

RICHIE DAVIS Recorder Staff 07/05/03 MONROE -- Permit applications for 19 new wind turbines here and in neighboring Florida are due to be filed late this month, beginning a process that developers hope will lead to construction of the 28.5 megawatt Hoosac Wind Project by the end of 2004.

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Initial testing of wind sites on Monroe's Crum Hill and adjacent Bakki Mountain in Florida have demonstrated that enXco's proposed \$30 million project should proceed, says Project Manager Todd Presson.

Representatives from the Danish-based wind energy company with regional offices in Burlington, Vt., are negotiating with Monroe selectmen to lease 110 town-owned acres off Tida Hill Road and with private landowners in Florida off Bliss Road for another 300 acres.

The project, which will necessitate clearing between 45 and 50 acres -- including 28 acres for roads as well as one acre per turbine -- will require special permits from each of the towns, as well as wetlands permits, building permits, Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act review and approval from the Massachusetts Highway Department.

All permit applications should be filed between late July and October, say project spokesmen, beginning with town wetland, building permit and subdivision and special permit applications, with public hearings in each town associated with each permit.

EnXco, which Presson said hopes to contribute toward the state's goal of developing 4 percent of its energy mix from new renewable sources by 2009, also will file for review under the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act for the project.

"Things change by the day in terms of what the schedule is, but we expect that all submitting for permit approval all should happen between now and October," said community outreach facilitator Sam Bittman. All environmental studies and filings will be posted on the project's Web site, www. Hoosacwind.com

The 19 turbines would be located on two separate ridge lines -- 10 of them in Florida and nine in Monroe.

Although 300 acres would be leased, only 45 to 50 would carry the "footprint" for the wind farm, including access roads and transmission lines.

EnXco is still negotiating terms of a lease, but Project Manager Presson said he believes the project would probably generate about \$300,000 in taxes, split between the two towns. There would also be a royalty of about 3 percent of revenues paid to the landowners, he said.

The 1.5 megawatt General Electric turbines would be perched on 213-foot towers, with the top of the three-propeller rotors reaching to 340 feet.

EnXco also maintains an 11-turbine wind farm in nearby Searsburg, Vt., and the owner -- Green Mountain Power Corp. -- is seeking to expand that by up to 20 more turbines.

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Wind power company ready to place turbines

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FLORIDA - A California wind power company which wants to operate in Massachusetts expects to have permits and plans ready for installations in Florida and Monroe this summer.

EnXco, which maintains an 11-turbine project in Searsburg, Vt., has been measuring air currents along a pair of mountain ridges in the Berkshire and Franklin County towns, and the results look good, Todd E. Presson, project manager at the company's South Burlington, Vt., office, said.

"It's actually very similar to the Searsburg area," Presson said.

The company plans to erect 19 wind turbines in the Hoosac Wind Project. They would be built along ridges between Florida and Monroe. They would sell the power generated by the 213-foot tall structures to utilities.

The wind company is negotiating to lease part of almost 300 acres off Tilda Hill and Bliss Roads in Florida and 110 town-owned acres on the Monroe side. It has made arrangements with a private trust owning 600 acres in Florida and the owner of 54 acres in Monroe.

But the plans will have to go before town officials for review, including a possible check of the project's impact on wetlands, and approval.

Voters in each town this year approved allowing selectmen to negotiate land deals. Last month, at a town election which drew half of Florida's 491 registered voters, residents voted 170 to 47 in favor of a non-binding referendum supporting wind power.

While there have been some in Florida who have expressed concern about the visual and environmental impact of the large turbines, others welcome the "green" energy source.

"It's non-polluting, renewable power," said Stanley L. Brown, town moderator and owner of Brown's Garage, who was involved with the pro-turbine Citizens Using Renewable Energy, which formed in March to support the project.

Company representatives have estimated that the Monroe portion might generate 10 to 12 megawatts, and the Florida portion 13 to 17. In addition to the increased tax value of the property, enXco and the towns are looking at arrangements which would have the towns paid a 3 percent royalty off of the turbines' revenues, possibly netting the towns another \$2,000 to \$3,000 per megawatt annually.

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RICHIE DAVIS Recorder Staff 03/31/03 FLORIDA -- By late 2004, 19 wind turbines may be spinning along two ridges north of Route 2 here and in neighboring Monroe, generating 28.5 megawatts of power.

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About 100 residents of the two towns packed the Abbott Memorial School cafeteria Thursday to hear about plans by a Danish-based wind energy company to develop a wind farm on Monroe's Crum Hill and neighboring Bakki Mountain in Florida.

Representatives from enXco, with regional offices in Burlington, Vt., are negotiating with Monroe selectmen for lease of 110 acres off Tida Hill Road and with Florida selectmen for nearly 300 acres off Bliss Road, while arranging purchase of 54 privately owned acres in Monroe.

Thursday's informational session presented plans for the Hoosac Wind Project, which must still clear a variety of hurdles, including special legislation that would allow the towns to lease their land to enXco for 35 years, rather than the 25 permitted under Massachusetts law, according to Monroe Selectman Larry Thoreson.

Voters in the two towns agreed in January and February to allow selectmen to negotiate the lease of the property, and Thoreson said there was no opposition. Although the town will reap income from leasing the land, as well as personal property tax from the nine turbines to be located in Monroe, he said it's too early to tell how much that would be.

The 1.5 megawatt General Electric turbines would be perched on 213-foot towers, with the top of the three-propeller rotors reaching to 340 feet, project manager Todd Presson told the audience -- many of them wearing "Plug into Renewable Energy" buttons.

The only opposition voiced Thursday came from the Hoosac Range Scenic Preservation Association, whose spokesman, Adam Richardson of Florida, said numbered "a couple dozen people" concerned about noise pollution, visual pollution as well as the threat of possible lightning strikes, falling ice, falling towers and threats to wildlife.

"We want to preserve the scenery we have on our mountainside," he said. "That seems to be left out of this whole picture."

Among the visual pollution concerns detailed in a printed handout association members distributed was the "strobe effect: When the sun is behind the rotating blades, a strobe effect is generated when the sunlight is chopped by the fast moving blades. Medical opinion suggests that this can cause dizziness, headaches, disorientation and trigger seizures and migraines. It can also frighten livestock, such as cattle, and other wildlife."

Presentations by Presson and four other guest speakers -- including an engineer and a bird specialist -- explained that improvements in wind turbine technology have eliminated risks such as lightning strikes, ice being thrown by blades and towers being damaged by blades spinning out of control.

The project, which will necessitate clearing between 45 and 50 acres -- including 28 acres for roads as well as one acre per turbine -- will require special permits from each of the towns, as well as wetlands permits, building permits, Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act review and construction permits.

Paul Kerlinger, an avian specialist, presented preliminary analysis data from a six-month study that found no significant impact to birds.

Presson said the project -- based on data from five test sites last fall -- would help the state toward its goal of developing 4 percent of its energy mix from new renewable sources by 2009.

Thoreson, commenting before the meeting about the reaction of townspeople he's talked to said, "Most people don't look it as income coming in. It's clean energy."

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Recorder Staff 03/04/03 MONROE -- The public is invited to participate in two informational meetings to discuss wind power and the proposed Hoosac Wind Project in Florida. The meetings will be held in the towns of Florida and Monroe on Friday and March 27.

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The informational meetings are sponsored by the Berkshire Renewable Energy Collaborative, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, Center for Ecological Technology and Towns of Florida and Monroe with support from the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative Community Planning Initiative.

The first forum will be held at the Abbott Memorial School in Florida on Friday from 7 to 9 p.m. At this public meeting, community members can learn more about wind technologies, benefits and impacts

Sally Wright, from the University of Massachusetts Renewable Energy laboratory, will discuss the status of wind technology, the environmental and economic benefits, and siting issues. Wright will be joined by Walton Congdon, a science educator who has led tours at the Searsburg Wind Farm in southern Vermont for several years.

Congdon will explain the science and technology of wind power and will talk about the experiences residents and visitors have had over time with the wind project in Searsburg. Lauren Gaherty from Berkshire Regional Planning will talk about local regulatory issues related to siting wind turbines.

The second session will take place March 27 at the Monroe Town Offices from 7 to 9 p.m.

At this forum, residents and visitors will meet members of the enXco development team.

Here, the focus will be more specific to the proposed Hoosac Wind Project. Project Manager Todd Presson of enXco East Coast will give an overview of the project, and discuss the status of data collection and site planning.

He will also describe the next steps and approximate timetable for the project.

Presson and other speakers will respond to community questions, including those questions that might be unanswered at the first session.

"Since the Town of Florida expects to receive a proposal for the development of a wind farm in the near future, these sessions are an excellent opportunity for town officials and residents to learn more about wind power and the impacts of development from the experts in the field," said Jana Hunkler Brule, Florida town administrator.

The Berkshire region, particularly the northern Berkshire hilltowns, has the potential to supply electricity from wind resources and major wind projects are moving forward.

These forums will provide objective information about wind technology as well as up-to-date information and dialogue about site-specific projects to allow the communities to make informed decisions.

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