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## Commissioners approve wind turbine deal

By Amy Revak, Herald-Standard

**Two Fayette County commissioners voted to sign an agreement Thursday that addresses neighbors concerns regarding the location of wind turbines in a \$100 million project proposed for Wharton, Georges and Springhill townships.**

Commissioners Vincent Zaposky and Vincent A. Vicites voted to sign the agreement between PPM Atlantic Renewable Energy Corp./Iberdrola Renewables, the county and property owners that petitioned the court to be included in the case. Commissioner Angela M. Zimmerlink voted against the action, saying she doesn't believe the commissioners have the authority to approve changes to the proposed project.

Zimmerlink said she supports the project itself but the commissioners have to make sure it follows the zoning ordinance.

"I support windmills and alternative energy as long as they conform to the zoning ordinance," Zimmerlink said.

Zimmerlink also clarified that county solicitor Joseph E. Ferens Jr. did not give a formal written legal opinion, but told the commissioners the case is in the hands of the court and signing an agreement could give a perception of political pressure.

Zaposky said he feels the agreement shows the concerns of the residents of Skyline Drive were addressed.

"I think it's important as leaders to show a stance," Zaposky said.

Vicites said he wanted to ensure the residents got a fair shake because they were going to be steamrolled.

"I do support the project but my feeling is they had to take care of the concerns of neighbors. I think they have done an excellent job of addressing the problems," Vicites said. "Now we have to speak with a loud voice as county commissioners. We are leaders, let's move this project forward."

The agreement specifically calls for the elimination of one of the proposed sites for the South Chestnut Windpower Project for Wharton, Georges and Springhill townships. A separate agreement reached with another property owner called for eliminating another proposed site.

The stipulation also states that the property owners would not oppose court action to overturn a denial for the project.

The agreement will be presented to the court as a part of the records. Judge Ralph C. Warman will make the decision on the case.

Gary Verkleeren of PPM said the company plans to keep its word regarding the elimination of the two proposed sites.

Plans are to construct a wind-powered, electricity-generating facility that would provide enough electricity for 17,000 homes annually to be placed in the power grid.

Earlier this year, the county zoning hearing board denied a special exception and variance request by PPM Atlantic that would have allowed construction of the 24-turbine project. The Wharton Township Zoning Hearing Board approved a similar request that would have allowed construction of about a half dozen turbines in that township but the project isn't economically viable unless all 24 turbines are constructed.

After the denial, the company appealed the decision, saying the zoning board improperly denied the request. The zoning ordinance allows windmills of up to 250 feet in height, but the current industry standard is now 262 feet.

Zaposky and Zimmerlink directed the county solicitor to intervene in the case to ensure the zoning board did as it was charged to do under the law.

Larry Williams, a property owner who signed an agreement that removes a proposed turbine location and keeps the closest turbine about a mile from his house, said he thinks the project all comes down to money. He asked the three commissioners how they each came to support the project.

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Zapotosky said they have to look at the bigger picture and support alternative energy.

Vicites said he always has supported the project.

"I understand people don't want it in their back yards but we have to do what is best. We have to keep an open mind," Vicites said.

Zimmerlink said she supports alternative energy but believes the decision about the case rests with the court.

Vicites said he doesn't understand how his fellow commissioners can say to let the courts decide and then intervene in the case. Zimmerlink said she merely wanted to ensure the zoning board did what it is charged to do under the law.

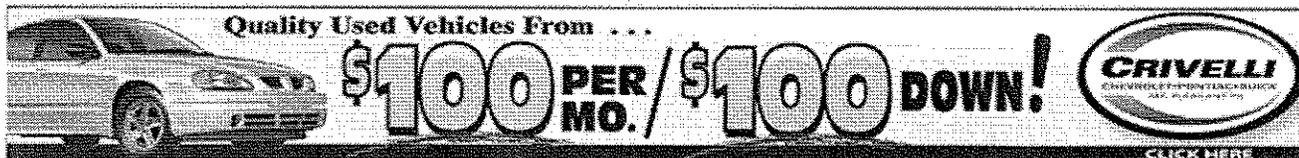
Williams said he would hate to see windmills across the entire ridge.

"The fact remains, we all don't live on an island," Zapotosky said.

Williams said it is quiet at his house now and he can't put a price tag on living that way. He also pointed out that if the wind turbines are built, the electricity they provide goes out of the county.

Zapotosky said he grew up in Masontown across the Monongahela River from Hatfield Ferry Power Plant and Fayette County doesn't benefit from the electricity produced there.

"It's the nature of the industry. We have to get outside the box of 'fill my oil tank every September,'" Zapotosky said.



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## Wind on the Ridge

Monday, September 15, 2008 - MiBiz

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By Karen Gentry | MiBiz |  
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SPARTA TOWNSHIP — Wind energy may provide a way for growers to improve their bottomline and produce clean energy in their own backyards.

Two wind energy companies are interested in installing windmills on farms in the Ridge, a prime fruit growing area that includes Conklin, Casnovia, Kent City, Sparta and Grand Rapids. Representatives from Iberdrola Inc. and Traverse City-based Heritage Sustainable Energy LLC have approached growers in the last year with the intent of offering contracts for use of their land for the installation of wind turbines and construction of access roads.

Ridge Economic Agriculture Partners (REAP) President Kirk Briggs said REAP held a meeting on the topic in July and 100 growers showed up.

"Our goal as an organization is to look at alternative ways for farmers to make money off their property," Briggs told *MiBiz*.

The organization won't take a stand on the wind energy proposals but aims to educate farmers.

Briggs was approached about wind towers on his land. He owns Fruit Ridge Hayrides Inc. in Sparta Township. His 100-acre farm includes 15 acres of woodlot, 15 acres of apple orchards and the rest is tillable land, house and barns. He has turned to agri-entertainment in the fall, featuring a farm market and hayrides. He said most of the growers are excited about the possibility of generating money off their farm without having to do anything. At the REAP meetings, lawyers from Michigan State University Extension discussed legal issues involved.

Briggs said townships are generally in favor of the wind towers and are drafting wind power ordinances to keep up with the times. Wind towers on the Ridge may be possible in the next year or two but there are still a lot of unknowns. With towers costing \$1 million each, Briggs said the energy companies and growers want to have more confidence in just exactly what is there.

Briggs said the wind energy companies want to put up 100 towers in the Ridge. The area is suitable for the wind towers because of the hills, distance from Lake Michigan, and farmland.

To determine the feasibility of wind power on the Ridge, two test towers will be erected this month by Iberdrola, the developer and operator of wind energy headquartered in Spain with U.S. locations in Philadelphia and Portland, Ore. The towers will go up in Chester and Casnovia townships — and a third in Sparta Township pending township approval. The 200-foot towers measure wind speed and direction very precisely.

"We need a minimum of one complete year of data," Iberdrola Business Developer Dan Litchfield said.

Litchfield, who is based in the Midwest, said his company has more than 8,000

megawatts of wind energy installed worldwide and more than 2,400 megawatts in the United States. Although the company has 29 wind farms in more than 10 states, the Ridge farms would be its first in Michigan.

In selecting suitable areas, Iberdrola looks for areas with plenty of wind and high wind speeds.

Whereas in real estate it's location, location, location; with wind energy it's wind speed, wind speed, wind speed.

"Generally it takes a high altitude relative to the surrounding area," Litchfield told *MiBiz*. "In addition you need compatible land use, which in our case generally means farming."

He said wind farms need access to transmission lines to be able to deliver their generated power. He noted the Ridge has a large substation in Chester Township off of Kenowa Avenue. Litchfield said his company is already leasing several thousand acres on the Ridge from grain and alfalfa farmers. Litchfield said generally one turbine is installed per 100 acres, taking up about one acre with its access road. Turbines may be closer together depending on township ordinances.

Michigan has a lot of catching up to do when it comes to wind farms. Litchfield said Texas leads the way with more than 5,000 megawatts installed. Iowa and Minnesota also have a lot of wind energy and Illinois has added a lot in the last year, he said.

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# Ludington Daily News

## Consumers studying wind energy options in Mason County

### Plans are for private land only at present

Brian Mulherin - Daily News Staff Writer

Friday, September 26, 2008

BP isn't the only company looking to Mason County for wind generation possibilities.

Consumers Energy purchased existing wind-energy leases in the county in the last year and also got approval for four meteorological data or "met" towers in the county, primarily in Victory Township.



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Dennis Marvin, communications director for Consumers New Generation department, said the company is not currently looking at any public-land based projects like BP's, but Mason County remains desirable, especially now that Michigan power companies have to double their renewable energy portfolios to 10 percent of their current generating capacity.

The state legislature approved that measure just a week ago.

"We've been looking at areas around the state that have historical data that is on the record as well as consulting organizations that understand the wind profiles in Michigan," Marvin said. "The Mason County area is one of the higher-profile areas for wind."

Marvin noted that the company can't categorically say Mason County is top-notch for wind until its towers have been in place for a year or so.

"But it clearly does match our parameters for potential wind development," Marvin said.

Although Consumers purchased two existing data towers, it's only currently zoned to operate the four it's erecting itself.

"What we purchased, we acquired the easements and associated 'met' towers for that area from a company that had already been in the area," Marvin said. "At this point in time, our plans are for the four that we received approval for, for zoning."

Many discussions of possible wind generation in Mason County inevitably include someone asking why towers aren't erected on the high bluff that houses the Ludington Pumped Storage Plant.

Marvin said he was not prepared to discuss specific properties for competitive reasons, but he said the plant is vital to Consumers' wind energy plans.

"The pumped storage plant plays a very strong role in our ability to provide a stable transmission system and grid system in the future when wind becomes an integral part of Michigan's energy supply," Marvin said.

"Typically the best wind is at night, which is when we are pumping water from Lake Michigan into the holding pond."

Which means while the pumped storage plant is being filled or "charged" like a giant battery, wind turbines will be generating to help power the pumps.

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