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Panel Speaks on Wind Farm Proposal Flaws

By DAN SULLIVAN
SPRINGFIELD

Last Tuesday, January 24, a public information meeting was held at the Springfield Community Center to inform area residents about issues surrounding the proposed wind energy project in the towns of Warren, Springfield and Stark—Stark Wind, as it is called locally.

A panel of three presenters comprised of Keith Schue of Cherry Valley, Jonathan Knauth of Litchfield and Steve Helmin of Glen was moderated by Nicole Dillingham, retired attorney and environmental activist. In her opening remarks, Dillingham pointed out what she believes to be a major issue with the environmental review of the project. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement omitted the Town of Springfield's local law, she said, which specifically bans such projects.

"This flawed review should be thrown out," Dillingham urged.

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All three of the presentations which followed focused on other troubling aspects of the project, and on New York State's renewable energy goals and policy.

The roughly 70 attendees heard first from Schue, who has spoken several times across the state on the weaknesses of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, or CLCPA. According to Schue, the CLCPA goals are unrealistic, especially in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The reason for this is that wind and solar—the lynchpins of the state's plan to produce electricity without burning fossil fuels—are intermittent, which means that reliable baseload production must remain in place and, subsequently, either fossil fuel or nuclear production must continue. Schue noted that

closure of Indian Point's nuclear reactors in 2019 has resulted in a large increase in emissions from the fossil fuel sources needed in the absence of nuclear generation.

"Downstate's production is dirty, while upstate has a very green profile," Schue said.

Knauth addressed issues surrounding large wind turbines based on land, moving through the problems of wind resources (New York is among the poorest places for wind energy production in the continental United States, he said), bird and bat kills, and human health effects. The last category has numerous aspects and ramifications, Knauth stressed. There is the physical danger of ice throw. It can travel out to 10 times the blade diameter from the turbine, he said. In the case of the proposed 650-foot turbines in Stark, that means more than one mile. Health effects such as shadow flicker and infrasound are also worrisome, Knauth explained. Closing one's eyes to avoid flicker exacerbates the effect, and individuals prone to seizures can be in more danger, he continued. Sound problems can lead to health effects such as insomnia, hypertension and headaches.

Overall, Knauth noted, these turbines are an unwise investment at best.

Helmin, president of Stop Energy Sprawl, a coalition of groups across the state who oppose New York's energy policy, of which Schue is also a member. spoke about the need to get involved on the local and state levels in order to influence the direction of our fight against climate change.

"Developers from all over the world are here in New York with their hands out, looking for the subsidies. They're here not because the wind blows best or the sun shines most. It's about the money," Helmin warned.

A return to the principles of Home Rule is needed, Helmin added.



A short question-and-answer session followed the panel presentations. Another session on the subject is scheduled for February 7 at 7 p.m. in the Town of Otsego Town Hall.



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