

Amazon Wind Farm project to produce power in Dec.

BY JON HAWLEY
The Daily Advance

Avangrid Renewables' massive wind energy project continues to take shape on the Pasquotank-Perquimans border, and should begin producing electricity in December, a company spokesman told local business and civic leaders last Wednesday.

Craig Poff updated members of the Elizabeth City Area Committee of 100 about Avangrid's Amazon Wind Farm US East project during the group's monthly luncheon at Montero's Restaurant. The Committee of 100 is a private nonprofit that supports economic development in Pasquotank County.

Poff said turbine components continue being delivered to the project site from around the world, flowing from Mexico and the ports of Wilmington and Morehead City before being stored in Edenton and then trucked to Pasquotank County.

The nearly 500-foot-tall wind towers have been going up since last month, filling in the landscape off the U.S. 17 bypass north of Elizabeth City. Poff said the project may also bring in two more massive cranes, for a total of five, to keep the project moving forward. It's slated to start producing power in December, when Poff said it will start feeding power into Dominion Power's existing 230-kilovolt transmission line.

"After the first year when we start generating, the



THOMAS J. TURNEY/THE DAILY ADVANCE

Two 500-foot wind turbines are shown at Avangrid Renewables' Amazon Wind Farm US East wind energy project in Pasquotank and Perquimans counties, Wednesday. Construction continues on the wind farm, which is expected to begin producing electricity this December, a company spokesman said Wednesday.

electrons making lights here at Montero's and in many homes and businesses around here are going to be coming from wind turbines," Poff said.

While the project's customer is Amazon Web Services, Poff clarified the wind turbines will add electricity to the grid to offset its power needs. Poff likened the electrical grid to a bank when one wants to make a withdrawal, they don't expect to receive the exact dollar bills previously deposited.

In addition to updates on the project's construction, Poff highlighted the project's current and future economic impacts. Poff said the \$400 million project is currently employing more than 200 temporary workers, noting about a fourth of them reside within 50 miles of the project site. More lo-

cal workers were employed previously, but the project has shifted from laying out 62 miles of roads to bringing in more specialized workers to install turbines, he explained.

Poff also said the project will pay local property owners about \$625,000 a year in lease payments. It also will generate \$520,000 a year in local property taxes for both Pasquotank and Perquimans counties. Even with economic incentives the two counties granted the wind farm project, it will still become the largest property taxpayer in both counties, he said.

Poff also fielded numerous questions from the audience. Most were from Elizabeth City officials, including Mayor Joe Peel, City Councilors Ray Donnelly and Tony Stimatz, and City Manager Rich Olson.

Though wind power is "the fastest growing" form

of energy in the U.S., Poff said offshore wind power is still very expensive. Its electricity costs three to five times more than that produced by land-based wind farms, he said, meaning it's "not competitive" yet.

The Amazon wind farm spans more than 22,000 acres but its turbines and infrastructure will only occupy about 200 to 250 acres, Poff said. That means it's possible to "co-locate" solar panels on the wind farm, he said, but declined to say if Avangrid plans to do so.

Avangrid hopes to eventually build another 46 turbines - bringing the project up to the 150 turbines first proposed - once it studies the radar impacts of the first 104 turbines. Poff explained that the Navy's Northwest Annex in Chesapeake, Virginia, employs "relocatable over-the-horizon radar," and the Navy was concerned that the "lightning protection conductors" in the turbines' spinning blades would create noise that would affect its signal. The first 104 turbines, once operational, will provide the empirical data to determine if and how to expand the project, he said.

The turbines are also built to withstand lightning strikes and hurricane-force winds, Poff said. A big copper cable grounds the turbines, he said, and the wind blades alter their angle and lock into a "safe mode" when winds exceed 60 mph. He added historical data show it's rare that a strong hurricane hits Pasquotank or Perquimans counties; they weaken substantially crossing over the Outer Banks, he said.

Chowan urged collect full value for project

BY PETER WILLIAMS
News Editor

A Chowan County citizen told the county commissioners at their meeting last week that the county should be careful to collect taxes on the full value of the proposed Timbermill Wind Project.

"I submit to you, our directly elected officials, that if you accept even \$1 less than a tax based on the actual value of the project, you are cheating all the rest of the Chowan County taxpayers," Bob Kirby said during the public comment period at the Aug. 1 meeting of the Chowan County Board of Commissioners.

Kirby's comments addressed the taxes that would be paid by the Timbermill Wind Project. The 300-megawatt industrial wind energy facility has been proposed by Charlottesville, Va.-based Apex Clean Energy Inc. for a site in the Bear Swamp and Center Hill areas of Chowan and Perquimans counties.

The county commissioners are scheduled to hold a hearing on Apex's conditional use permit application for the project on Aug. 22 and 23 at the Northern Chowan Community Center.

Based on a \$6 million per turbine cost that he

derived from a wind energy industry website and the proposal to construct 48 turbines in the county, Kirby figured the investment in Chowan County for the Timbermill Wind project at \$288 million.

Based on the county's current property tax rate and a value of \$288 million, the county should collect \$2,289,600 a year in taxes from the project, according to Kirby.

Kirby suggested that the county negotiate with Apex a payment in lieu of taxes of \$2.29 million, which would be adjusted on an annual basis in accordance with the Consumer Price Index.

"Collection of this PILOT fee should commence immediately upon approval of the CUP since at that point, the land will become encumbered," Kirby said.

Kirby also remarked to the county commissioners that under the county's ordinance requirements Apex would have only one year after receiving the CUP to begin construction of the project.

"So if Apex does not receive all of the necessary federal and state permits by next August, and obtain the required building permits, their application to Chowan County would become moot," Kirby said.

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project is expected to generate a total of about \$500,000 a year in local property taxes and would be roughly split between

Perquimans and Chowan counties. Also property owners who lease the land on which the turbines would be placed stand to get close to \$10,000 a year in lease payments.

Brenda Lassiter was the lone member of the plan-

ning board to oppose one of the four motions.

Her "no" vote dealt with the legal finding "that the location and character of the use, if developed according to the plan as submitted and approved, will be in harmony with the area in which it is to be located and in general conformity with the Perquimans County land use plan."

"I voted no because I don't believe this project is

in harmony with the area nor in harmony with our resident's desires," Lassiter said last week. "By residents I mean those that are non-participants but (who) could be hugely affected by the project."

"I am not against wind energy. I value the fact that it holds immense potential in supplying electricity across the world and I

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PUBLIC NOTICE



The Perquimans County Board of County Commissioners will hold a Public Hearing using quasi-judicial procedures on Wednesday, August 24, 2016, at 5:30 PM and on Thursday, August 25, 2016, at 5:30 p.m. in the Courtroom on the 2nd floor of the Perquimans County Courthouse Annex Building located at 110 North Church Street, Hertford, NC (next door to the Historic County Courthouse), to consider Conditional Use Permit No. CUP-16-01, by Timbermill Wind, LLC, c/o Apex Clean Energy Holdings, LLC, for a Large Wind Energy Facility in the Bear Swamp and Centerhill Communities (to include Tax Parcel Nos. 3-0039-00011B; 3-0047-00001, -00002, -00014 and -00028; 3-0048-00001 and -00003; 3-0049-00009, -00024A, -00025, -00026, -00038 and -00039(part); 3-0058-00004(part), -00007 and -00013; and 3-0059-00012A(part)), and extending west into Chowan County.

Property owners, residents and other interested parties may review this item during normal business hours before the quasi-judicial Public Hearing at the Perquimans County Planning & Zoning Office, 104 Dobbs Street, Hertford, NC, or call 252-426-2027 or email dgodfrey@perquimanscountync.gov for more information. Public comments at the hearing will be in the form of sworn testimony subject to cross examination.

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