

Wind bill stirs up debate - Bill would allow opposing sides to appeal to the state

July 16, 2010 | Berkshire Eagle, The (Pittsfield, MA) Author: Scott StaffordBerkshire Eagle Staff| Section: Main| 695 Words Page: A01 OpenURL Link

Even though the state House of Representatives has passed its version of wind siting reform, the debate over local control of wind power projects continues to swirl.

The new law would allow developers to appeal a denial at the local level to the state's Supreme Judicial Court. Similar to a recently passed Senate bill, the House version allows a wind power proposal approved by a local board to then proceed to a single state permitting board for final approval. It also allows opponents of a project to appeal the local approval of a project in the state's top court.

Critics of the legislation say the bill puts too much power at the state level. Supporters praise the bill for reducing red tape and time involved in permitting such projects.

According to lan Bowles, Massachusetts secretary of energy and environmental affairs, the bill is very clear in mandating that if a local municipality decides a wind project is wrong for the town, that is the end of the state permitting process for that proposal. Legal challenges to the state's top court would still be allowed.

"Denial on the local level cannot be appealed to the state," Bowles said. "That's how it's worded. It's open and shut. And it sets up a very exact set of standards - no development on state-protected lands and away from recreation and population centers, which leaves only a handful of sites in Berkshire County."

The House passed its bill Wednesday 101-52 after two days of debate. The Senate passed a similar bill by voice vote in February. They both await action by the House- Senate Conference Committee to iron out the differences, and if that process is successful, observers expect the governor to sign the bill. But some question the clarity of the wording in the bill, and whether it really gives local boards the final word in denying a proposed wind energy project.

"The bill concentrates too much power in Boston and not enough with local boards," said Tad Ames, president of the Berkshire Natural Resources Council. "And most troubling is that state environmental laws are being replaced in this bill by standards that could be waived or relaxed should a developer plead difficulty."

State Rep. William "Smitty" Pignatelli, D-Lenox, said he opposed the bill from the start. "It provides a serious lack of local control," he said. "It circumvents the local planning

process and allows developers to circumvent that process."

Nat Karns, executive director of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, said the bill would leave the local permitting process "unworkable" by only giving the local board 120 days to complete the permitting process for a wind project.

"The wording would allow a developer to go to the state wind siting board with or without approval from a local board," he said.

The legislation is a response to the difficulties and delays wind projects have faced in the permitting process and from legal challenges. One example often cited in the debate is the more than \$100 million Hoosac Wind project, which was recently cleared to erect 20 wind turbines in the town of Florida and Monroe. The estimated cost of the project more than doubled during six years of legal challenges.

Developers seem relieved at the bill's passage because it clearly lays out the process and the timelines for permitting a wind project.

Tyler Fairbank, CEO of local green energy development firm EOS Ventures, said the passage of the bill was a "significant" step forward. "As a developer, you want to understand the process you have to go through - having no process is scary," he said. "And it will certainly result in more interest in developing wind in Western Massachusetts because now we understand the rules of the game. But whether more projects gain approval at the state or local level is yet to be seen."

Todd Presson, COO of Patriot Renewables, which has proposed a wind project that straddles the border between Savoy and Adams, said the bill is good news from his perspective. "It's helpful in limiting the length of the appeal process, and clarity always helps in development," he said. "It gives a defined process and timeline, so you know your answer in a more reasonable period of time."

To reach Scott Stafford: sstafford@berkshireeagle.com or (413) 496-6241.

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Debate over wind bill stirring - House approves wind siting reform bill

July 16, 2010 | North Adams Transcript (MA) Author: Scott StaffordNew England Newspapers | Section: Main | 684 Words Page: A01

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New Mass. wind project proposal draws ire

July 15, 2010 | Bennington Banner (VT) Section: Region | 397 Words Page: A05 OpenURL Link

SCOTTSTAFFORD

The Berkshire Eagle

FLORIDA, Mass. - While the six-year legal storm over the Hoosac Wind project may have blown over, a new wind power dust-up is stirring on Florida Mountain.

A developer has proposed erecting a single wind turbine off Moores Road on private land.

The proposal generated a 43-signature petition against the project from some nearby residents and others.

Opponents cite noise and what they described as potential health threats the turbine could cause.

"I hope we can stop this thing from going up," said Mike Fairneny, a 25-year homeowner on Moores Road. "This is a commercial wind turbine they're trying to put in a small residential area. It would degrade my standard of living and disrupt my pursuit of happiness. It would change my life."

Fairneny said he has seen Internet reports on "low-level frequency interference" allegedly generated by wind turbines that may cause a variety of maladies to humans.

Supporters say wind turbines are quiet, pose no threat to human health and safety and would help defray the local need for electricity generated by fossil fuels.

Margo Van Peterson, a Moores Road resident who would lease a small part of her 50-acre parcel to the wind project, said she is happy to be a part of the effort to rid the nation of its dependence on oil, especially after what has happened in the Gulf of Mexico.

"I think it is critical that our country get on an independent energy production pathway to reduce the huge risk connected with continuing to use oil as our primary energy source," Van Peterson said. "And this one turbine will generate enough energy to power the entire town of Florida."

She questioned the allegations of any health risk allegedly caused by inaudible low-frequency noise from a wind turbine.

"We should not base our actions on unsubstantiated Internet rumors - I question the validity of any so-called report," she said.

Dean landoli, a partner in Quabbin Wind LLC, the developer, said the more than \$3 million project would involve one General Electric 1.5-megawatt turbine located 916 feet away from the nearest structure and 1,530 feet from the Whitcomb Summit Motel. Its height would be 339 feet.

landoli said the energy produced would be sold to nearby commercial users at a rate below retail rates charged by electric utilities.

Because most commercial wind projects typically involve a number of wind turbines on one site, his one-turbine

plan is a newly developed business model, he said.

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Three wind farms sign to sell power to NStar

July 15, 2010 | Sarasota Herald-Tribune (FL)

Author: Telegram & Gazette Staff TELEGRAM & GAZETTE; Donna Boynton Telegram & Gazette Staff Section: LOCAL NEWS | 268 Words

Page: B4 OpenURL Link

Wind farms in Douglas and Brimfield are among the three land-based wind farms that have signed agreements to sell electricity to NSTAR.

Douglas Woods Wind and Brimfield Wind were chosen from about 50 companies that responded to NSTAR's request-for-proposals.

The other wind farm chosen was the Hoosac Wind Project located in Monroe and Florida.

Caroline Allen, spokesman for NSTAR, said yesterday each proposal was evaluated on NSTAR's internal scale system, 80 percent of which is based on price, and 20 percent based on non-price factors such as financing of the project, the experience of the developer, what permits are in hand and the overall ability to build the project.

Douglas Woods Wind Farm, owned by American Pro Wind LLC, has 11 turbines proposed for land abutting the Douglas State Forest near the Webster town line. The project is expected to produce 27.5 megawatts of electricity and is expected to be in service by January 2012.

Brimfield Wind, also known as Pioneer Valley Wind and owned by Pioneer Valley Wind LLC, is a nine-turbine project expected to produce 22.5 megawatts of energy. The Brimfield project is expected to be in service by Nov. 30, 2012.

The Hoosac Wind Project is due to come online by the end of 2011. The 20-turbine project owned by Iberdrola Renewables Inc. is expected to produce 30 megawatts of energy.

The proposed contracts have been submitted to the state Department of Public Utilities for approval, Ms. Allen said. Copyright (c) 2010 Sarasota Herald-Tribune

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Three wind farms sign to sell power to NStar

July 15, 2010 | Worcester Telegram & Gazette (MA) Author: Donna Boynton| Section: LOCAL NEWS| 243 Words Page: B4

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EDITORIAL - Wind win

July 14, 2010 | Providence Journal (RI) Section: projoNation | 111 Words Page: B6 OpenURL Link

The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court has just given a big boost to land-based wind power in the state.

It has cleared a \$100 million plan to put up 20 wind turbines in Monroe and Florida, in the Berkshires. The project has been held up by summer people and others with money, although the turbines will power 10,000 homes with clean energy.

This sort of litigation is one reason why the Bay State only generates 9 megawatts of wind energy, though its goal is 2,000 by 2020. The court noted the obvious: Copious evidence supports the regulatory approvals for the project, Hoosac Wind. Wind power has drawbacks -- but look at its rivals!

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Sleeker wind permits proposed // House bill critics urge local control

July 14, 2010 | Sarasota Herald-Tribune (FL)

Author: THE ASSOCIATED PRESS TELEGRAM & GAZETTE; Steve LeBlanc THE ASSOCIATED PRESS Section: NEWS | 658 Words

Page: A1
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BOSTON - Massachusetts House lawmakers are weighing a bill designed to streamline the permitting process for wind energy facilities, over the objections of critics who say the bill strips local control of the projects.

The push to increase the number of wind turbines in Massachusetts has been frustrated by opposition to the projects.

The state's biggest proposed wind facility, the 130-turbine Cape Wind project, has battled eight years of lawsuits and government reviews. U.S. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar gave final approval in April to the project, which would be the nation's first offshore wind farm, but it still faces legal challenges.

Rep. Barry Finegold, House chairman of the Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy, said the goal of the bill is to overhaul that permitting system, which he described as "long, costly and often futile."

"We currently make it easier to permit a large fossil fuel power plant than we do a wind energy facility," said Finegold, D-Andover.

"Even communities who want a wind energy facility have had trouble attracting developers because of so much red tape."

Finegold rejected criticism that the bill strips away local control. He said the bill puts the final regulatory say over projects in the hands of local boards.

"If a local board says, 'No,' game over," he said. "The only option for a developer is to appeal to courts."

Backers also said the bill would help create hundreds of jobs and increase the state's wind power capacity to 100 megawatts by 2012. The state produced

9 megawatts of wind power last year.

But critics said if lawmakers really wanted to ensure local control over projects, they would let voters have the final say.

Rep. Denis Guyer proposed an amendment that would require a city or town to schedule a referendum on a project.

"Don't you think that the people in the community should have a vote?" said Guyer, D-Dalton.

The House rejected the amendment on a 86-61 vote.

Harry Dodson, a landscape architect from Ashfield, said the bill erodes the ability of cities and towns to regulate their land.

Dodson said two wind farms are proposed in his town - one that would install three turbines, another that would install five to ten turbines up to 425 feet tall.

"Each industry sees itself as the savior of the environment, but we don't think that one of the core elements of

Massachusetts democracy should be taken away regardless of how beneficial the industry is," said Dodson, 58. "We think local review makes projects better."

Gov. Deval Patrick, who has pushed to dramatically increase renewable energy use in Massachusetts, including wind power, said the bill is designed to get rid of red tape, not local control.

"It's all local control," Patrick told reporters Tuesday. "What it does is instead of having six or seven different layers of appeal, there are two or three. There is no imposing of a site on a local community by the state."

Patrick pointed to a proposed 20-turbine wind power project in the Western Massachusetts town of Monroe.

The project, which could produce up to 30 megawatts of electricity, was stalled for six years by litigation before a Supreme Judicial Court ruling last week cleared a path for construction of the Hoosac Wind project.

"That's exactly the kind of thing that sends the wrong message," Patrick said.

The Senate has approved its own wind energy siting bill. If the House approves its bill, both versions must be reconciled into a single bill before being sent to Patrick's desk.

ART: PHOTO

PHOTOG: T&G Fike Photo/RICK CINCLAIR

CUTLINE: People sit in the shade to watch as a rotor is installed in May on a new wind turbine behind Narragansett Regional High School in Templeton. Wind turbine projects are also are under way or being discussed in other Central Mass. communities including Lancaster, Douglas, Auburn, Charlton and Worcester.

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Yet another plan on table - Turbine idea meets resistance

July 12, 2010 | Berkshire Eagle, The (Pittsfield, MA)

Author: Scott StaffordBerkshire Eagle Staff | Section: Berkshire | 530 Words

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He said he is concerned about noise and the potential for "ice throws" in the winter. He added that he has seen Internet reports on "low-level frequency interference" allegedly generated by wind turbines that may

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Supporters say wind turbines are quiet and pose no threat to human health and safety, and would help defray the local need for electricity generated by fossil fuels.

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"I think it is critical that our country get on an independent energy production pathway to reduce the huge risk connected with continuing to use oil as our primary energy source," Van Peterson said. "And this one turbine will generate enough energy to power the entire town of Florida."

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He said the energy produced would be sold to nearby commercial users at a rate below retail rates charged by electric utilities.

Because most commercial wind projects typically involve a number of wind turbines on one site, his one-turbine plan is a newly developed business model, he said.

"And if it works, you'll see a bump in green energy development," landoli said. The Board of Selectmen discussed the project at a special permit hearing in June and at a board meeting earlier this week. They are scheduled to discuss it again during a meeting July 20.

If town leaders approve the special permit, the developer would be close to moving ahead with the project, according to landoli.

"Once we get the special permit and the appeal period expires, we will begin work the next day," landoli said.

Construction would take four to six months, and landoli hopes to have the turbine in operation by the end of the first quarter 2011.

To reach Scott Stafford: sstafford@berkshireeagle.com, or (413) 496-6241.

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Making progress on wind

July 12, 2010 | Berkshire Eagle, The (Pittsfield, MA)

Section: Main | 190 Words

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Last week's ruling by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court in favor of the Hoosac Wind project is welcome but long overdue, coming after nearly six years of appeals and lawsuits. The Wind Siting Reform Act, which goes before the House Tuesday, is designed to eliminate unnecessary red tape while maintaining needed regulations, and should become law.

The 30-megawatt wind farm proposed for Florida and Monroe was finally approved by a Department of Environmental Protection commissioner in 2007 but was tied up by appeals involving stream- crossing culverts. Though the DEP's decision was sound and problems with the culverts can be easily resolved, it took years to get to this point. The Wind Siting Act takes environmental concerns seriously and provides local input while making it more difficult for projects to be delayed by stalling tactics. The bill has passed the Senate with a loose definition of "local" input that should be tightened in the House.

While no energy source is without drawbacks, wind projects can reduce our dependence on sources like coal and oil whose environmental drawbacks are severe. Appropriate wind projects should be encouraged, not tied in knots.

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Last challenge loses in court

July 12, 2010 | Berkshire Eagle, The (Pittsfield, MA)

Author: Scott StaffordBerkshire Eagle Staff Section: Berkshire 360 Words

Page: B01 OpenURL Link

FLORIDA - Now that a court challenge is over, town and company officials anticipate the beginning of work soon on access roads to the sites for 20 wind turbines in Florida and Monroe, even though the estimated cost of the project has more than doubled during protracted legal wrangling.

The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court on Tuesday ruled against the last legal challenge to the Hoosac Wind project.

"This development clears us to move forward with the finer details," said Paul Copleman, a spokesman for Iberdrola Renewables, which owns New England Wind LLC, the developer of the project. "The goal is

start construction this year, and have the turbines operating in 2011."

He said that during the six-year legal battle, the cost of the project soared past the former estimate of \$45 million to more than \$100 million.

Town officials also expected to be working on the project soon.

"We still have a lot of work to do, like negotiating the [payment in lieu of taxes] agreement, and reviewing plans," said Christine Dobbert, Florida town administrator. "[The developers] are hoping for a start in September, and we are optimistic that the project will move forward quickly."

The 30- megawatt wind farm includes 20 turbines to be built on Bakke Mountain in Florida and Crum Hill in Monroe. The 20 General Electric 1.5- megawatt wind turbines have the capacity to power 9,000 homes.

Dobbert said that in the early stages of construction a garage would be built, intersections adapted and turnarounds built to handle the transport of heavy equipment through town and into the turbine sites.

Copleman said that there is also a significant amount of "geo-technical" and engineering work to be completed in preparation for construction.

The project includes two gravel access roads to the ridgelines that would house the turbines, one of which would cross 12 streams.

In 2004, a group of nearby residents and the local environmental group Green Berkshires sued, later seeking review of a decision that the project complied with the Wetlands Protection Act.

Tuesday, the Supreme Judicial Court found that a DEP commissioner's decision approving the project in 2007 was supported by substantial evidence.

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• Citation (aglc Style)



Wind project proposal draws ire

July 12, 2010 | North Adams Transcript (MA) Author: Scott StaffordNew England Newspapers| Section: News| 500 Words Page: A03 OpenURL Link

FLORIDA - While the sixyear legal storm over the Hoosac Wind project may have blown over, a new wind power dust-up is stirring on Florida Mountain.

A developer has proposed erecting a single wind turbine off Moores Road on private land. The proposal generated a 43-signature petition against the project from some nearby residents and others.

Opponents cite noise and what they described as potential health threats the turbine could cause.

"I hope we can stop this thing from going up," said Mike Fairneny, a 25-year homeowner on Moores Road. "This is a commercial wind turbine they're trying to put in a small residential area. It would degrade my standard of living and disrupt my pursuit of happiness. It would change my life."

Fairneny said he has seen Internet reports on "low-level frequency interference" allegedly generated by wind turbines that may cause a variety of maladies to humans.

Supporters say wind turbines are quiet, pose no threat to human health and safety and would help defray the local need for electricity generated by fossil fuels.

Margo Van Peterson, a Moores Road resident who would lease a small part of her 50-acre parcel to the wind project, said she is happy to be a part of the effort to rid the nation of its dependence on oil, especially after what has happened in the Gulf of Mexico.

"I think it is critical that our country get on an independent energy production pathway to reduce the huge risk connected with continuing to use oil as our primary energy source," Van Peterson said. "And this one turbine will generate enough energy to power the entire town of Florida."

She questioned the allegations of any health risk allegedly caused by inaudible low-frequency noise from a wind turbine.

"We should not base our actions on unsubstantiated Internet rumors - I question the validity of any so-called report," she said.

Dean landoli, a partner in Quabbin Wind LLC, the developer, said the more than \$3 million project would involve one General Electric 1.5-megawatt turbine located 916 feet away from the nearest structure and 1,530 feet from the Whitcomb Summit Motel. Its height would be 339 feet.

landoli said the energy produced would be sold to nearby commercial users at a rate below retail rates charged by electric utilities.

Because most commercial wind projects typically involve a number of wind turbines on one site, his one-turbine plan is a newly developed business model, he said.

"And if it works, you'll see a bump in green energy development," he said. The Selectmen discussed the project at a special-permit hearing in June and at a board meeting earlier this week. They are scheduled to discuss it again during a meeting on July 20.

If town leaders approve the special permit, the developer would be close to moving ahead with the project, according to landoli.

"Once we get the special permit and the appeal period expires, we will begin work the next day," he said.

Construction would take four to six months, and landoli hopes to have the turbine in operation by the end of the first quarter of 2011.

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Work on wind turbine access roads to begin soon

July 10, 2010 | North Adams Transcript (MA)

Author: Scott StaffordNew England Newspapers | Section: News | 351 Words

Page: A03 OpenURL Link

FLORIDA - Now that the court challenge is over, town and company officials anticipate the beginning of work soon on access roads to the sites for 20 wind turbines in Florida and Monroe, even though the estimated cost of the project has more than doubled during protracted legal wrangling. The Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court on Tuesday ruled against the last legal challenge to the Hoosac Wind project.

"This development clears us to move forward with the finer details," said Paul Copleman, a spokesman for Iberdrola Renewables, which owns New England Wind LLC, the developer of the project. "The goal is to start construction this year and have the turbines operating in 2011."

Copleman said that during the six-year legal battle, the cost of the project soared past the former estimate of \$45 million to more than \$100 million.

Town officials also expect to be working on the project soon.

"We still have a lot of work to do, like negotiating the [payment in lieu of taxes] agreement and reviewing plans," said Christine Dobbert, Florida town administrator. "They [the developers] are hoping for a start in September, and we are optimistic that the project will move forward quickly."

The 30-megawatt wind farm includes 20 turbines to be built on Bakke Mountain in Florida and Crum Hill in Monroe. The 20 General Electric 1.5-megawatt wind turbines have the capacity to power 9,000 homes.

In early stages of construction, a garage would be built, intersections adapted and turn-arounds designed to handle the transport of heavy equipment through town and into the turbine sites, Dobbert said .

Copleman said there is also a significant amount of "geo-technical" and engineering work to be completed in preparation for construction.

The project includes two gravel access roads to the ridgelines that would house the turbines, one of which would cross 12 streams.

In 2004, a group of nearby residents and the local environmental group Green Berkshires sued, later seeking review of a decision that the project complied with the Wetlands Protection Act.

On Tuesday, the Supreme Judicial Court found that a DEP commissioner's decision approving the project in 2007 was supported by substantial evidence.

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Court allows wind farm

July 8, 2010 | Bennington Banner (VT) Section: Region | 393 Words Page: A05 OpenURL Link

SCOTT STAFFORD

The Berkshire Eagle

FLORIDA, Mass. - Developers of a \$45 million, 30-megawatt wind farm are free to move ahead with construction following a ruling in the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court on Tuesday in favor of the project's wetland permit.

The ruling ends a six-year legal tussle over wetland permitting. The project known as Hoosac Wind, proposed by New England Wind LLC and owned by Iberdrola Renewables, calls for 20 turbines to be built on Bakke Mountain in Florida and Crum Hill in Monroe.

The Supreme Judicial Court found that a DEP commissioner's decision approving the project in 2007 was supported by substantial evidence.

"We are obviously disappointed, but the court has made its final decision," said Eleanor Tillinghast, executive director of Green Berkshires, one of two groups that challenged the project in court. "We have the option to ask the court for reconsideration, but we're not going to do that."

"We are extremely pleased by the Court's decision," said Paul Copleman, a spokesman for Iberdrola Renewables. "The decision affirms our thoughtful and responsive approach to the environment while developing the Hoosac wind farm, as well as the DEP's attentive permitting process that guides our efforts to build it."

He added that the company will soon be moving forward with the project.

Tillinghast noted that officials at Green Berkshires were concerned about the wetland permitting process and what affect it might have on future projects, unrelated to wind power, in wetland areas.

"We don't have any regrets," she added. "We did the right thing."

"It's probably the right ruling," said state Rep. Daniel E. Bosley, D-North Adams. "But we still need to take a careful look at where we put wind mills in the future. We certainly don't want them placed willy nilly all over the place."

The proposed project plans two gravel access roads, one of which would cross 12 intermittent streams.

A group of nearby residents and Green Berkshires sued, seeking review of a decision that the project complied with the Wetlands Protection Act.

Florida residents that approved of the project in a town election and town officials have been anticipating a windfall payment in lieu of taxes from the project's developer when the project is done.

The 1.5-megawatt wind turbines would have a capacity of 30 megawatts - enough to power 9,000 homes.

The proposed project plans two gravel access roads, one of which would cross 12 intermittent streams.

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'Court allows wind farm', *Bennington Banner* (online), 8 Jul 2010 A05 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view? p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/130D661017D70318>



Court allows wind farm - Opponents rejected in their challenge to 20- turbine project

July 7, 2010 | Berkshire Eagle, The (Pittsfield, MA)
Author: Scott StaffordBerkshire Eagle Staff | Section: Main | 380 Words
Page: A01
OpenURL Link

FLORIDA - Developers of a \$45 million, 30megawatt wind farm are free to move ahead with construction following a ruling in the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court on Tuesday in favor of the project's wetland permit.

The ruling ends a six-year legal tussle over wetland permitting. The project known as Hoosac Wind, proposed by New England Wind LLC and owned by Iberdrola Renewables, calls for 20 turbines to be built on Bakke Mountain in Florida and Crum Hill in Monroe.

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The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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Wind project is now free to move forward

July 7, 2010 | North Adams Transcript (MA) Author: Scott StaffordNew England Newspapers | Section: Main | 379 Words Page: A01 OpenURL Link

FLORIDA - Developers of a \$45 million, 30-megawatt wind farm are free to move ahead with construction following a ruling in the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court on Tuesday in favor of the project's wetland permit.

The ruling ends a six-year legal tussle over wetland permitting. The project known as Hoosac Wind, proposed by New England Wind LLC and owned by Iberdrola Renewables, calls for 20 turbines to be built on Bakke Mountain in Florida and Crum Hill in Monroe. The Supreme Judicial Court found that a DEP commissioner's decision approving the project in 2007 was supported by substantial evidence.

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Breeze bill awaits Beacon Hill passage

June 25, 2010 | Taunton Daily Gazette (MA) Author: Myles Maranca; Environment Massachusetts | Section: News | 483 Words Page: A4 OpenURL Link

With summer temperatures quickly descending upon Massachusetts, residents are beginning to turn on their fans and air conditioners to escape the summer heat. Turning on those air conditioners increases power consumption throwing more pollution into the air as our power plants work harder than ever to keep up with demand.

Despite the best efforts of the state and a burgeoning clean tech sector, Massachusetts still gets more than 90 percent of our electricity from dirty and dangerous sources. Also troubling to consumers, our largest source of electrical power is natural gas, a fossil fuel that is extremely vulnerable to price spikes.

A bill in the state legislature would help Massachusetts build more wind, cutting our pollution and stabilizing electricity markets.

As we have learned from the Cape Wind saga, one of the biggest challenges to building wind is siting the turbines. But there are also many examples of responsible onshore projects being unduly delayed. Like the Berkshire Wind project, a 15 megawatt facility that has been in development for over ten years. Its construction has been delayed repeatedly because of restrictive zoning bylaws and lawsuits. Hoosac Wind is another example. It's a 30 megawatt wind farm that has been in permitting for nine years. It was delayed due to appeals on wetland road access, even though the permit was approved by the Department of Environmental Projection and the Berkshire Superior Court. It is still waiting for approval by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court.

Wind power today faces laws and regulations that place it on unequal ground with fossil fuels. The two primary factors that are the cause for this unequal position are; there are no statewide (or national) standards. This lack of standards discourages would be developers who don't know what conditions must be met to develop new facilities.

It can also take years to get the necessary permits and approvals to start a project. This is only a brief sketch of the bureaucratic morass that makes it easier to site a fossil fuel plant than a wind turbine.

The Wind Energy Siting Reform Act, which passed the state senate earlier this year, is awaiting action in the Massachusetts House of Representatives. The bill has been carefully constructed to balance municipal authority and the need to preserve our open spaces and build clean energy. It enjoys the support of the Massachusetts Municipal Association and most environmental groups, including the members of the Massachusetts Climate Coalition. It is estimated that these reforms would decrease the permitting process from up to a decade to at most 18 months and break the seemingly endless cycle of appeals.

No one thing will help solve our dependency on fossil fuels entirely. But wind power is an important part of the solution. Now let's get those turbines turning.

Environment Massachusetts is a statewide, citizen-based environmental advocacy organization.

Myles Maranca, on behalf of Environment Massachusetts, has been advocating for new wind power legislation for the state's clean energy policy.

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MARANCA: Breeze bill awaits Beacon Hill passage

June 25, 2010 | Taunton Daily Gazette (MA) Section: opinion_columnists | 494 Words OpenURL Link

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Windy path

May 27, 2010 | North Adams Transcript (MA) Author: Editorial | Section: Opinion | 394 Words OpenURL Link

Thursday May 27, 2010

It appears Savoy may finally gets its wind farm after the town's Zoning Board of Appeals last week unanimously approved Minuteman Wind's proposal for a five-turbine, 12.5 megawatt facility on West Hill.

However, the proposal still has to go through the town Conservation Commission and meet wetlands standards, which could start a whole new ball game, as the folks in Florida can attest. Six years after the Hoosac Wind project started, they're still waiting for the court process to end so 20 turbines can be built in their town and abutting Monroe. The project stalled after environmental groups appealed the state Department of Environmental Protection's granting of wetlands permits.

So hang on to your hats, Savoy. Minuteman Wind can hope to break ground next spring -- already a delay of over a year without the state or courts even getting involved -- but progress has proved very slow here in the Berkshires.

That is not necessarily a bad thing. The Savoy proposal is one of the few that the Transcript has endorsed, as we believe state officials, chiefly Environmental Secretary Ian Bowles, are a little wind happy -- particularly when it comes to the Berkshires. But there were flaws even with this modest plan, as the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission pointed out in January. Based largely on the commission's comments, Minuteman Wind has amended its plan so that it can transport the huge turbines into town without knocking down buildings or dismantling major intersections.

Building a limited number of wind farms in our region is a fine and noble idea but not one to rush into willy-nilly. The Savoy plan is more logical than most since it will involve fairly minimal disruption of the environment when making its connection to the grid -- much like Jiminy Peak's "Zephyr" turbine when it was built.

Taking the time to build these projects right is far more important than jumping on the "renewables" bandwagon just to say we're doing something -- especially when the benefits are so minimal. The Savoy turbines would provide enough power for roughly 5,000 homes -- at a cost of \$35 million, which will be largely subsidized by the state (as in, your tax dollars).

As time goes on, new technology should emerge to help increase the power generated by turbines, lessen their impact, improve their efficiency and lower the cost. We can afford to wait.

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The prevailing wind

April 28, 2010 | Berkshire Eagle, The (Pittsfield, MA) Author: Editorial | Section: Editorials | 250 Words OpenURL Link

Thursday April 29, 2010

The approval Wednesday of the Cape Wind project, the nation's first offshore wind farm, by Interior Secretary Ken Salazar will help the state and nation catch up to the rest of the world in the production of this clean, renewable energy source. We look forward to the day when environmentally sound Berkshire wind projects can join Cape Wind in this worthy cause.

NIMBYs have knotted up the 130-turbine Nantucket Sound project for nine years and will continue to try to derail it in court, but approval by the environmentally conscious Obama White House is a great argument in the project's favor. Governor Patrick, who is aggressively pushing alternative energy projects, backs Cape Wind, as does Senator John Kerry, who observed yesterday that after years of review and challenges, "every argument, every criticism, every worry was answered."

Denmark installed the world's first offshore wind turbine 20 years ago, and oil-addicted America still trails much of the world in development of wind, solar and nuclear power. Even modest wind projects are parts of a much larger whole.

In Berkshire County, the Savoy wind project appears to have run out of air, the Brodie Mountain project has been blocked in court by a Texas developer putting its own economic interests first, and the Hoosac Wind project in north Berkshire County has been subjected to the same stalling strategy employed against Cape Wind. The Cape Wind project won out on its merits, which is how all wind proposals should be judged.

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