

Windmill project moving forward

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WARREN - Plans for a windmill project for the towns of Warren and Stark continue to move forward.

The town of Warren, the lead agency involved in the project, recently determined that a supplement to the comprehensive Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be prepared for the proposed Jordanville Wind Energy Project. A Draft Environmental Impact Statement was previously accepted by the town of Warren and three public hearings were held as part of the public comment period. An additional opportunity for public comment of no less than 30 days will be provided before a Final Environmental Impact Statement is prepared.

Community Energy has proposed to develop a wind-powered generating facility of up to 150 megawatts in the towns, which will include around 75 windmills. Each of the turbines carries a capacity to generate 2 megawatts, and the turbines will feature a 285-foot diameter, three-bladed rotor mounted on a 256-foot high steel tubular tower.

The proposal also includes two meteorological towers, 21 miles of access roads, 41 miles of electrical interconnect, a collection substation, a .8-mile long, overhead 230-kilovolt transmission line, an interconnection substation, a centrally located, temporary construction staging area, and an operations and maintenance facility.

The project encompasses around 6,225 acres of private land and around 77 separate parcels of land.

Potential environmental impacts being looked at include visual impacts, roads, wildlife, water resources, soils, communication facilities, the socio-economic impacts of the project on the community, and impacts on agriculture.

Representatives of Community Energy, as Jordanville Wind LLC, continue to gather concerns and input from area residents about the project and bring forward studies that will supplement the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

According to local officials, residents' response from both towns on the project continues to be positive. Proponents of the project have been far more vocal than opponents to this point, at least at county legislature meetings. Stark resident Ed Mower has approached the legislature several times over the past year, saying the project would benefit many landowners who are struggling financially in what is one of the poorer areas of the county.

Leslie Miller, town of Warren planning board chairman, has told the legislature that the money that would be coming to the town through a PILOT agreement is also sorely needed.

Town of Stark supervisor Richard Bronner said members of a local group formed in opposition to the project regularly attend town board meetings to speak out against the proposal. But Bronner believes the vast majority of folks stand behind the project, and what it could bring to the area in terms of an economic shot in the arm. In particular, Bronner said “the old-time local residents do not seem to be opposed to this.”

Bronner remarked that many farmers who stand to profit from having the windmills on their property are badly in need of any help they can get, adding the impact on farmers has been one of the least talked about aspects of the windmill discussion.

“We're gambling dealing with a big company, but for farmers gambling is a way of life on a dairy farm. Dairy farmers that need the help seem to be one of the forgotten groups in this supposed economic boost,” said Bronner.

Miller said the town continues to negotiate with Community Energy on a PILOT agreement. He added there's no timetable set up as far as when the towns might be acting on accepting the proposal.

“We're just taking this one step at a time,” commented Miller.