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News

Board modifies wind farm rules

By Diane Graff of the Daily Times staff

JUNEAU - An amendment to the development standards of a wind energy overlay district will come back to the Dodge County Board of Supervisors when it meets Tuesday.

Earlier this week, the county's planning and development committee members approved modifications to the ordinance that was sent to them in December by the full board.

The modifications include specific height requirements and outlines the responsibility for removing outdated wind towers.

In December of 2004, the county board tabled the proposed revisions to the county's land-use code.

Several wind farms are being proposed in the county.

Forward Wind Energy has proposed constructing 133 wind turbines in Fond du Lac and Dodge County. The project was unveiled in the summer of 2004 by Chicago-based Invenergy Wind LLC. The power plant developer has several state utilities on board to purchase electricity from the wind farm. It is one of the largest wind power projects proposed in the state.

The modifications to the energy overlay district accommodate newer technology and higher towers, according to Joe Giebel, assistant code administrator for the planning and development department. The code required a maximum height of 300 feet, which has been modified to allow 500-foot turbines.

Another major change to the ordinance is the fiscal responsibility of the company to remove the tower when 20-year power contracts expire.

Invenergy Wind has agreed to increase its letter of credit from \$480,000 to \$2.4 million in the 15th year of operation. The funds would be used to cover the cost of dismantling the wind turbines after 20 years. A bank letter of credit is like an insurance policy for the county to guarantee there are funds available to remove the large steel turbines.

Removal of the structures was a concern of several county board supervisors.

The purpose of the overlay district is to regulate wind energy system facilities in the county.

In another wind farm matter, the committee approved, with nine conditions, an application for a conditional use permit for Midwest Wind Energy to construct an electrical substation in the town of Rubicon. Midwest Wind Energy has proposed the construction of wind turbines in the town of Herman.

About a year ago, Midwest Wind Energy, a Chicago-based firm, proposed to the Herman Town Board the construction of a wind farm within a six-mile radius of Rock Road and County Highway P. We Energies, through a contract with Midwest Wind Energy, has proposed to construct 33 wind turbines.

The proposed substation would receive the power from the wind turbines, according to Fred Lueck of the planning and development department.

Once the nine conditions are met, a permit will be issued for the construction of the substation, Lueck explained.

According to some of the conditions, Midwest Wind Energy is required to operate the substation without excessive noise, or lighting and it should not be detrimental to the public health or general welfare of the community.

The substation is being proposed on property adjacent to the Hartford School District's Saylesville Elementary School on County Highway P. One condition requires the firm to construct a new and larger baseball backstop for the school district to prevent foul balls from entering the substation property.

A study is also required before and after construction of the substation to measure the electric and magnetic field for the project. Readings are to be taken at property lines with the school district and at the school building and the information provided to the school district and county.

The exterior walls of the control house structure are to be painted with low reflective colors and all exterior lighting is to meet functional and security needs of the proposed development, Lueck said.

The county also requires all federal, state and local permit required for the development be obtained prior to the beginning of construction.

Sometimes the conditions are met immediately or it can take up to

six months, Lueck said. Once the conditions are met, the permit can be issued and construction started, he added.

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