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S T E U B E N   C O U N T Y  
I N D U S T R I A L   D E V E L O P M E N T   A G E N C Y  
P U B L I C   H E A R I N G

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February 26th, 2020

Troupsburg Fire Hall

893 State Route 36

Troupsburg, New York 14885

PRESENT:

Steuben County Industrial Development Agency

7234 Route 54 North

PO Box 393

Bath, New York 14810

By: James C. Johnson, Executive Director

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Pittsford, New York 14534

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EDITH E. FORBES (585) 343-8612

1 MR. GAENZLE: Good afternoon everyone. So  
2 what I'll do is I'll read off the people who have  
3 submitted the form to speak. And I apologize in  
4 advance if I screw up your name. And there are --  
5 no necessarily certain order. And as Jamie  
6 notified, it's a five-minute limit. And to the  
7 extent, you know, comments are duplicative, we just  
8 ask that we try to limit that.

9 So, anyway, let's open it up. The first one I  
10 have here is from Mona Meagher.

11 MONA MEAGHER: Yup. Somehow I always end up  
12 first.

13 MR. GAENZLE: Get it over with.

14 MONA MEAGHER: My name is Mona Meagher and I'm  
15 with CMORE Citizens for Maintaining Our Rural  
16 Environment. I am one of the board members.

17 The Canisteo Wind Project and eight point  
18 projects were granted 360 million dollars from New  
19 York State courtesy of Mr. Cuomo for wind  
20 development. On top of that, they also received  
21 federal subsidies. Where does all that money come  
22 from? Why, out of the pocket of your -- out of  
23 your pocket, the taxpayers.

24 Now, Canisteo Wind is asking for tax breaks  
25 from the towns in this project. How much of a tax

1 break? According to previous figures,  
2 approximately 75 percent tax break of what they  
3 would pay if fully taxed. According to Exhibit 27  
4 of the Article 10 Application under the PILOT,  
5 CWE -- Canisteo Wind -- will pay approximately one  
6 point million dollars (sic) per year for a total of  
7 about 30 million dollars over 20 years. Keep in  
8 mind that this is approximately 25 percent to the  
9 towns split six ways, 50 percent to the schools  
10 split three ways, and 25 percent to the IDA. The  
11 only real tax revenue will come from full tax on  
12 wind projects or certainly a higher percentage of  
13 tax that a PILOT provides.

14 Chautauqua Niagara County legislatures are  
15 challenging their counties' IDAs to no longer  
16 support PILOT programs in an effort to bring  
17 responsible tax revenue to host communities, as  
18 well as product, to protect the health, safety, and  
19 welfare of public for improperly sited wind  
20 projects.

21 The PILOT offered by Steuben County are overly  
22 generous in favor of wind companies, which is  
23 drawing an extraordinary number of projects to our  
24 county. The current projected and approved  
25 projects is going to nearly triple the turbine

1           Steuben County already hosts.

2                   When will Steuben County have given enough to  
3           renewable energy? Another thousand? Five  
4           thousand? Ten thousand turbines? By continuing to  
5           allow pilots and untold number of turbines, Steuben  
6           County will no longer boast rich tourism in our  
7           lakes and numerous state parks. It will become a  
8           wasteland.

9                   When we lose tourism and property value, and  
10          when it becomes unbearable to live here any longer,  
11          who will make up the deficit in the tax revenue?  
12          Will it be the wind company? No. It will yet  
13          again fall on the backs of the already over  
14          burdened taxpayers.

15                  The wind company -- has the wind company given  
16          any guarantees to net economic benefit? I dare say  
17          no. Let's ask them to put their money where their  
18          mouth is and make such a guarantee before granting  
19          them a tax break.

20                  This project projects 14 -- 12 to 14 full-time  
21          equivalent jobs, whatever that means. Probably a  
22          lot of part-time jobs. With six towns in this  
23          project, that amounts to two jobs per town.  
24          Canisteo Wind is to be given millions of dollars in  
25          tax breaks for two jobs per town. It is the job of

1           the Steuben County IDA to work in the best interest  
2           of the community, not the wind company. Therefore  
3           we ask that the Steuben County IDA deny a PILOT and  
4           other associated exemptions to the Canisteo Wind  
5           Project.

6           MR. GAENZLE: Thank you. Next I have Susan  
7           Beckham (sic).

8           SUSAN BECKHORN: Beckhorn.

9           MR. GAENZLE: Beckhorn. I apologize.

10          SUSAN BECKHORN: I didn't prepare anything.  
11          But I'll say, my husband Fred and I live in  
12          Rexville. We've been there -- it'll be 40 years  
13          next April. We came to this area because it's so  
14          beautiful and Fred grew up in Alfred. We were  
15          looking for a place where we could live  
16          sustainably. We raise almost all of our own  
17          vegetables. We have timber, which we have cut, and  
18          we are in the process of putting a conservation  
19          easement on our land to protect it in the future.  
20          We have chosen not to have windmills because we  
21          don't want to look at them. Sorry. Not in our  
22          backyard.

23          Mostly, we're really concerned about the  
24          visual thing, in this area, that it's so pristine.  
25          I mean, I'm sorry. I just think there are parts of

1           the country that they are more suited for, just  
2           because land is cheap here, you know? We're not  
3           liking the lights that we see from the Westfield  
4           Project that flash on and off every couple of  
5           seconds. They're pretty bad. And as these  
6           plants -- as -- well, I feel like we're going to  
7           become an industrial zone. We're going to have  
8           these flashing red lights all around our horizon  
9           every night. We are known as the dark sky area.  
10          Fred and I run an Airbnb cabin. People come from  
11          New Jersey; they've never seen the Milky Way. They  
12          can't get in at Cherry Springs in Pennsylvania.  
13          They stay at our place. They say it's just as good  
14          on our hill for the stars. These are things that  
15          we've had forever. Before the time that humans  
16          were on the planet and we're making some changes  
17          that are -- you know, maybe this is just a  
18          short-term thing in the big picture that we'll find  
19          a better energy source.

20                 We're -- Fred and I are more in favor of  
21          solar. That's the way -- I know we need  
22          alternative energy. The wind turbines, I don't  
23          know. Six hundred foot, you know?

24                 The other thing, I'm a birder. I don't know  
25          how -- have the studies really been done? That

1           we're -- we're keeping them out of the migration  
2           paths? I really wonder about that. If you can --  
3           we're told that there is no -- that there is  
4           technology to just have the lights come on if  
5           aircraft are in the vicinity. We're not seeing  
6           that happen in -- down in Westfield.

7           Also, we have read in a recent bird  
8           publication that if you could do that -- not have  
9           the lights on all the time -- you not only save a  
10          lot of power, but you'd save a lot of birds and  
11          bats. Not that bats are attracted to lights, but  
12          they're attracted insects. What do you think?  
13          Anything else?

14          FRED BECKHORN: I think they should pay full  
15          taxes. Everyone else in this room does.

16          SUSAN BECKHORN: Thanks.

17          MR. GAENZLE: Thank you. Thank you. Next is  
18          Jon Lance.

19          JON LANCE: Good evening. My name is Jon  
20          Lance. I am the business representative for the  
21          International Union of Operating Engineers in this  
22          area. I am here, along with some of our members  
23          that are local residents, to support this wind  
24          farm.

25          In the past, we've had success with

1 contractors hiring local labor for construction of  
2 these wind farms in this area. It is my hope that  
3 everyone here knows that the majority of the money  
4 earned here, on local construction projects by  
5 local residents, is spent here in the community.

6 So we, the operating engineers, support the  
7 Canisteo Wind Farm. Thank you.

8 MR. GAENZLE: Thank you. Next is Kyle Toth  
9 (phonetic) or Tough (phonetic).

10 KYLE TOTH: You can move on. He pretty much  
11 said what I wanted to say, so you can move on.

12 MR. GAENZLE: Okay. Thank you. James Koegel.

13 JAMES KOEGEL: Thank you for the opportunity  
14 to speak. I have many questions, which I will  
15 impose rhetorically primarily to The Board, but I  
16 think it's important that other people consider  
17 them too. I'm not expecting any answers to these  
18 questions today, but I do present them as food for  
19 thought.

20 I have to take issue with the unrealistically  
21 brief time limits allowed the citizens to comment  
22 on this issue. This is one of such importance,  
23 it'll affect our communities for the rest of our  
24 lives and well beyond. You must bear in mind that  
25 your decisions as The Board, and such serious



1 matters, will affect the economic well-being of  
2 future generations long after you are gone. As  
3 such -- and feel free to correct me on this  
4 afterwards if you want to discuss it, Jamie. But  
5 as such, I take serious issue with the methods by  
6 which the IDA conducts its business and the lack of  
7 transparency. Other than this one brief session,  
8 the public is not allowed to contribute at your  
9 regular meetings. Other than information available  
10 on your website, we hear very little publicity  
11 except from headlines announcing your support of  
12 the local economy through the latest PILOT  
13 payments. This meeting is an example -- received  
14 very little publicity -- that I am aware of. And  
15 if it were not for the vocal efforts of a few, the  
16 room might not be full tonight.

17 We the public need -- we deserve a full  
18 accounting of the process by which you determine  
19 the need and the amount of a PILOT payment. Who is  
20 charged with this final decision and by what  
21 authority? Your board members are appointed, not  
22 elected. And to whom do you answer and through  
23 what means? What is your relationship with the  
24 county legislature? And how much input do our  
25 legislatures -- our elected officials -- have in

1           your decision-making process? Unless you are able  
2           to clearly show that a body of elected officials,  
3           as the ultimate power to determine these subsidies,  
4           and do so in an objective and informed way without  
5           undue influence, then I submit that what you are  
6           doing, it affects to taxation without  
7           representation contrary to one of the founding  
8           principals in this country. Summarizing, through  
9           what means are you accountable to us?

10           I question the IDA's motives for granting  
11           PILOT payments for an enterprise, such as wind  
12           development, in light of so many well-documented  
13           shortcomings of wind power. For instance, have  
14           you, as board members, even bothered to examine the  
15           effects of wind projects already established  
16           elsewhere? The negative effects, all clearly  
17           documented on health, property values, and quality  
18           of life. Have you spoken to members of other  
19           development agencies? Other town board members?  
20           Other residents of other states about the long-term  
21           impacts that they have experienced firsthand?

22           Are you aware that because of this insane  
23           irrational push for wind, that we, as a state, are  
24           on the verge of losing our last vestiges of home  
25           rule thanks to the wind developers?

1           Are you aware that in other parts of the  
2           country eminent domain is already being used as an  
3           excuse for wind development?

4           Are you aware of the enormously complicated  
5           and costly process in dismantling a wind turbine?  
6           And what about disposal of the blades that are not  
7           recyclable and must be buried? Does the Steuben  
8           County Landfill have room for several thousand of  
9           these 20 years from now? And what about the  
10          implications of abandoned leaking towers dotting  
11          the landscape when the current wind company of  
12          ownership at that time does not respond your calls,  
13          and the landowners have defaulted and disappeared?  
14          What about our tax base and our economy then?

15          Do you, the IDA, have answers to these  
16          questions? Do you even care? If your answer is  
17          "no," then you have absolutely no business  
18          disbursing our money for no provable benefit. I  
19          would defy any one of your board members to sit  
20          down with me and have an informed discussion on  
21          this topic that would convince me that you have  
22          done your homework and can speak from a  
23          well-informed point of view to the pros and cons of  
24          wind. If they were able to do that, only then  
25          would I agree that you are capable of making an

1 informed -- objective decision beneficial to our  
2 entire community.

3 As a start point to this goal, I would highly  
4 recommend you interview several other IDAs and  
5 boards of health in the southern tier, who have  
6 done just this, and determined that wind energy is  
7 not in their best interest, and have not allowed it  
8 in their communities.

9 This comes up over and over and I firmly  
10 believe this, becoming a well-informed person is  
11 often a time-consuming and difficult task. It must  
12 be, however, an absolute necessity and a moral  
13 requirement for any person in a position of public  
14 trust. Whether appointed or elected. No excuses.

15 If you are truly serious about protecting the  
16 health, economic well-being, and welfare of those  
17 you serve as you are charged with doing, then  
18 before handing out our money, it's time to do your  
19 homework. And I'll expand on that a little bit  
20 later in the second session. I thank you.

21 MR. GAENZLE: Thank you. Next is Nick Ahorn  
22 (sic).

23 NICK AHERN: Ahern.

24 MR. GAENZLE: Ahern. Sorry.

25 NICK AHERN: Yeah. So my name is Nick Ahern.

1 I'm a representative from IBW Local 139. I am not  
2 a resident, locally, but I'm here on behalf of my  
3 membership. I represent around 300 electricians.  
4 Many of them that do live in -- not only this area  
5 that'll have windmills -- but other areas in  
6 Steuben County.

7 So far is that -- to reiterate what Jon said,  
8 that the spark for the building trades would be a  
9 huge impact and benefit to us on that.

10 And in such, I just say that I too support the  
11 Wind Farm Project. Thank you.

12 MR. GAENZLE: Thank you. David Marsh.

13 DAVID MARSH: David Marsh. Business manager.  
14 Laborers Local 785. We cover eight and a half  
15 counties. All of Steuben County. We have 800  
16 members. About 200 in which live in this area --  
17 well, "this area," being Steuben County. The huge  
18 county that it is.

19 Again, same thing. We have built the other  
20 wind farms in the county in the past. And a lot of  
21 really good jobs for our member, who are your  
22 neighbors. So as far as the tax issue, that's for  
23 you folks that live here. So these are good jobs,  
24 good paying jobs, good wages, good benefits,  
25 pension, healthcare all attached to these jobs.

1 And the developer has committed to using local  
2 union laborers. So we support the project.

3 MR. GAENZLE: That's all of the sign-in forms  
4 that I had. If there's anyone else that would like  
5 to speak at this hearing -- again, there's another  
6 hearing at 6:00. The process will be the same. So  
7 to the extent, you wanted to speak then, obviously,  
8 you're more than welcomed to do so. So if there's  
9 anyone else that would like to speak, you need to  
10 fill out a form. Oh, did I miss one? Oh, I missed  
11 it. I'm sorry. Not intentionally. You're up.

12 STEPHANIE MILKS: My name is Stephanie Milks  
13 and I'm a resident on the proposed Energy Wind  
14 Project. I'm here today to voice my concerns in  
15 regards to the negative financial impacts of  
16 600-foot turbines within this community. We'll  
17 focus on property value decline and the long-term  
18 implications.

19 As the saying goes, there are two sides to  
20 every coin. The first demonstrates real concern  
21 for property value decline and the long-term impact  
22 to the Steuben County tax base; I'm discussing the  
23 Sheldon New Build Report I obtained from the  
24 Wyoming County real property office. To give an  
25 equal measurement of time frame, I counted the

1           number of new builds nine years before the 2009  
2           installation and commencement of the High Sheldon  
3           Wind Project, and the nine years after the wind  
4           turbines were built. So it's a period of 2000 to  
5           2008. And then 2009 to 2018.

6           In the nine years prior to the installation of  
7           the commercial scale electrical generation  
8           facilities, there were 40 new builds. In the nine  
9           years post-construction, there were only 15 new  
10          builds. This is a 63 percent decline. And I have  
11          all of this information here to submit for you as  
12          well.

13          There's also maps compiled by a concerned  
14          member of the community that demonstrate the  
15          placement of the new builds in relation to the wind  
16          turbines. Both before and after the turbines  
17          erected. The maps clearly show that the new builds  
18          prior to the wind turbine construction were evenly  
19          distributed throughout the town. The new builds  
20          post-construction are heavily to the east side of  
21          town away from the turbines. There's more tree  
22          cover over there so that there's not a way to see  
23          them. This is a clear demonstration that people do  
24          not want to live near or develop properties near  
25          wind turbines. This should also spark concern for

1           the future development of Steuben County. If  
2           people are not willing to further develop  
3           properties or move into the area, the loss of tax  
4           revenue over the long-termed duration of the wind  
5           projects will cause a further rise in taxes due to  
6           the natural inflation of the cost of services,  
7           stagnant population growth, or even loss. This  
8           will be a double-edged sword for Steuben County  
9           residents. Taxes will continue to rise as their  
10          property values decline. This is not an  
11          economically sustaining scenario.

12                 A gentleman earlier mentioned the jobs that  
13           would be coming to the community. These jobs are  
14           roughly for one year -- the construction jobs that  
15           he's referring to. You're looking at a year of  
16           construction or so.

17                 As we've looked at the Sheldon New Build  
18           Report, what about the losses for local  
19           contractors? Your well drillers? Your  
20           electricians? Your plumbers? Your excavators?  
21           Your real estate agents? Your tourism industry  
22           over the decades of the projects? Again, it was  
23           roughly a 63 percent decline in Sheldon. You still  
24           have your local area businesses to sustain after  
25           the ten months the construction workers leave town.



1           So we covered that.

2                   And for our project area, much of the  
3           properties are recreational or seasonal. And then  
4           they develop the property after retirement and  
5           moved out here from the suburbs for the natural and  
6           peaceful setting. They would state that they would  
7           have never invested in a home here had they known  
8           wind turbines were proposed for the area. And then  
9           Siting Board Public Hearing transcripts also  
10          reflect this for our project area.

11                   This is -- I have a scale drawing. So the  
12          Sheldon New Build Report is based on this little  
13          turbine here. The 600-foot turbines -- this is a  
14          scale drawing -- that's what it's going to look  
15          like. So before you didn't have as much visual  
16          problem. I mean, this is hugely significant. It's  
17          going to cause more noise. It's going to cause  
18          more shadow flicker. People are going to be less  
19          likely to move into an area with these giant  
20          turbines.

21                   So if you would, take notice of the other  
22          counties interested in protecting their  
23          communities. Cattaraugus County, Erie County,  
24          Chautauqua County, Niagara County.

25                   Senator Ortt hosted a seminar on the health

1 impacts at ECC in September in 2019. And I have  
2 articles of all the those legislatures, IDA  
3 decisions, and all of that for you to review as  
4 well.

5 And again, the saying goes, there are two  
6 sides to every coin. Which side of the coin are  
7 you going to tax?

8 MR. GAENZLE: Thank you. Sorry, again. I  
9 didn't mean to skip over you. I just --

10 STEPHANIE MILK: That's okay.

11 MR. GAENZLE: There were two others submitted.  
12 Next would be Russ Gerow.

13 RUSS GEROW: Hopefully I'll keep things brief.  
14 I'm an area farmer and like the one guy says that  
15 these wind towers won't pay their full taxes, I  
16 don't pay my full taxes either. I get cultural  
17 exemptions. And I think most people would agree  
18 that that's good to get an agricultural exemption  
19 to keep farms. And I know that in the cities like  
20 Hornell, there are exemptions given to Alstom and  
21 some of those companies just to keep them there for  
22 their economic input.

23 I'd like to point out that I'm not getting any  
24 windmill from this project. And I think the thing  
25 that is missing here, that nobody has mentioned, is

1           global warming and renewable energy. And I think  
2           you're allowed to have a choice whether you want a  
3           nuclear power plant here, or a coal burning plant,  
4           or renewable energy generating your electricity.

5           There are some people here that are kind of  
6           elitists. They have enough money that they don't  
7           care where their electricity comes from as long as  
8           they get electricity. And some rural owners need  
9           the income from this project. And therefore, I'm  
10          speaking in favor of it.

11          MR. GAENZLE: Thank you. And then Jeremy  
12          Gerow.

13          JEREMY GEROW: I'll be even briefer. I've  
14          been to several of these meetings for the last  
15          couple of years for different projects and I've  
16          seen an overwhelming trend where there is a group  
17          of elitists that are very eloquent, and highly  
18          educated, and very motivated. But they are a small  
19          group. And what I also see is a large group of  
20          local landowners that are quiet, and mind their own  
21          business, and keep to themselves, that are in vast  
22          support of this.

23          So I support the wind project.

24          MR. GAENZLE: Thank you. So unless I missed  
25          anyone else, that was the number of forms that I

1 had filled out for this.

2 Again, to the extent you want to come back at  
3 6:00, we're having another hearing. It would be  
4 the same process. And if we weren't clear about  
5 filling this out at the outside, I apologize, but  
6 that would be the same thing at 6:00.

7 So unless anybody else wants to provide  
8 comments, we can adjourn this meeting. And again,  
9 we'll be back at 6:00.

10 MR. JOHNSON: And just as a point of  
11 information, this is being video recorded. It will  
12 be posted on our website.

13 MR. GAENZLE: And we also have a stenographer  
14 that will -- once both hearings are done -- it may  
15 take a couple weeks -- will compile the comments  
16 together with all of the written comments that we  
17 received. So it will be one package of all the  
18 comments.

19 MR. JOHNSON: And that will be posted on our  
20 website with the rest of the application materials.

21 Thank you all for coming.

22 MR. GAENZEL: Thank you.

23 \* \* \*

24

25

Steuben County Industrial Development Agency 2/26/2020

REPORTER CERTIFICATE

I, Alexandra K. Wiater, do hereby certify  
that I did report in stenotype machine shorthand the  
proceedings held in the above-entitled matter;

Further, that the foregoing transcript is a  
true and accurate transcription of my said  
stenographic notes taken at the time and place  
hereinbefore set forth.

Dated this 6th day of March, 2020

At Rochester, New York

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Alexandra K. Wiater