

Polluted planet needs help from wind

June 13, 2006 | Berkshire Eagle, The (Pittsfield, MA) Author: Editorial | Section: Editorials | 377 Words OpenURL Link

Tuesday, June 13 Unless mankind decides to crawl back into the caves from whence it came, the world's people will always need plenty of energy. It's been firmly established that the addiction of the world's industrial nations to fossil fuels is destroying the planet, which means alternative sources must be found and used.

Efforts to build wind power projects in the Berkshires have raised a ruckus, especially in the environmental community. In the Berkshires, long-afflicted by NIMBYISM and its more virulent cousin BANANAism ("Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anything") it's easy enough to find opponents to any project. A foe of the Hoosac Wind project, proposed for Bakke Mountain in Florida, quoted in the second part of Scott Stafford's two-part series examining wind turbine projects in the Berkshires said he was unhappy that the project was in his "back yard." The frankness is admirable, the attitude paralyzing.

Wind power foes have a litany of objections. Wind won't produce massive amounts of energy, they assert, but doesn't every bit of clean energy help? A modest project at Jiminy Peak will provide more than half of the resort's energy needs, with the remainder sold into the public utility power grid. That is a little less fossil fuel energy that will be required.

Opponents don't want the government to subsidize wind project developers, but subsidizing alternative forms of energy is exactly what government should do. Foes conjure up images of huge turbine blades destroying bats, aggravating neighbors with low frequency noises and strobe effects on sunny days, and catapulting ice chunks onto unsuspecting victims three football fields away. These worst-case scenarios are all possible, but compare them to the real-world scenarios offered by coal and oil energy — lakes killed by acid rain, deaths and illnesses caused by air pollution, land ravaged by strip mining, horrific storms fueled by global warming, melting ice caps altering climate patterns.

It's not good enough to oppose ideas without offering alternatives — conservation is a cop-out that avoids the issue of energy sources. If the planet is to be rescued from pollution, wind energy must be on the table — and nuclear energy also. This doesn't mean every Berkshire wind project has merit, but let's go beyond finding reasons to oppose them and find reasons to support them.

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Turbine foes cite a slew of faults

June 11, 2006 | Berkshire Eagle, The (Pittsfield, MA) Author: Scott Stafford, Berkshire Eagle Staff| Section: Headlines | 1739 Words OpenURL Link

Sunday, June 11 This is the second in a two-part series examining wind turbines in the Berkshires. The first story ran in yesterday's paper. Bill Kelton knows that scenic views are the biggest draw for people to visit the town of Florida in Berkshire County, which is why the Florida resident doesn't want any part of the proposed Hoosac Wind project that would place 11 turbines on Bakke Mountain.

"(The turbines) will basically be right in our back yard, although I'm not sure if we'll be able to see them," Kelton said. "I don't want the beauty of (Florida) being ruined by these windmills. Why not put them where they'll not be seen?"

The Hoosac Wind project would construct 20 340-foot-high wind turbines, 11 on Bakke Mountain, and another nine on Crum Hill in Monroe. It is one of four projects that are at least in the development stage in Berkshire County.

The debate over wind turbines in Berkshire County has been anything but calm for more than a decade. Critics of the wind turbines lament a number of negatives, including disruption of ecosystems, added noise, scenic blight, lower property values and physical danger. Proponents, however, refute all those claims and promote turbines as a possible solution for a country that is looking for answers to an energy crisis.

"Our energy consumption is continuing to grow at a time when we're changing our climate," said Nancy Nylen, associate director of the Center for Ecological Technology (CET) based in Pittsfield. "We need to reduce our usage and change how we produce our energy. I look at the wind turbines — they're large and graceful and quietly generating electricity — and I wonder, 'How did we choose coal over this?' "

"Politically, to be green is very much in favor these days," said Eleanor Tillinghast of Green Berkshires. "But wind turbines, in my view, are a bothersome solution to a real problem that it will not solve."

According to Green Berkshires, the negative impact on the environment results when roads are built or enhanced to transport the turbines to the site, and from the turning of the blades once in operation. The construction of roads and foundations for the turbines requires the removal of trees and affects wetlands and natural drainage of the area, Tillinghast said.

Nylen agreed that there should be great care taken when locating wind projects, and every effort taken to minimize the impact to nearby ecosystems. She added that, once the massive equipment is on site, much of the temporary roadways used to bring it in would be deconstructed and allowed to revegetate.

Once completed, Tillinghast noted, there is also a potential danger to birds and bats whose flight path could carry them into the turbine blades.

Wind farms on the coast of California have had to reduce turbine use to cut down on the number of bird kills, and in the Southeast, they have been shown to result in the deaths of hundreds of bats.

Since identifying those impacts, developers have been more aggressive about locating wind farms away from bat and bird nesting areas and migratory paths, Nylen said. "We've seen no bird kills at Searsburg at all," she said.

» Wind turbine projects in the Berkshires There are two Berkshire wind turbine projects under way:

At Jiminy Peak, a \$4 million project to construct a 375-foot-high 1.5-megawatt wind turbine near the summit, at 2,380 feet above sea level, is scheduled for completion in midsummer 2007. According to Betsy Strickler, Jiminy Peak spokeswoman, projections show the wind turbine will power 60 percent to 65 percent of the resort's winter power needs, and during the summer, about 75 percent of the power needs, with any excess being sold into the public utility power grid.

On Brodie Mountain, construction is already under way on the roadway and foundations for 10 340-foot-high, 1.5 megawatt wind turbines. Barring substantial weather or equipment delivery delays, Berkshire Wind Power officials hope to see the turbines erected and generating power by the end of the year. If working at their rated capacity, which takes into account erratic wind patterns, the wind farm should generate enough power for 5,000 households. Company officials call the Brodie Mountain project "the first commercial utility-scale wind power facility in Massachusetts."

There are two other Berkshire County projects in various stages of development:

The Hoosac Wind project would construct 20 340-foot-high wind turbines, 11 on Bakke Mountain in Florida and nine on Crum Hill in Monroe. Scheduled for completion in 2007, the 1.5- megawatt turbines would generate enough electricity to power 10,000 households. This project is waiting for the resolution of an appeal of its allowable impact to wetlands caused by roadway construction.

In Savoy, the Minuteman Wind project has proposed five 420-foot-high wind turbines on a 293-acre parcel on West Hill currently used for logging. This proposal, which also calls for completion in 2007, would generate enough electricity to power 2,500 homes. It will soon be under consideration for a special-use permit by the Savoy Zoning Board of Appeals, which will seek a recommendation from the Planning Board.

If all four projects are completed, a total of 36 wind turbines will generate enough power for 17,500 households, based on American Wind Energy Association averages, and most of one ski resort, in a county where there are — according to the 2000 U.S. Census — 56,000 homes.

Other disturbances

Then there is the question of noise pollution and scenic impact.

Opponents claim that the noise created by the turning blades registers on four levels: tonal, broadband, impulsive and low frequency. The low-frequency noise has been cited by neighbors of existing wind farms in other parts of the world as the most disturbing.

"Low frequency is the one that has been the most bothersome to people and travels the greatest distance," Tillinghast noted.

Nylen said that, when she gets close to the towers, "you can hear them, but they're not very loud at all. You can talk in normal tones. I have not personally seen any places where you can hear them one or two miles away. I know the Searsburg (Vermont) towers are quiet, and the newer equipment and technology is even quieter."

The red lights mounted on the towers also have been cited as distracting to wind farm neighbors at night, but perhaps the worst visual impact is the strobe effect of the shadow of the moving fan blades passing over windows of homes on a sunny day, according to documentation provided by Green Berkshires.

Nylen said the strobe effect isn't likely to have an effect here because the terrain and vegetation would shelter

most nearby structures.

Some also view the wind towers as an ugly blight in an otherwise scenic area and claim that property values nearby will be adversely affected.

"These turbines would be on some of the highest points in Massachusetts," Tillinghast said. "They will be very visible. Before we destroy what makes our community unique, we should explore other options and put our subsidies into things that conserve energy."

Supporters say wind turbines are more attractive than power lines and utility poles. "It's really in the eye of the beholder," said Nylen. "In fact, some people go out of their way to see them."

William R. Wilson Jr., president and CEO of the Berkshire Visitors Bureau, said that the few wind farms proposed for the county won't have any effect on tourism.

"Whether one finds them visually ugly or attractive is totally up to personal taste," he said. "But they are not tourist attractions, and they are not going to prevent tourists from coming to the Berkshires, either."

One project, he added, would actually enhance tourism. "The Jiminy Peak project, from a tourism point of view, is essential to help them provide their product. It's not highly visible, it is functional, and it contributes to the tourism infrastructure. I applicate them for doing that."

Then, say opponents, there is the physical danger to those near the wind turbines. During the winter storms, when ice can form on the towers, there is a potential for chunks of ice being thrown from the spinning blades up to 1,000 feet away. There is also a danger posed by defective blades that can crack and fly off the turbines, or defective towers that can collapse. Turbine fires and lightning strikes also can cause damage to the turbines.

Ice in the winter poses little risk because few people are outdoors near high-elevation wind farms, note project supporters. And defective equipment is a statistical rarity, Nylen said.

She agreed, however, that lightning strikes can be an issue and are under study for preventive measures.

Residents weigh in

The debate even extends to residents near the projects. Although Tilden, of Florida, opposes the idea, others have shown support.

Thomas Cochran and his wife, Meredith, residents of Hancock, are leasing property to the Berkshire Wind Project on Brodie Mountain. Nine years ago, when the project was first proposed, Cochran said that they had concerns about the noise and the scenic impact. So they went to Searsburg to see the wind farm there.

"It was seeing the actual wind towers there that sold us on the benignness of the whole thing," Cochran recalled.

"They just sat there and generated this presence, like a kinetic sculpture. They were certainly more alive than mere cell phone towers, and they stood for something that we wholeheartedly embrace, which, of course, is clean energy."

According to Don McCauley, president of Minuteman Wind LLC in Waltham, wind farms are large, difficult projects that provide plenty of headaches and obstacles and take years to complete, but in the end are a small step in the right direction.

"There are an immense amount of moving pieces and intricacies involved with it, but it produces power quietly and elegantly without fossil fuels, which is a good thing," McCauley said.

The power generated by wind farms, although sold to commercial utilities to serve a variety of areas, actually will

flow to the location of power usage that is physically closest to the point of power generation. And for some, the mere concept of electricity coming from the Berkshire winds through the power lines and into their homes is also a source of comfort and pride.

"It would be delightful to know that we are empowered by the wind," Cochran said. "And it would also be delightful to know that people who have vehemently opposed this (Brodie Mountain) project will also reap their power from the wind."

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Generating pros and cons of turbines

June 10, 2006 | Berkshire Eagle, The (Pittsfield, MA) Author: Scott Stafford, Berkshire Eagle Staff| Section: Headlines Top Story| 809 Words OpenURL Link

Saturday, June 10 This is the first in a two-part series examining wind turbines in the Berkshires. The second story will be in tomorrow's paper. When the winds blow through the Berkshires, the mountains seem alive with motion.

That power to create and sustain motion is a force that some want to harness to generate local electricity. Other than the Massachusetts coastline, Western Massachusetts is the only other part of the state that has potential for wind power because it has some of the highest elevations.

There aren't many possible locations for wind farms in the Berkshires, however, because there also must be power transmission lines nearby to make it feasible.

The few sites that present opportunities have attracted wind power development projects. Two proposals have been turned down. But two others are under construction and two more are proposed.

If all four projects are completed, a total of 36 wind turbines will generate enough power for 17,500 households, based on American Wind Energy Association averages, and most of one ski resort, in a county where there are — according to the 2000 U.S. Census — 56,000 homes.

Some decry the effort to develop local wind power plants, fearing collateral effects they claim would result from the erection and use of wind turbines in North Berkshire.

Two Berkshire wind turbine projects are under way:

At Jiminy Peak, a \$4 million project to construct a 375-foot-high General Electric Co. 1.5-megawatt wind turbine near the summit, at 2,380 feet above sea level, is scheduled for completion in midsummer 2007. According to Betsy Strickler, Jiminy Peak spokeswoman, projections show that the wind turbine will power 60 percent to 65 percent of the resort's winter power needs, and about 75 percent of the power needs during the summer, with any excess being sold into the public utility power grid.

On Brodie Mountain, construction is already under way on the roadway and foundations for 10 340-foot-high GE 1.5 megawatt wind turbines. Barring substantial weather or equipment delivery delays, Berkshire Wind Power officials hope to see the turbines erected and generating power by the end of the year. If working at their rated capacity, which takes into account erratic wind patterns, the wind farm should generate enough power for 5,000 households. Company officials call the Brodie Mountain project "the first commercial utility-scale wind power facility in Massachusetts."

Two other Berkshire County projects are in various stages of development:

The Hoosac Wind project would construct 20 340-foot-high wind turbines, 11 on Bakke Mountain in Florida and nine on Crum Hill in Monroe. Scheduled for completion in 2007, the 1.5-megawatt GE turbines would generate enough electricity to power 10,000 households. This project is waiting for the resolution of an appeal of its allowable impact to wetlands caused by roadway construction.

In Savoy, the Minuteman Wind project has proposed five 420-foot-high wind turbines on a 293-acre parcel on West Hill currently used for logging. This proposal, which also calls for completion in 2007, would generate enough electricity to power 2,500 homes. It will soon be under consideration for a special-use permit by the Zoning Board of Appeals, which will seek a recommendation from the Planning Board.

Opponents of these wind power projects, including Green Berkshires (a group that opposes all wind power proposals in the county), contend that wind power projects generate such low levels of power that they do not justify the cost and environmental impact, and that the government subsidies, which enhance profitability of such projects, counteract any positive economic effect that might result by replacing electricity generated by fossil fuels.

Wind power supporters note that the environmental issues from wind turbines are infinitesimal when compared with other power-generating facilities such as coal or nuclear, and that subsidies to wind projects are dwarfed by the huge subsidies provided to more environmentally invasive power plants.

"You could put up 100 wind turbines in Berkshire County, and they would generate less than one percent of the state's energy needs," noted Ellen Tillinghast of Green Berkshires. She said that if every household in the state replaced one incandescent light bulb with a compact fluorescent light bulb, more energy would be conserved than would be generated by the Brodie and Hoosac projects combined.

Nancy Nylen, associate director of the Center for Ecological Technology based in Pittsfield, said that energy conservation is essential to the goals of the center and goes hand in hand with the use of wind power.

She noted that, although Green Berkshires is comparing the wind generation with statewide usage, "what we've seen is that the wind turbine proposals would contribute a considerable amount of power to local use. We have to look at local contribution rather than the whole statewide power grid."

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Tax agreement for turbines in the making

June 9, 2006 | Berkshire Eagle, The (Pittsfield, MA) Author: Patrick G. Rheaume, Berkshire Eagle Staff | Section: Local | 265 Words OpenURL Link

Friday, June 09 FLORIDA — The town has selected representatives to negotiate a long-term tax agreement with PPM Energy, which plans to build 20 wind turbines on Bakke Mountain and Crum Hill.

An agreement would determine "full and fair tax value" of the property for a certain number of years, providing certainty about the town's revenue and avoiding costly reassessment disputes every three years.

During a meeting of the Board of Selectmen on Monday night, member Neil Oleson was selected as a principal representative and member Raymond W. Burdick as an alternate. Assessor Margo Van Peterson and Town Administrator Susan Brown were also chosen as principal representatives, and Assessor Doris Lewis was named an alternate.

Energy consultant to come

During the next few months, the town will hire an energy consultant for advice during the negotiations. The company might pay the town a fixed assessment every year or an amount determined by a formula that considers revenue from the turbines.

Any agreement would require approval from voters at a town meeting and from the state Department of Revenue, and a special permit from the state Legislature.

Will generate 30 megawatts

PPM Energy, a British company, purchased the \$40 million Hoosac Wind LLC in January from enXco. The wind turbines would generate an estimated 30 megawatts of electricity and are expected to start operating in 2007.

The state Department of Environmental Protection approved the turbines in November 2004, but Green Berkshires, an environmental organization opposed to the project, has filed an appeal currently under consideration by the state Division of Administrative Law Appeals.

Monroe also plans to negotiate a tax agreement with the company.

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Voters approve tax deal

May 6, 2006 | Berkshire Eagle, The (Pittsfield, MA) Author: Patrick G. Rheaume, Berkshire Eagle Staff| Section: Headlines | 374 Words OpenURL Link

Saturday, May 06 FLORIDA — Voters authorized the town to negotiate a payment in lieu of taxes with PPM Energy, which has permits to build 20 wind turbines on Bakke Mountain and Crum Hill here and in Monroe.

The tax deal was approved during a special town meeting last night.

A long-term tax agreement would provide certainty about the town's revenue and the company's obligations and would avoid a costly reassessment dispute every three years, said James B. Art, special counsel for both towns.

"This might be advantageous to the town," said Raymond W. Burdick, chairman of the Board of Selectmen. "Maybe for them, too."

If the state Legislature provides a special permit, officials from both towns, including the selectmen and assessors, PPM Energy, attorneys and expert appraisers, will develop an agreement that would need approval from voters at a town meeting and from the state Department of Revenue. Voters in Monroe have already authorized the town to start negotiations.

Art said an agreement would determine the "full and fair tax value" of the property for a certain number of years, possibly for decades, the payments being either a fixed number or the result of a formula. The deal wouldn't necessarily increase tax revenues from the property, he said, but would reduce the town's revaluation costs and benefit long-range financial planning.

PPM Energy purchased the \$40 million Hoosac Wind LLC in January from enXco. The proposed wind turbines, which would generate an estimated 30 megawatts of power, are expected to start operating in 2007.

The state Division of Administrative Law Appeals has been considering an appeal filed by Green Berkshires, a group that opposes the project, over the permit for the wind turbines issued by the Department of Environmental Protection in November 2004.

The unanimous vote to authorize negotiations in Florida might indicate an increasing acceptance of wind energy proposals in North Berkshire. During Hancock's annual town meeting Tuesday, a zoning bylaw that would have restricted the height of wind turbines didn't receive the necessary two-thirds majority.

Florida's annual town meeting hasn't been scheduled; the Selectmen will choose a date on Monday. On May 1, voters re-elected Burdick, Moderator Steven W. Brown and Town Clerk Lisa H. Brown, among other town officials.

Patrick G. Rheaume can be reached at prheaume@berkshireeagle.com or at (413) 664-4995.

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Meeting on Savoy wind project to be held May 10

April 27, 2006 | North Adams Transcript (MA) Author: Shaw Israel Izikson, North Adams Transcript Section: Local 283 Words OpenURL Link

Thursday, April 27 SAVOY — An informational meeting on the proposed Minuteman Wind power project will be held on Wednesday, May 10, at 7 p.m at the Savoy Fire Station.

According to Minuteman Wind LLC President Donald McCauley, the company is proposing to build five turbines mounted on 80-meter monopole towers on top of West Hill.

"We expect to generate four million megawatt hours over the course of a year," he said. "We expect to sell the power to the wholesale power grid in New England, and we think it will be a benefit to the residents of Savoy."

The company received a \$200,000 predevelopment loan last year from Renewable Energy Trust, a division of the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative. Marybeth Campbell, public education coordinator for the trust, said MTC's decision to fund the loan was based on the possible direct economic benefits it would bring to the state and town.

"Projects such as this can have direct economic benefits to a Massachusetts community and landowners," she said.
"MTC supports projects that stimulate renewable energy facility development in New England."

McCauley said the company has not started the permitting process, and that it was still working on the preliminary designs.

"We're hopefull to start in the fall of 2007," he said. "We don't know what the total project cost will be; it depends a lot on other marketplace conditions."

The proposed project would be built on a 293-acre site on West Hill owned by Diane and Harold Malloy, who run a logging operation there.

It is one of a number of wind-power projects that are in the planning stages in the Berkshire region. Others include the Hoosac Wind Power project in Florida and Monroe and the Berkshire Wind Power project in Hancock.

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Gaping hole in inspection process

April 10, 2006 | Berkshire Eagle, The (Pittsfield, MA) Author: Editorial | Section: Editorials | 275 Words OpenURL Link

Monday, April 10 The tragic collapse last week of a work platform on a downtown Boston construction site revealed gaping holes in the inspection process, such as it is, at three levels of government. A Boston Globe investigation found that the state stopped inspecting construction sites 12 years ago following a court ruling that this was the responsibility of the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), but OSHA has been underfunded for years. The city of Boston didn't see inspecting scaffolding as its duty. Berkshire County doesn't have the size and number of construction projects that Boston does, but the Colonial renovation contains smaller but similar platforms to those in use at the Boston site, so they do occur. The court's puzzling ruling aside, Beacon Hill should find a way to bring the state back into the inspection process.

Senate wind trumps windmills

When Congress tailors laws to minutely specific issues, with the Terri Schiavo intrusion the best example, it can be assumed that it is up to no good. Such is the case with a Senate measure enabling Governor Romney or his successor to stop the Cape Wind Associates wind farm project for Nantucket Sound. The project is in federal waters, and the only explanation for the Senate decision to give the governor such authority is the opposition to the project by the governor, the state's political leaders, and wealthy residents of the Cape, Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard. This underhanded process short-circuits an ongoing environmental review and sets a bad precedent for other wind turbine projects, such as the proposed Hoosac Wind project in North Berkshire County, that could provide needed energy options. No wonder voters are cynical.

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Countering statement on wind farm tax status

April 7, 2006 | North Adams Transcript (MA) Author: Letters | Section: Opinion | 162 Words OpenURL Link

Friday, April 7 To the editor:

I am writing in response to a quote attributed to Eleanor Tillinghast in the Monday April 3 article entitled "Hancock eyes limits on heights."

In the quote, Tillinghast states: "Wind turbines do not produce any tax revenues"

I would like to point out that, while this is true, according to M.G.L. c59, sec.5,cl.45, for wind turbines that are used as a primary or auxiliary power system for the real estate upon which they are located, (in other words privately owned for private/personal use) this does not apply to wind turbines that are used for the commercial generation of electricity, for example Hoosac Wind Project proposed for the towns of Florida and Monroe.

In File No. 99-753, Re: Taxation of Windmill Farm, the Massachusetts Department of Revenue offers a written determination stating "in the case of a commercial generator of electricity for general distribution ... the wind power exemption does not apply."

Susan L. Brown

Town Administrator

Town of Florida

April 3

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Bylaw limiting height of Hancock towers discussed

April 6, 2006 | North Adams Transcript (MA) Author: Christopher Marcisz, The Berkshire Eagle | Section: Local | 527 Words OpenURL Link

Thursday, April 6 HANCOCK — About 30 town residents debated the merit of limiting the height of cell phone towers and wind turbines as one way to keep town growth in check.

Monday night's public hearing before the Planning Board was a precursor to the annual Town Meeting in May, when voters will consider a bylaw limiting the structures to 120 feet.

If adopted, the bylaw would not affect the two existing wind power projects: Berkshire Wind LLC's plan to build 11 turbines on Brodie Mountain and Jiminy Peak Mountain Resort's effort to put up a 320-foot turbine near its ski area.

Concerns about growth in town

Planning Board Chairwoman Joan Burdick said the proposal responds to concerns about growth in town. She noted that much of the property along Brodie Mountain Road is being bought, and that there needs to be firmer controls on development.

"Hancock doesn't look a thing like I'd have thought 30 years ago," she said.

Some residents agreed with the intentions of the bylaw, but raised concerns about whether it would stand up to litigation, considering case law on zoning restrictions for private property based on aesthetics.

Others said the town should take its chances.

"We cannot live by a fear of litigation, or we'd never leave our front doors," one woman said.

Resident Andre Rambaud suggested regional planners could help craft a more comprehensive set of regulations to restrict "excessive development."

Burdick replied that she did not think regional planners had been much help in the past, especially when wind turbines were first proposed.

"I feel they should have come here when they were planning these," she said.

Attorney Donald Dubendorf said the bylaw — in particular its 120-foot height restriction — would be stronger with more input.

"It's hard to come to a number without some input from industry or experts," he said, adding that "you're not regulating this in ways to get what you're looking for."

Discussion later turned to the relative merits of wind power in general, a topic of growing interest.

Another major wind project — the 20-turbine Hoosac Wind project proposed for Florida and Monroe — is working its way through the appeals process.

Merits of wind power

Jiminy Peak owner Brian Fairbank said he was initially undecided about the Hoosac Wind project. But then he was

swayed by the effects of fossil fuels and the rising cost of electricity. In announcing his plan for a wind turbine at Jiminy Peak last fall, Fairbank said the resort pays about \$948,421 in utility costs each year.

Fairbank said encouraging alternatives to fossil fuels is essential. The town, he said, should be careful when it crafts rules dictating how they come to the area.

"We owe it to future generations to look at other forms of energy," he said. "And fortunately or unfortunately, they're in our backyard."

Resident Bob Ronnow said pressure to build wind turbines in Massachusetts will grow in coming years. A likely place for many wind turbines would be offshore, but he said the powerful opposition to the Cape Wind project suggests that developers may look to the Berkshire Hills to build.

"I think the Planning Board is doing the right thing," he said.

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Tower bylaw discussed

April 5, 2006 | Berkshire Eagle, The (Pittsfield, MA)

Author: Christopher Marcisz, Berkshire Eagle Staff | Section: Local | 518 Words

OpenURL Link

Wednesday, April 05 HANCOCK — About 30 town residents debated the merit of limiting the height of cell phone towers and wind turbines as one way to keep town growth in check.

Monday night's public hearing before the Planning Board was a precursor to the annual Town Meeting in May, when voters will consider a bylaw limiting the structures to 120 feet.

If adopted, the bylaw would not affect the two existing wind power projects: Berkshire Wind LLC's plan to build 11 turbines on Brodie Mountain and Jiminy Peak Mountain Resort's effort to put up a 320-foot turbine near its ski area.

Planning Board Chairwoman Joan Burdick said the proposal responds to concerns about growth in town. She noted that much of the property along Brodie Mountain Road is being bought, and that there needs to be firmer controls on development.

"Hancock doesn't look a thing like I'd have thought 30 years ago," she said.

Some residents agreed with the intentions of the bylaw, but raised concerns about whether it would stand up to litigation, considering case law on zoning restrictions for private property based on aesthetics.

Others said the town should take its chances.

"We cannot live by a fear of litigation, or we'd never leave our front doors," one woman said.

Resident Andre Rambaud suggested regional planners could help craft a more comprehensive set of regulations to restrict "excessive development."

Burdick replied that she did not think regional planners had been much help in the past, especially when wind turbines were first proposed.

"I feel they should have come here when they were planning these," she said.

Attorney Donald Dubendorf said the bylaw — in particular its 120-foot height restriction — would be stronger with more input.

"It's hard to come to a number without some input from industry or experts," he said, adding that "you're not regulating this in ways to get what you're looking for."

Discussion later turned to the relative merits of wind power in general, a topic of growing interest.

Another major wind project — the 20-turbine Hoosac Wind project proposed for Florida and Monroe — is working its way through the appeals process.

Jiminy Peak owner Brian Fairbank said he was initially undecided about the Hoosac Wind project. But then he was swayed the effects of fossil fuels and the rising cost of electricity. In announcing his plan for a wind turbine at Jiminy Peak last fall, Fairbank said the resort pays about \$948,421 in utility costs each year.

Fairbank said encouraging alternatives to fossil fuels is essential. The town, he said, should be careful when it crafts

rules dictating how they come to the area.

"We owe it to future generations to look at other forms of energy," he said. "And fortunately or unfortunately, they're in our backyard."

Resident Bob Ronnow said pressure to build wind turbines in Massachusetts will grow in coming years. A likely place for many wind turbines would be offshore, but he said the powerful opposition to the Cape Wind project suggests that developers may look to the Berkshire Hills to build.

"I think the Planning Board is doing the right thing," he said.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Christopher Marcisz, Berkshire Eagle Staff, 'Tower bylaw discussed', *Berkshire Eagle, The* (online), 5 Apr 2006 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/110D0B4D23AE8D50



Hancock eyes limits on height

April 3, 2006 | North Adams Transcript (MA)

Author: Shaw Israel Izikson, North Adams Transcript Section: Local \mid 370 Words

OpenURL Link

Monday, April 3 HANCOCK — The Planning Board will hold a public hearing tonight at 7 at Town Hall on a proposed zoning amendment that would limit the height of future cellular phone towers and wind turbines.

The proposed bylaw would limit the height of any tower that is built for commercial telecommunications or the commercial generation of electricity to 120 feet in height.

The proposal comes several months after the town authorized wind-turbine projects for Jiminy Peak Ski Resort and Berkshire Wind LLC.

The Jiminy Peak project, which was announced in November, will involve a 320-foot wind turbine near the resort that would provide 1 megawatt of electricity for the resort's use.

The Berkshire Wind Power project involves 10 turbines atop Brodie Mountain that will provide 15 megawatts of electricity. The Massachusetts Municipal Wholesale Electric Co. announced in December that it would be purchasing power from the project.

The projects would not be affected by the amendment.

Planning Board Chairwoman Joan Burdick declined to comment on the proposal.

"I have nothing to say; it's all being said in the legal notice," she said.

Eleanor Tillinghast, spokeswoman for the nonprofit environmental group Green Berkshires and a Great Barrington resident, said the amendment would prohibit construction of any further wind turbines on top of Brodie Mountain.

"They have turbines that are 120 feet tall, but those are for personal or farm use," she said. "They can be very appropriate if a farmer needs to power their operations, but it's too small for commercial operations."

Town benefits?

She said the bylaw would benefit the town in terms of tax revenues.

"Wind turbines do not produce any tax revenues, and they depreciate surrounding property values," she said. "Wind turbines in residential developments are absolutely incompatible."

There are several wind power projects that are currently in the development stages in the Berkshire area, including the Hoosac Wind project, which is being developed by PPM Energy.

The \$40 million project, which has been in he planning stages since 2003, would construct 11 wind turbines on top of Bakke Mountain in Florida and nine on Crum Hill in Monroe.

The project has been at a standstill while the state Division of Administrative Law Appeals hears an appeal by Green Berkshires on wetlands concerns.

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Shaw Israel Izikson, North Adams Transcript, 'Hancock eyes limits on height', *North Adams Transcript* (online), 3 Apr 2006 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/110C625EC5BCCFA0



Hitting the lottery

March 31, 2006 | Berkshire Eagle, The (Pittsfield, MA) Author: Editorial | Section: Editorials | 305 Words

OpenURL Link

Friday, March 31 The decision of House Speaker Salvatore F. DiMasi to lift a three-year-old cap on the amount of aid available to communities from the state lottery is good news for the Berkshires' financially beleaguered cities and towns. Governor Mitt Romney had proposed lifting the cap and with the Senate likely to follow the House's lead, Pittsfield will be looking at \$1.8 million more in funds than a year ago and North Adams will receive an increase of just under \$900,000. North Adams Mayor John Barrett III proposes using the funds for property tax relief, and a good argument could be made to use some of the money for projects that have a long-term benefit for communities seeking to build the tax base. If the release of the extra lottery money was timed to give a boost to a bill legalizing slot machines that appears dead on Beacon Hill, it probably won't do so. The state and its communities are so addicted to lottery money, much of it taken from the pockets of the poor, it will never be able to go cold turkey. Addiction to yet another form of gambling should be avoided.

Wind power must be in energy mix

The Massachusetts Audubon Society's conditional endorsement of the 130-turbine Cape Wind power project doesn't have a direct bearing on the 20-turbine Hoosac Wind project proposed for Florida and Monroe, but some of the society's recommendations and views concerning wind projects are worth noting. In terms of Cape Wind, the society recommends creation of an independent panel to analyze relevant data, which would limit agenda-driven turbine-siting debates. A society statement also declared that in light of the need to curb global warming while addressing energy needs, "wind should be tapped as the most successful and readily available of all energy technologies." Any responsible long-term energy plan must include wind power.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Editorial, 'Hitting the lottery', *Berkshire Eagle, The* (online), 31 Mar 2006 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/110B693E773404E0



More debate is in the air

March 30, 2006 | Berkshire Eagle, The (Pittsfield, MA) Author: Christopher Marcisz, Berkshire Eagle Staff | Section: Headlines | 569 Words OpenURL Link

Thursday, March 30 Officials at the Massachusetts Audubon Society said yesterday that, despite this week's decision by the powerful conservation group to conditionally endorse the controversial 130-turbine Cape Wind power project, the group will continue to consider other projects in the state on a case-by-case basis.

That includes other projects in the pipeline, like the 20-turbine Hoosac Wind project proposed for Florida and Monroe. They are also working with the state to create clearly defined guidelines for future projects.

Heidi Ricci, a senior policy specialist at Mass Audubon who has followed the Hoosac Wind project, said each project is different.

"We continue to follow (the Hoosac project) through discussions with agencies, but we're not planning any kind of similar announcement for land-based ones as we did with Cape Wind," she said.

Ricci said the group is participating in a process through the state Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. While still early in the process, she said the talks could eventually lead to some guidance on these projects, if not actual regulations.

"We really need some good, strong state guidance for siting these wind projects so we get the maximum benefit with the minimum environmental impact," she said.

The \$40 million Hoosac Wind project has been in the works since 2001. The 20 turbines could produce up to 30 megawatts of power, and developers hope to begin building in 2007.

The project faces opposition from some Berkshire environmentalists, who have raised concerns about wetlands issues and access roads leading to the hilltop sites. The group Green Berkshires filed an appeal, which is currently before the Division of Administrative Law Appeals in Boston.

No surprise to local environmentalists

Green Berkshires spokeswoman Eleanor Tillinghast said she was not surprised by Mass Audubon's position on the Cape Wind project, noting that it came after five years of intensive study mandated by state and federal regulators.

"I wish we had that kind of research out here," she said. "It is a measure of the difference with which these two projects are being treated."

Ricci said Mass Audubon filed comments on Hoosac Wind in December 2003, and raised concerns similar to those voiced by Green Berkshires. They wanted more study of bird and bat migration patterns at the site, and had some concerns about building roads in a remote area with unfragmented forest.

The developers agreed to some voluntary studies which are still ongoing, and which Ricci said were not as thorough as they would have liked. She added that after the sale there are some concerns about whether PPM Energy — the Oregon-based company which purchased the project from original developer enXco in February — is as committed to them.

Mass Audubon's statement on the Cape Wind suggests its future approach on other projects. They recommend extensive monitoring, along with mitigation procedures for unanticipated consequences and decommissioning of

abandoned turbines. It also calls for the creation of an independent panel to analyze and distribute data, and an independently administered mitigation fund to pay for conservation of bird habitats.

In general, Mass Audubon said in its statement that it clearly supports careful wind power development to decrease the nation's dependence on fossil fuels.

"The consequences of climate warming compel us to increase energy conservation as a first priority," the group said in a statement announcing its position. "To continue to supply our energy needs, wind should be tapped as the most successful and readily available of all renewable energy technologies."

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• Citation (aglc Style)

Christopher Marcisz, Berkshire Eagle Staff, 'More debate is in the air', *Berkshire Eagle, The* (online), 30 Mar 2006 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/110B1586ABDF9CF8



Stricter laws for teen drivers

March 29, 2006 | Berkshire Eagle, The (Pittsfield, MA) Author: Editorial | Section: Editorials | 296 Words

OpenURL Link

Wednesday, March 29 A stunning series of drunken driving incidents led to passage of a tougher state drunken driving law last year, and a long string of accidents involving teenagers, including two recent fatalities in the eastern end of the state, should lead to passage of a stricter teen driving law. A bill expected to reach the House this week calls for an increase in the legal driving age by a year to 17 1/2 and a dramatic increase in the number of hours of on-the-road driving education training. The drop in the number of highway crashes involving junior operators in recent years is irrelevant because the numbers are still too high and the legislation is long overdue. Whatever the downsides are of making young people wait another year to get on the road is more than balanced by providing an extra year for them to mature. A few lives will be saved in the process.

Whither the Hoosac wind project?

A proposal by attorney James B. Art, town counsel for the communities of Monroe and Florida, for a payment in lieu of taxes by PPM Energy, which hopes to put 20 wind towers on Bakke Mountain and Crum Hill, is certainly worth consideration by voters and the state Department of Revenue. This payment would enable the two small towns to avoid lengthy and costly tax evaluation battles every three years, leaving them with just the one-time expense of a wind energy consultant in drawing up the deal. This assumes, of course, that there will be such a wind project. The Oregon-based company made its proposal five years ago and a permit granted nearly 11/2 years ago by the state Department of Environmental Protection is still under review. The permitting process grinds slowly in Massachusetts and it is time for a decision in this case to be reached.

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Editorial, 'Stricter laws for teen drivers', *Berkshire Eagle, The* (online), 29 Mar 2006 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/110AC1486371DE28



Deal would aid wind project

March 28, 2006 | Berkshire Eagle, The (Pittsfield, MA) Author: Patrick G. Rheaume, Berkshire Eagle Staff| Section: Berkshire Eagle | 522 Words OpenURL Link

Tuesday, March 28 FLORIDA — A tax agreement between PPM Energy and the towns of Florida and Monroe could prevent costly disputes about the land used for Hoosac Wind LLC, a proposal for 20 wind turbines on Bakke Mountain and Crum Hill.

Attorney James B. Art, serving as counsel for both towns on the wind project, said a payment in lieu of taxes wouldn't necessarily increase revenues from the property. But he said that the agreement, which could last for a decade or longer, would allow the towns and the company to avoid disagreements over the assessed values every three years.

"All the property associated with this project is going to be taxable, which the developer has acknowledged," Art said. With an agreement, he added, "you're not going to be hiring lawyers and consultants and expert witnesses (to determine the value of the land and the electricity-producing equipment)."

A payment in lieu of taxes would determine the full and fair tax value of the property for a certain number of years, Art said, providing PPM Energy and the towns with certainty about the company's long-term tax obligations.

He recommended that the towns hire a consultant with wind energy experience to help structure the deal.

"There hasn't been a deal like this done in Massachusetts," Art said. "It could serve as a model for this state." Any agreement would depend on complete approval of permits for the wind turbines.

A payment in lieu of taxes would apply to land owned by PPM Energy or leased to the company by the towns but, without special legislation from the state, could not cover lands owned by private individuals, which include some of the parcels where proposed turbines would be located.

Participants at a town meeting would have to vote on a final agreement, which also would need approval from the state Department of Revenue.

The town expects "sizable" payments from the developer, but the annual amounts or tax revenue remains uncertain.

Selectman Neil G. Oleson said the towns should consider the tax payments from wind projects elsewhere and consider other energy companies. "It's another business," he said. "There are enough of them out there to know the value."

PPM Energy, an Oregon-based company, purchased Hoosac Wind in January from enXco, which first proposed the project in 2001. The \$40 million plan to install 20 wind turbines on ridge lines in Florida and Monroe would generate about 30 megawatts of power. Initially expected to start in 2004, the project has been delayed by concerns about negative impacts on the mountains. PPM Energy wants to start operating the wind turbines in 2007.

"There's substantial ground to cover before the turbines are going to be constructed," Art said. The Division of Administrative Law Appeals has been considering an appeal filed by Green Berkshires — a group that opposes the project — of a permit for the wind turbines issued by the Department of Environmental Protection in November 2004.

Both towns have decided to have special town meetings to discuss the negotiation of a payment agreement,

although the exact dates haven't been chosen. The meetings would authorize town representatives — possibly selectmen, assessors or town administrators —to deal with the energy company.

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• Citation (aglc Style)

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Amendment would limit tower heights

March 23, 2006 | Berkshire Eagle, The (Pittsfield, MA) Author: Patrick G. Rheaume, Berkshire Eagle Staff| Section: Headlines | 521 Words OpenURL Link

Thursday, March 23 HANCOCK — A proposed amendment to the town's zoning bylaw would restrict the height of cell phone towers and wind turbines to 120 feet, effectively prohibiting additional commercial wind energy projects.

The amendment would prohibit towers that are built for "commercial telecommunications" or "the commercial generation of electricity" and are more than 120 feet above ground level, measured from the base of the tower.

Previously authorized town permits, which the amendment would not revoke, allow Jiminy Peak Mountain Resort to construct a 320-foot wind turbine near the ski area and Berkshire Wind LLC to build 11 turbines on Brodie Mountain.

Many towns in the state require special permits for wind turbines and have certain restrictions, said Nathaniel Karns, executive director of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. But, he said, "I haven't heard of any that have a flat-out standard (of 120 feet)."

Karns said the height limit would "effectively preclude" commercial wind farms. Nils Bolgen, a program manager for Renewable Energy Trust of the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, agreed. Bolgen, whose organization provides financial support for the development of wind energy, expects the wind turbines on Brodie Mountain to exceed 300 feet.

Joan Burdick, chairwoman of the Planning Board, said the amendments would limit the problems of growth in a community of fewer than 1,000 people.

"The Planning Board is often criticized for not doing enough to protect the town," she said during an interview. "So, we came up with these limits. Hancock is growing."

Burdick added that the amendments would require approval at the upcoming town meeting. She remains uncertain about public opinion on wind turbines, and she said the hearing gives people an opportunity to share their perspectives.

Plans for wind power developments remain controversial throughout Berkshire County.

Supporters have claimed that wind produces clean energy efficiently and inexpensively. Opponents have argued that wind turbines don't create enough power to compensate for their visual effect on scenic ridgelines.

PPM Energy recently purchased the proposed Hoosac Wind project, a \$40 million effort to install 20 wind turbines on ridgelines in Florida and Monroe that would generate about 30 megawatts of power. Concerns about impacts on the hills have moved the anticipated beginning of the project's operations from 2004 to 2007.

In October 2005, the Lenox Select Board voted, three to two, against installing a wind turbine.

Jiminy Peak's turbine, announced in October 2005 and quickly approved by the town, would generate power generated for lighting, chair-lifts and snowmaking.

The board will hold a public hearing on April 3 at 7 p.m. at Town Hall on Route 43. Copies of the proposed amendments are available in the office of the town clerk during regular hours.

Restrictions on the height of cell-phone towers, Karns said, require providers to build more towers to increase

coverage. He said the Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 allows cities and towns to limit the size of these towers, but local governments cannot eliminate them entirely.

Another amendment under consideration by the Planning Board would prohibit houses or apartments more than 50 feet tall, with exceptions for chimneys, antennas, cupolas or similar accessories.

Patrick G. Rheaume can be reached at prheaume@berkshireeagle.com or (413) 664-4995.

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Bylaw amendment would restrict height of towers in Hancock

March 23, 2006 | North Adams Transcript (MA)

Author: Patrick G. Rheaum, Berkshire Eagle | Section: Local | 518 Words

OpenURL Link

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Brodie towers could top 300 feet

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Burdick added that the amendments would require approval at the upcoming town meeting. She remains uncertain about public opinion on wind turbines, and she said the hearing gives people an opportunity to share their perspectives.

Controversial issue

Plans for wind power developments remain controversial throughout Berkshire County.

Supporters have claimed that wind produces clean energy efficiently and inexpensively. Opponents have argued that wind turbines don't create enough power to compensate for their visual effect on scenic ridgelines.

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Ask tough questions on wind power

March 20, 2006 | Berkshire Eagle, The (Pittsfield, MA) Author: Letters | Section: Letters to the Editor | 303 Words

OpenURL Link

Monday, March 20 To the Editor of THE EAGLE:

Stanley Brown's letter to the editor ("Is wind project of no value?," March 12) raises some interesting questions. The information he demands is presented on the Green Berkshires Web site www.greenberkshires.org, with the resources and links to Web sites that have the information. Is information about the details of the financial agreement, or a copy of this public document, between the developer and the town of Florida, available on either of their Web sites?

I have been to several public meetings on the Hoosac Wind project in the town of Florida. I observed people who speak against this project questioned about their expertise and motives. I find this all very disturbing. The siting of multiple huge industrial structures on the Berkshire mountains, structures that are much taller than the Statue of Liberty, is being pushed as "green Power." The pollution credits created by this project will be sold to distant utilities who can burn more dirty coal, and result in less clean air. The economic benefits of the project compared to the economic value of this natural resource is never questioned.

It is a sad legacy for all to see that the Berkshires are a special place where people pay more for electricity to industrialize their mountains, breathe dirtier air, and fuel the growth of air-conditioned cities like Houston and Phoenix with their ever increasing sprawl.

If the good people of Florida would question the developers, the politicians who fast-track this project, the facts, and the integrity of the siting process with this type of intensity instead of attacking anyone who participates in the public process, this project would never be built.

Facts should be presented on the economics of wind power and the industrialization of our "quality of life."

RICHARD A. ZONA

North Adams, March 14, 2006

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Letters, 'Ask tough questions on wind power', *Berkshire Eagle, The* (online), 20 Mar 2006 https://infoweb.newsbank.com/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/1107C9288D16E420



Many costs, few benefits of wind power

March 2, 2006 | Berkshire Eagle, The (Pittsfield, MA) Author: Eleanor Tillinghast| Section: Other Opinions | 1030 Words OpenURL Link

Friday, March 03 MOUNT WASHINGTON

MASSACHUSETTS HAS an ambitious goal for renewable-energy development but no realistic plan or guidelines to reach it. The result is a free-for-all with the state lavishing money on wind-power development in the Berkshires, investors and other states benefiting from the largess, and Berkshire towns and residents left in the dark as to the real consequences for our community, our economy, and our beautiful mountains.

Our state has set a quota for renewable energy that depends upon building hundreds of massive wind turbines in the next four years. Unfortunately, there are only a few places with enough wind: offshore, along the coast, in the Berkshires, and in other states.

There is a proposal to build 130 turbines off the coast of Nantucket, but that is likely to fail because of powerful opponents. A few coastal communities are considering one or two turbines for municipal use, but land there is otherwise too costly and populated for bigger facilities. Residents of neighboring states are furiously opposed to hosting wind projects that benefit Massachusetts, and have their own renewable energy quotas to meet. That leaves the Berkshires. We have windy ridgelines, without the population and political clout to hamper development.

Based on information from state agencies, it's clear that if no turbines are built offshore more than 450 will be needed on our mountains to satisfy the quota. It's just as clear that state officials know that number will never be attained. Rather than analyze the problem thoroughly and produce a realistic plan, the state has, instead, defaulted to a bumbling strategy of spending extraordinary amounts of public funds to entice developers into the Berkshires, and hoping that something happens. There's no plan, no guidelines for where turbines should be erected to minimize impacts, and no hope of meeting the quota.

There are, however, many unintended and costly consequences. The state's lack of careful planning forces electricity retailers like National Grid to compete against private investors, companies seeking to appear "green," and other states for the certificates needed to meet the renewable-energy quota. This increases costs for all of us.

Here's how it works: State law permits renewable-energy producers like wind-power companies to sell electricity and its "green" attributes as separate products. For every unit of electricity, a corresponding renewable-energy certificate (REC) is created. This is an extremely lucrative subsidy for those producers. Electricity retailers must buy and hold a certain number of RECs each year to meet the state's quota.

If there aren't enough RECs on the market, then the retailers must make costly alternative compliance payments (ACPs) to the state government. RECs and ACPs are reflected in our electricity rates, already among the highest nationwide.

In effect, the electricity retailers are a captive market because by law they must have RECs or pay the ACP penalty. However, RECs are in short supply because there aren't enough renewable-energy producers, and there is increasing demand in the voluntary market. Hedge funds, private equity firms, and other investors see an opportunity for profit and are speculating on RECs to resell at premium prices. Companies like Staples and Whole Foods are buying RECs as part of their marketing strategies to impress customers. Households that sign up for programs like GreenStart, which charge extra to support renewable energy, are also fueling competition for scarce RECs, forcing up prices, and intensifying pressure to build wind turbines on our mountains.

In addition, other states are competing for our RECs and the underlying renewable electricity to meet their own quotas. Connecticut just announced that it will buy half of the output of the Hoosac wind-power plant proposed in the Berkshire towns of Florida and Monroe.

Consequently, none of the associated RECs will qualify for our state's quota. Rhode Island is funding the purchase of thousands of RECs from the Brodie wind-power plant proposed in the Berkshire town of Hancock. Thus, not only will we be paying more for the few remaining RECs, but we will be subsidizing REC purchases by those companies and states.

Hoosac's 20 turbines will produce less than 14/100ths of one percent of the commonwealth's annual energy consumption. Yet, over 20 years, its foreign owners will pocket an estimated \$80 million in federal, state, and local subsidies, including \$56 million from REC sales. If our state's entire electricity consumption were subsidized at that rate, about \$60 billion would be spent on subsidies during the same time period.

Those subsidies won't bring lots of new jobs or revenues to our communities. Each wind-power plant will create one or two full-time jobs. Building the miles of new access roads will require temporary construction workers, but the turbines will be erected by out-of-state contractors.

The towns of Florida and Monroe have been promised approximately \$320,000 in annual tax revenues for Hoosac, but are unlikely to ever see that much. In Pennsylvania, 20 turbines produce about \$13,000 in annual payments to the town of Meyersdale. In West Virginia, 44 turbines generate about \$100,000 in property taxes for two counties. In Massachusetts, it appears that wind turbines are exempt from local property taxes and excise taxes.

A few landowners will make money leasing to the developers, but neighbors will pay the price in reduced property values and diminished quality of life. Our tourism economy, too, could suffer. People come here for the scenic beauty, not for ridgelines industrialized with 34-story turbines. In fact, if all wind projects are built as proposed near Mount Greylock, visitors to the War Memorial there may be forgiven for thinking they've arrived at America's premier industrial resort.

These are a few of the many costs of wind turbines in the Berkshires.

It's time for our region's business and cultural leaders to step forward and demand from the state a detailed plan, siting guidelines, a ruling on tax status of wind-power plants, and independent analyses of economic and environmental impacts before any wind turbines are built on our mountains.

Eleanor Tillinghast serves as head of Green Berkshires and is vice-chair of the Massachusetts League of Environmental Voters. She is also a member of the Massachusetts board of the Conservation Law Foundation.

Window-

There's no plan, no guidelines for where turbines should be erected to minimize impacts. There are, however, many unintended and costly consequences.

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Oregon company takes ownership of proposed Searsburg wind project

February 23, 2006 | Brattleboro Reformer (VT)

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SEARSBURG -- Though the ownership has changed hands, those working on bringing up to 32 new wind turbines to Bennington County say the project will remain largely the same.

PPM Energy of Portland, Ore., recently bought the rights to the proposed expansion of a wind farm on Searsburg Mountain.

The company is part of Scottish Power, which is based in the United Kingdom. It purchased the Searsburg rights from a French company, EnXco, along with the rights to the Hoosac Wind project in Florida, Mass.

"The idea is to keep things pretty much the same as they were," said John Zimmerman of Deerfield Wind, a consultant to the project.

He called the purchase a standard commercial transaction.

"I think the project will be just as strong, if not stronger," Zimmerman said.

Jan Johnson, a spokeswoman for PPM Energy, said the project sale price is not being disclosed. Johnson said the company has worked with EnXco in the past, citing the purchase of a 150-megawatt project in Northern California.

In the past five years, PPM Energy has gained ownership in 12 operating wind farms. Most of the farms are significantly larger than the Deerfield Wind project, which is proposed to generate between 33 and 45 megawatts.

"We have a long track record of bringing projects online. We have a long track record of working closely with the community and we have been very well received in those communities where the wind farms are located," said lohnson.

Johnson said the new ownership will bring expertise, experience and financial backing to the projects.

Currently, PPM Energy has ownership in 1,600 megawatts of operating or proposed wind power. The purchase of the two New England projects are part of the company goal to generate 2,300 megawatts of wind power by 2010, said Johnson.

The Deerfield Wind and Hoosac Valley projects will be the first for PPM Energy in New England.

Deerfield Wind applied in July for a special use permit from the U.S. Forest Service because the entire project, about 80 acres, will be built on National Forest land.

Pending permit approval, Johnson hopes construction of the Searsburg and Readsboro wind farm would begin in 2008, with the facility coming online within a year.

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