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Supporting 5 Mile Wind Turbine set back from any city limits and other comments.

1 message

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Mon, Feb 6, 2012 at 4:01 PM

To: wcplanning@co.wasco.or.us

Supporting 5 Mile Wind Turbine set back from any city limits and other comments.

Re: Proposed Wasco Co. Energy Ord. Amendments, Hearing Feb. 15, 2012

While we are hoping that weather will permit attending the WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 15, 2012 hearing in the Dalles, it is hard to be certain that conditions will permit this so here are written comments to supplement my prior comments.

A number of residents here have discussed this and decided to request that the commission adopt a five-mile set back from any city limits. There are several reasons I support this which I will attempt to outline.

Of course any one that is threatend with having these turbines sited in their community can read the many conflicts that have plagued this industry in the U.S. and Europe as well- health impacts, noise, safety, esthetics- we have these concerns as well but I want to focus on some other issues as well. It seems that many of these "wind farm" sitings are very contentious. As one who has chosen to live in a relatively remote scenic area I can understand and share the feelings of many critics.

When examing these issues, I would strongly suggest that the Commissioner discover or rediscover Goal 5.

NEGATIVE IMPACTS ON OUR COMMUNITY, PROPERTY VALUES AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

It has been recognized by economic development agencies for some time that tourism and the tourist industry is a future key for economic development of your small cities.

Highway 218 from Shaniko through Antelope is part of the "Journey Through Time Scenic Byway" as established by the state I believe primarily with the goal of encouraging tourism and promote development of the tourist industry. This designation brings a lot of traffic through our area and quite frankly these tourists are looking to enjoy an experience "off the beaten path." Because Antelope is a high-value historic resource, this designation is appropriate. (This is also true form Hwy 97 from Grass Valley to Shaniko.)

Antelope's potential for economic development of tourism and historic presetvation are really intertwined and it would seem that wind turbines within 5 miles or visible nearby would seriously compromised. These have been long-term goals for this region and community and this project should be accomplished in a manner that respects these objectives.

I would like to impress that other than our traditional regional base of agriculture and ranching, tourism is the most promising avenue for economic development in the city.

For the past several years residents have been working to establish a historical district in Antelope.

The Heritage Outreach Specialist with the Oregon Heritage Programs wrote that the agency had "finally wrapped

up the historic building survey ... conducted back in May in Antelope."

The state agency specialist advised "(t)he final report includes recommendations for next steps ... in terms of preserving the city's historic resources and promoting its heritage. In short, I think there's enough remaining in the city to constitute a historic district or at least listing several of the buildings in the National Register of Historic Places, if property owners so desired. There's also some great resources surviving that tell a pretty rich history of the city, from its early settlement through the 1980s."

Siting turbines only within a mile or a mile and one-half from any city is really restricting future growth option.

COMPATIBILITY WITH EXISTING USES

Additionally, the city land-use plan, as approved by the state, put a priority on developing the city as a retirement community and any nearby industrial use as proposed obviously would impact this goal in an adverse manner.

Siting turbines on bluff and ridges hovering above our city will not only blight our vistas but our quality of life.

Again, I believe we need much greater set backs to make sure this project is a truly compatible neighbor to the city.

FIRE & SAFETY

The closer to our city the more chance of unintended impacts for us. One concern is fire protection. Right now we have a fire-rating of 10 and we have very little, if any, ability to fight range fire around our city. Shaniko has very limited resources.

We have a situation here where, as the ODOE commentator in their model wind ordinance notes is common in rural areas, we have no organized fire protection. This is a problem in the area. Shaniko has a very tiny fire department and Antelope has barely any fire department activity although the council talks about improving this. So I want the state and applicant to note, if it is not already understood, that Antelope has no fire protection services to provide. In the past few years we were actually reduced to a "fire rating" of 10 (the worst).

A five-mile set back would allow greater response time should fire become an issue. While I am not going to question the safety of the turbines, any time we have more vehicles and people out in the range land the fire danger increases. No system is 100%. I don't think you need to have a lot of expertise to assert that any where there is an electric system it poses a risk of fire. At least the state ODOE proposed wind-ordinance seems to believe it.

CITY WATER SYSTEM - NEED FOR OTHER SETBACKS.

While a five mile setback would address this issue, if not adopted, I would suggest that the County look at establish other setbacks involving our resources that could be impacted. One such resources is out city water system and adjacent lands, owned by the city but outside of the city.

The city owns wells, springs, a pump house and water lines on property on both sides of Hwy. 218 adjacent to the proposed project boundaries. (This is the same parcel on which the cell phone tower is located.) The city also owns a reservoir and distribution system south of that parcel which I believe is not immediately adjacent to the project land but very close. This is our municipal water system. The city does not have a lot of funding for water treatment or mitigation and presently we have no water treatment except for chlorination. We have and prize an excellent quality drinking water. Obviously it is priority for city residence to protect the water supply and quality.

However, we need to protect our water supply and system. I have no idea what kind of contaminants may be used on turbine facilities- i.e. de-icers, oil, fuels, pesticides, herbicides, etc. but this needs to be addressed.

Again, it seems a set back of a mile or two from the city land and system may be appropriate to ensure both quality and safety but to also allow for potential future modification or expansion of the system and facilities.

PROPERTY RIGHTS & SET BACKS

I have seen that several property owners have submitted comments expressing concern over proposed sets back and assert private-property rights as a reason that they should be free to site wind turbines as they see fit rather than complying with concerns about the effects of their actions on others.

I own private property and I support property rights as a fundamental freedom we enjoy in our country. I would like to be able to do what I please on my property and develop it as I see fit. So from this standpoint I can relate to these comments.

However, why they lose me is because this industry and the land owners future economic progress is so heavily dependent upon the government and use of government infra-structure. They intend to profit from the public policy, including many forms of economic stimulus to subsidize this industry. This dependence on governmental infrastructure will continue for the life of these turbines especially the dependence upon the federal BPA transmission system which has been paid for by us, the tax payers and rate payers. This activity is causing us to assume greater costs and impacts on our electric costs and infrastructure.

It would seem that in this case where the public support will be needed, the land-owners would want to seem to be or be more friendly when considering the impacts on their neighbors. If they were engaged in agriculture/farming I would be more sympathetic to them, but when they are seeking to introduce an offensive incompatible industrial use, which is really completely dependent upon the public infrastructure and subsidies, I think that invites public input and a balancing of public concerns against their property rights.

CONCLUSION

The first of my family arrived here in Wasco County in the 1850's with the US Army with Lt. Bonneville and Cpt. U.S. Grant. My great-mother was the second white person born in this county. My Great Grandfather homesteaded in Adams Canyon adjacent to the proposed project in the 1880's. So we have a history here and we see things change. If I had a magic wand We would all go back to the "good old days" when you could get your wind-mills mailed ordered from Sears. However, I am afraid the winds of change are blowing our way. New people come in and the views of what is best for the land change. You see so much conflict and fighting over these wind projects. I just think wouldn't it be nice if we could have a little cities that say Wasco County really respect us. So I hope these words may help promote harmony.

Thank you,

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