

TOWN OF TEMPLE, NEW HAMPSHIRE PLANNING BOARD

JULY 13, 2011
FINAL MINUTES OF PUBLIC MEETING

Board members present: Richard Whitcomb, Randy Martin, Allan Pickman, John Kieley, Mary Beth Ayvazian, Rose Lowry

Call to order by Pickman at 7:31 p.m.

Wind turbine presentation: Adam Cohen, representing Pioneer Green Energy, addressed the board to explain a proposal for a wind turbine installation. The majority of the turbines would be erected in New Ipswich, with an additional two to four turbines sited on Kidder Mountain in Temple. Cohen provided background information on the company's history and experience with wind energy systems. He indicated testing is being done in both towns to develop data, with one meteorological tower in New Ipswich collecting data since November of 2010, and a request for a second met tower pending site plan approval. He continued that the wind data is being correlated with Jaffrey airport. Ayvazian asked about raptor migration, and Cohen responded that data for the spring migration has been collected and fall data will be forthcoming. He also stated that recent information from wind farm data located in the town of Lempster showed zero migratory kills. Cohen presented copies of topo maps showing the location of the proposed towers in both New Ipswich and Temple. One map displayed an overlay of Temple land parcels, and Cohen indicated his company was already leasing land from the Bradler family. He said there are no existing nearby Temple residences, with the closest over 2,000 feet away, and all setbacks could be met. Kieley asked about visibility of the towers. Cohen replied they would not be visible from the downtown area but would be apparent from certain areas in town. Kieley then asked about additional power lines, and Cohen said there would be no new high voltage lines, with lines between towers being buried, and one connection to an existing line in New Ipswich.

Cohen spoke of new technology for wind towers, with larger machines translating to fewer turbines and greater efficiency. He mentioned the circa 1970's Altamont Pass wind farm in California and explained how its closely spaced smaller size turbines proved to be less efficient, and also how their design contributed to notable bird kills. Kieley asked about conservation easements on land in New Ipswich. Cohen said this type of wind farm would contribute to keeping land open and protect from sprawl. He explained the footprint of a turbine is small, with low impact to wildlife. He stated it is a passive use of land, involving no town services and increasing tax revenues. Lowry asked about land leases, and was told they are for a 30-year period, after which they are either renewed, or the turbines are removed and the land restored to its previous state.

Cohen said the construction process has two phases, and the company may upgrade necessary town road and bridge infrastructure if deemed necessary. He said the turbine blades are 160 feet long and comprise one solid piece, so an adequate turn radius is necessary and some roads may need to be widened. Kieley told Cohen, "There are 200-year old trees alongside roads in Temple, and it could be a huge issue, not in your favor". Martin suggested an approach from New Ipswich that might prove to be of less impact. Ayvazian brought up tax implications and asked about a tax study in Lempster. Cohen supplied a chart that showed an immediate tax benefit to Temple up front, which lessened as property assessment valuation catches up. Pickman commented that under the school district equalized valuation system the town would end up paying more for education. Estimated tax amortization provided by Cohen showed declining value and taxes paid as the towers depreciated over a 25-year timeframe. Cohen stated with wind energy systems the upfront cost is in the turbines, there are no fuel costs, and the biggest ongoing cost is taxes. He said the company profit curve goes up over time, as depreciation kicks in and tax payments drop. He said wind energy is immediately competitive with other forms of power generation. Lowry said she recently had occasion to visit the Harvest Wind Farm in Michigan, which consists of thirty-two 400' high towers that she found "beautiful", and she feels there is a lot of misinformation out there. She asked if there was any value to homeowners who are not leasing their land, and Cohen answered that studies show no huge impact to land values. He also stated the company would work with non-participating landowners to keep people happy.

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Pickman asked about wind speeds, and Cohen said the towers turn on at 3 meters or 9-10 miles per hour, and turn off at 50 miles per hour. Kieley asked about lights and was told there would be lights at the perimeter and every third turbine. Lowry asked what happens if the wind farm should fail. Cohen said there would be bond money in the bank for removal as a condition of landowner leases. He also said when decommissioned the salvage value is high. He stated abandonment issues are usually handled within a town zoning ordinance, such as Temple's Small Wind Energy System ordinance.

Cohen told the board that a dialogue had been started at this meeting, and his company would like to begin serious planning in the fall. There was brief discussion of ongoing issues with the Antrim wind farm, different brands of turbines, existing transmission lines, use of underground lines, location of substations, and job creation. At that point Pickman suggested Temple work on developing a Large Wind Energy System ordinance, with requisite public hearing and vote of approval by town residents in March. Cohen said the company would be seeking a state permit and hoped to have that in place by November 1st. Board members felt proceeding without an ordinance in place would not be wise, and trying to expedite the project through a special exception or special town meeting would be too rushed. Whitcomb asked if the project would proceed if Temple should vote "no", and Cohen said it would proceed in New Ipswich. Cohen said the power created by the turbines would be sold to PSNH. He said he would make himself available to talk to people and answer questions, would hold a site walk, and make all studies and data available. He told the board, "We need power in the U.S. – how do you want it? Wind is renewable energy." He also stated "transmission is more important than wind" and reiterated his company's desire to work with the town.

New Ipswich meeting: Pickman read a notice from the New Ipswich Planning Board advising of a July 20th meeting with possible regional impact. A hearing is scheduled to consider an application from Pioneer Green Energy to erect a 198' meteorological tower. Pickman noted that as this request is a precursor to a possible wind farm installation in Temple, one or more planning board members may want to attend.

Review of minutes: Motion by Ayvazian to accept the minutes of June 15, 2011 as written, second by Whitcomb, and so voted.

Bartolomeo subdivision: Pickman informed the board he had attempted to record the Mylar and it was rejected by the registry. The issue involves compromised legibility of some figures on the plat, plus dissatisfaction with a red ink stamp used by the health officer. The surveyor will be contacted and asked to revise the plat; the health officer will be asked to utilize a black ink stamp.

Kullgren subdivision: Pickman told the board the town had received a notice from the state DOT regarding a revised driveway permit for Map 2 Lot 55. The application indicated Bruce Kullgren and Ben Fisk were requesting a 2-entrance permit for a "sugar house and small retail store" on an existing three lot subdivision located on Route 101. Pickman then read a letter of response from the Temple Board of Selectmen. Several issues were brought up, including lack of a town building permit, lack of an application for a special exemption to run a commercial business, lack of a DES permit for bridge construction to access the lots, concern for motorist safety on that stretch of the highway, and lack of an application to the town for a second driveway entrance. Kieley told the board Kullgren had made an appointment to discuss the situation with the BOS but failed to attend the meeting. The board reviewed the approved plat and noted it was for residential lots and had one approved driveway entrance. Pickman said the planning board could take no action at this time as there was no plan presented.

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Summer meeting schedule: Pickman asked the board to consider holding one or more meetings in August to deal with the wind turbine proposal. A trip to visit the existing wind farm in Lempster was again brought up. Lowry said the PB needs to do some homework, and highlighted the following action items: Lowry will contact a friend who has done wind turbine installations to come in and talk to the board; contact the Audubon Society regarding information on raptor migration; Kieley will contact the Harris Center and a bird expert in Peterborough regarding raptor migration; Ayvazian will contact the wind farm company and the landowner in Lempster to arrange a visit; board members to schedule a date to hike the area on Kidder Mountain; review the New Ipswich Large Wind Energy Systems ordinance and contact SWRPC to determine if they have any relevant information; prepare website and newsletter announcements for town residents once information gathering and further discussion has occurred. Kieley mentioned an upcoming town forum in August to discuss driveway plowing, and there was some thought of addressing the wind farm proposal at that time. The board decided to schedule a meeting on August 17th, and plan on a field trip to Lempster as another meeting earlier in the month.

Move to adjourn by Ayvazian, second by Kieley, and so voted. Meeting adjourned at 9:36 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Betsy Perry