board of Elections office is located at 601A S. Edenton Rd. Street. You may call our office at 426-5598 if you need additional information.

Dianne Layden, Chairman
Perquimans County Board of Elections
Absentee Board meetings: Oct. 13, 20, and 27 at 10:00 A.M., Nov. 2, at 5:00 P.M. and Nov. 6 at 10:00 A.M.

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THE PERQUIMANS WEEKLY

(USPS428-080)
Vol. 83 No. 38
Published each Wednesday.

A publication of Cooke Communications North Carolina, LLC
Established 1934
111 W. Market St., Hertford, NC 27944

Mike Goodman.....Publisher
Peter Williams.....News Editor
Bev Alexander.....Advertising Representative

Phone 252-426-5728 • Fax 252-426-4625
Email: perquimansweekly@ncweeklies.com

Subscription Rates

In Daily Advance home delivery area..... \$25.25*
All other continental U.S..... \$31.50*
*Plus applicable sales tax in N.C.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to
The Perquimans Weekly, Hertford, NC 27944