

SEPTEMBER 18, 2024

The Board of Supervisors of Clinton County, Iowa, met at the Northeast High School Auditorium, Goose Lake, IA. Present were Supervisors Irwin, Srp and George.

6:00 P.M. Call to Order – Pledge of Allegiance

DISCUSSION WITH POSSIBLE ACTION

Public Discussion of the County Renewable Energy Wind Turbine Ordinance: Jen Kutsch, Clinton County resident and landowner, would like the ordinance to have strong setbacks from property lines, right of ways, schools and other designated locations. She asked for setbacks of at least a reasonable three miles. She is worried about health effects on people around the wind turbines. She said environmental noise causes significant health effects. She's sympathetic to property owners and their rights, but the suffering of others from other property owner decisions is immoral. She said it is disrespectful to listen to wind industry dismiss the fact there are harmful effects that can be a result from wind turbines. She said we live here, and they don't. She asked the Board of Supervisors and Planning and Zoning Commission for respect for their health and welfare.

Heather Hippler has lived in Clinton County her entire life and enjoyed living in this area to enjoy the river and the many birds especially the bald eagle. She said bald eagles are a sacred bird and protected by federal laws that include penalties. She said the windmill companies don't care about the bald eagles. She said more than 2,900 bald eagles were in the state but naturalists worry this amount will decrease. She said 2,000 golden eagles in California have been killed by wind turbines. She said all the money in the world will not bring back the eagles. She said a majority of the bald eagles in Iowa come from the migratory path of the Mississippi River. She said NextEra has recently pled guilty to migratory bird deaths. She said they have not paid as much in fines as they should have.

Jim Taplin said he has been a well contractor for several years. He has seen blasting from quarries from two miles away that affect wells and can affect water quality and the groundwater supply. He said groundwater belongs to all. He said oil leaking out of turbines can contaminate groundwater. He said soil removal can also affect filtering of water. He said it's the duty of the supervisors to protect the health and welfare of the residents.

Gwen Rickertsen is a landowner near Bryant and she said a recent decommissioning of a wind turbine costs \$258,000. She said it will cost \$532,000 to decommission each turbine at a wind farm in Minnesota. She said these are numbers for shorter wind turbines than what are proposed for Clinton County. She said in 30 years that number will astronomically go higher and using inflation factors could more than double. She said other counties have asked other companies to pay up front for decommissioning. She said if the company goes broke then the landowner is stuck with wind turbines. She said one business owner said the only reason to build wind farms is because of the tax incentives. She is asking the Board to have the wind companies pay up front \$3 million for each turbine.

Ray Stuedemann has farmed the area his entire life. He was approached by NextEra and had his attorney review the offer who said he would lose a lot of control of his land. He said he would not do this to his neighbors. He said he has dealt with many issues in 62 years of farming, and he accepts those as being a risk of farming. He said their own goal is to bring the turbines to collect the government subsidies. He asked for 1.5-mile setback from non-participating landowners. He said in 2008 when the ordinance was approved, they were 200 feet tall, so setbacks need to be further with higher wind turbines. He wants to see a prohibition on the wind turbines going on land with a CSR of 65 or higher. He said they should be fully removed and restored for proper farming when they are decommissioned. He said the county needs to strengthen the ordinance language for road repair from damaged done by machinery to build the turbines.

Lana Griswold is the sixth generation to live on the family farm. She said there are usually good feelings when a new business comes to the area but these agreements are being done under the cloak of secrecy. If it is so good for the community then why the transparency, she asked. She also asked if they want to positively affect the community then why is there issues in other communities of damaged roads and damaged turbines not being repaired. She said actions speak louder than words. She said the ordinance needs to protect all in the community with setbacks from residents and schools. She said funds needs to be set aside for road repair and decommissioning.

Kelsee McCulloh said she and her husband farm, and she is an educator. She advocates for the young people in the county. She said poor sleep quality affects academic performance. She said she's seen it in practice as well. She said light can also impact students. She said noise can be an annoyance. She said the WHO has reported sound levels should be less than 30 decibels during a child's sleeping cycle. She asks for three-mile setbacks from any school. She said some counties in Iowa have three-mile setbacks from cities. She said there needs to be restrictions on lighting and flicker. She said there should be no flickering on non-participating land. She said there needs to be a clear process to handle complaints.

Amanda Rickertsen lives in Bryant with their three children. She said teaching and learning in a room with flicker would be impossible and asked for a three-mile setback from schools and two-mile setback from city limits and cemeteries.

Dustin Rickertsen, Bryant, is a fifth-generation farmer on his family land and wants to leave it to the next generation. He said putting wind turbines would not leave the land in good condition for the next generation. There are better and more efficient ways to provide cleaner fuel and said nuclear is reliable around the clock. He said they need a form of energy production that does not wreck good farmland. He said they fill landfills with the blades and that is not being green. He said farming practices have changed to better take care of the ground. He said the only green thing for wind turbines is the government subsidies they collect.

Kelly McDonald is a Clinton County resident and landowner. She said wind turbines are not only inefficient but involve practices that green energy is trying to address. She said construction of wind turbines require concrete and steel by highly carbon intensive manufacturing and deconstruction creates several issues as a turbine only lasts 20 years. Foundations removal would require a lot of work and the turbine parts fill landfills. She wants every developer applying for a wind project to pay \$3 million upfront for each turbine.

Joe Swanton farms in the Goose Lake area. He uses the Clinton airport and conducts flight training. He said there are 109 public use airports in Iowa. He said only 7 have class E extension surface area and Clinton is one of those. He said the airport is a tremendous asset to the city and county. He said no wind turbines should be placed in the boundaries surrounding the airport for class E extension surface. He said these FAA determinations should be included in the County ordinances.

DaVonne Eberhart of rural Delmar is a self-employed private health care professional. She said one of the greatest joys is allowing seniors to stay on their farm. She is speaking for the older residents in their homes. She said the current ordinance is weak and outdated and that's why the wind companies are coming in now. She asked if the lease agreements are actually 30 pages long. She said the landowner should be in control not the tenant. She said the contracts do not protect landowner rights. She said setbacks should be at least one mile from property lines. She said the seniors she represents want the farmland to be respected and should plant beans and corn and not cement.

Nakila Blessing said she lives by a wind farm in Missouri that is the largest in the state. She said the operation has not been 26% efficient and they have only 1,200 feet setback. She said her home has been changed from rural to industrial. She said a wind turbine is 3,400 feet from their home and wakes them at night especially in the winter when the blades have ice on them. She said the noise is different everyday depending on many factors. She has been spending the last five years fighting these projects. She said a very small percentage of residents in her county decided the fate of their county. She said everyone's property rights matter. She said roads are destroyed and relationships have been fractured. She said many turbines are turned off now for a certain amount of time because of the number of bats that were killed. She said industry standards are recommended to provide the most financial benefit for the company.

Floyd Marx farms two miles east of Goose Lake. He says he has ancestors buried in cemeteries in the area and wants two or three-mile setbacks from cemeteries, towns, schools and historic locations. He said the leases that landowners sign includes easements for flicker, noise, electromagnetic and other effects. He said they waive their protections from the turbines and place them on everyone else in the community.

Alyse Friedman grew up in Clinton County and plans to raise a family here. She's concerned about the setbacks and would like to see them 2,100 feet from property lines and 1.5 miles for non-participating landowners. She said this will provide security so they won't have to worry about a wind turbine where they may want to build a home in the future and keep safe from a turbine failure. She would also like to see high voltage transmission lines setbacks from wind turbines as well to protect from collapse or blade failure. She said ice can be thrown 1.5 times the height of the turbine and if it were to strike a high voltage line it could lead to damage to the electric grid.

Trula McDonald is a Clinton County landowner speaking about landowner rights. She does not question some people's decision to sign their rights away but they don't have a right to infringe on her property owner rights. She is speaking on behalf of the next generation of her family she will not allow the temptation of easy money to tarnish what the family has worked so hard to grow. They do not have the right to disturb the peace and tranquility of their home with noise and flicker. They do not have the right to destroy the roads to their farm fields and place the repair on county taxpayers. She said they do not have the right to devalue their land due to wind farm casting a shadow over their property. She asked the Board of Supervisors to make decisions for generations to come.

Jean Seyeller is a landowner and moving into the area and is concerned about the cemeteries and is on a board for the cemetery in Bryant which includes 10 veterans. She said their mission is to care for the cemetery. She said it would be horrific to have a funeral disturbed by the sound and flickering from a wind turbine.

TJ Burken, Charlotte, is concerned about wildlife in the area. He said the Iowa DNR does not have a jurisdiction over wind farms but can only provide recommendations. He said a company that kills bald eagles is not concerned with local wildlife. He wants setbacks from wildlife areas. He said he's not against renewable energy but it shouldn't endanger wildlife. He would a no flicker rule on non-participating land and for setback from municipalities added to the ordinance.

Marty Murrell rural Charlotte has property owners around him who have signed wind leases around his property. He said local contractors will not benefit from these projects. He said a local concrete company doesn't want anything to do with the project. He said it's the landowners and heirs who get the payments and they are not life changing money.

He said county tax dollars don't fully kick in until year eight. He said the revenue is a minor percentage on the County budget.

Patrick Schwartz, owns a heritage family farm, he is a logistic coordinator for wind farm projects. He's seen the wind farms cause damage to the land and to ground water. He said the synthetic oils will leak from the turbines and go into the ground and the ground water. He said decommissioning language should include clean up above and below ground including wells and make the company carry pollution insurance.

Bryant Burnette said wind turbines can cause danger to wildlife and destroy the scenic landscape. He said wind energy jobs are temporary and don't usually employ local residents. He said noise from windfarms can cause sleep disorders and stress.

Pete Morris, said wind turbines are evasive species, and they don't belong here. He said the cement will stay in the ground when they are long gone. He said wind is not efficient and other sources should be considered. He said elected officials have the responsibility to protect the residents of the County. He encouraged the Supervisors to adopt strict ordinances that have been suggested tonight.

Ray Goesser heard the same concerns in another county and what they learned is there is nothing to fear and believes in renewable energy. He said in Iowa wind produces 60% of electricity used today. He said the wind turbines pay about 40% of their county tax revenue in Adams County. He asked the Supervisors to make a thoughtful decision with the ordinances.

Ted Harkey grew up in Illinois and moved into a rural area of the state with their two kids. He said they lived there for seven years and a wind company moved into the area. He was excited about the project, but also heard some negatives. He said they heard they were noisy, and they went to visit one and listened for 20 minutes and they decided it wouldn't be a problem. He said the wind farm was built around their home. He said when they were turned on, they had serious noise problems in the house. He said it was 46 decibels in the house which caused sleep issues. He said they abandoned their home, and it took three years to sell their house and took a loss. He said there needs to be a maximum noise level outside the house of 39 dba. He said ordinances need to be based on property lines.

Loren Jacobsen farms north of Goose Lake and said being a County Supervisor is a job that deals with many issues. He said the county roads budget will get pushed beyond its limits. He said they rely on the county board for protection through improved ordinances. He said it is not practical to build the turbines here. He said a majority of the paychecks will not be used in the County or pay property taxes. He said just because it's legal doesn't mean it's ethical.

Ron Boesch is a chiropractor who lives between Charlotte and Welton and is an evidence-based practitioner which teaches how to review literature and how to teach that literature. He said definitions are important to define health. He recommends using the WHO for definitions and they state health includes social wellbeing. He said this is creating splits in the community. He said it also includes mental wellbeing. He said this project is also causing issues in that area as well. He said the noise does cause problems. He said annoyance does cause stress and sleep disturbance which both cause other health problems.

Thomas Bean with the Wind Coalition encouraged the Board to consider the Linn County ordinance which considered many of the concerns that have been raised this evening. He said a workable ordinance will allow landowners to participate if they wish and the projects can benefit tax revenue of the County and school districts.

Brad Burken owns a business in Charlotte and is trying to keep an open mind. He asked the Board to please extend the moratorium. He said he has trust issues with NextEra because he's not getting solid answers and numbers from them. He asked them to give every landowner the whole story before they signed up. He said NextEra said they would be getting the volunteer fire department money and they haven't seen any. He said Goose Lake finally got some after a year of emails. He said money subsidies are driving this project.

Anita Ilg of DeWitt said they learned Clinton wind has sent a letter to the Board and County Attorney with recommendations for the ordinance. She said NextEra has been working quietly in the County for some time. She said this is a classic case of the fox guarding the hen house. She asked the Board to work with the residents of Clinton County to update the ordinance. She encouraged taxpayers to work against the subsidies that drive these projects.

Swati Dandekar, Bright Future Iowa chairwoman, said she is representing hundreds of Clinton County residents who support landowner rights. She said 472 petition signatures in support of landowner rights were collected in under two weeks. She said this silent majority supports an ordinance that farmers can enter into lease agreements that support their family. She said the silent majority knows ordinances can be written for everyone because they did for solar projects.

Tim Arnold is the NextEra representative for the Clinton wind project. He said residents have expressed support and concerns about wind development in the County. He said a lot of those concerns are addressed in the current ordinance or are covered by fish and wildlife and FAA. He said some concerns will be addressed as part of coordination with county agencies at the time they submit the permit for their projects which would include road use agreements and emergency response plans.

Shelby Ridenhour works for a third-party consulting firm providing environmental studies. She said there are regulations by the Fish and Wildlife service that protect birds. She said locally there is no need to adopt protection for local wildlife. She said measures should be developed project to project.

Chris Jorgenson works with Ridenhour and said any wind project must follow regulations, but they also follow voluntary regulations based on environmental surveys of the area. He said the surveys are done monthly for one to two years to minimize impact to wildlife. He said they conduct surveys to identify bats in the area. He said that information is used to decide siting of the wind turbines.

Trevor Biggs works for NextEra and said they work with landowners to repair roads and tile. He said they work with the landowners to get field work completed. He said failures are very rare but they do have written responses to deal with them. He said they have training sessions with local responders and do annual training as well. He said they also meet with the nearest hospitals.

Connor Weber of NextEra works at a wind farm near Clear Lake. He met with Goose Lake firefighters a year ago. He described maintenance on turbine blades. He said they do many visual inspections of the blades. He said the turbines include a lightening detection system they use that informs them when there is a lightening detected around the turbines. He said they also do an annual drone inspection.

Dustin Van Depon of NextEra said his team sets up the site and trains the local staff. He described the inspections that are done after the turbine is constructed. He said they support the road use agreement that includes a pre-construction survey before the project starts.

Dr. Chris Olson has a PhD in environmental health sciences and said there are several papers written about siting wind turbines and health. He said ordinances should consider health concerns. He said the ordinance currently in place is good but could use some updates. He encourages a definition of participating and non-participating landowners. He said that is very common in many counties. He said the setbacks that are in the ordinance already address collapses. He said further setbacks than that would make it difficult to have a development. He said the ordinance should revisit the sound levels. He said to also consider catastrophic language in case it would happen.

James McDonald is a landowner and referenced an email he received today that the Board received from NextEra which says the ordinances are currently good and strong, but they know they are not. He said this is the fox guarding the hen house. He said NextEra has sold another development in another state and that company went broke. He said litigation was needed to get NextEra to take responsibility. He said no one lobbying for this project lives in Clinton County.

Janet Turpin lives in Clinton and is against the turbines because of concerns of contaminates in ground water. She mentioned a study that demonstrates stress on ground animals and livestock in the area. She lived in an area with turbines and said they interfered with satellite signals and cell phone reception.

Sue Schlichter is a resident of Clinton County and grew up north of Elvira. She said they retired and moved back to Clinton County in a house away from industrialization and is now angry she may have to have these structures around their property. She said the Board has the ability to protect everybody through the ordinance updates. She said roads will be destroyed for the construction of the turbines. She said fire departments don't have manpower or equipment to address a failure. She said wildlife will be in danger. She wondered how they will they get transmission lines through properties and will eminent domain be used. She suggested the Board review the Madison County ordinance because they approved the ordinance for the residents over the mighty dollar. She asked for 1.5-mile setback from property lines of non-participating landowners, schools and wildlife areas.

Bryon Dunlop said his house would be surrounded by turbines if the project goes through. He wants a setback of 3,280 feet from property lines and zero flicker for non-participating property. He also asked for sound level restrictions as well.

Ryan Drew is a union representative local 150 operating engineers and said some of those members who work on the projects do live in Clinton County. He said they are finishing a job in Henry County and almost all of them were local engineers. He said this is an economic development issue. He said nearby a company recently was not able to build because energy wasn't available.

Karl Deperoux is a business representative for Local 150 operating engineers and said they have members working in Bishop Hill, IL., and the relationship with the developers and local residents is different than here. He said these projects are good for workers and the communities. He said they recruit veterans to do these jobs.

Arlen Van Zee of Camanche thinks it's very clear what the boards need to do and that's update the zoning ordinance. He said it needs to be a strict ordinance and people need to be protected. They should be allowed to lease the land, but they shouldn't violate the neighbor's land. He said there are other counties that have done it. He asked them to write the ordinance in a fair way.

Rachel Till of Delmar comes from a family of farmers and said they moved out of Iowa for two years, but moved back knowing this is where they wanted to live. She enjoys the peace and quiet of the area and that is being threatened by getting a nightmare. She said her neighbors are being misled by the wind companies.

Mike Carberry, Bright Future Iowa outreach director, believes good projects are driven by good policy. He said there is no need to reinvent the wheel and he said that wasn't done the first time the ordinance was passed. He said Clinton County needs economic development. He said wind and solar projects can replace the jobs the County has lost. He said these developments will also attract other businesses. Iowa has never used eminent domain for renewable energy. He said wind turbines are ranked tenth on the list of bird mortality by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Bill Gerhard of Johnson County said he was a county construction laborer and became a business representative for the union. He said he views a wind turbine as a creation of safe renewable energy and sees laborers working on it and a local economy booming. He said he sees the County and schools getting tax revenue to improve roads and get high-speed broadband around the country. He asked the Board to come up with a common-sense ordinance to allow wind energy to develop.

David Osterberg of Linn County said he worked as a University of Iowa professor of public health. He said the Iowa environmental council worked at looking at noise affects from wind turbines. He said there are hundreds of papers on the topic. He said one was done by MIT and the Canadian Council of Academies and they could not find documented health effects except for annoyance. He said the annoyance was dependent based on if they were receiving payments from the wind industry. He said if you spend a lot of time on the internet, you can get pretty annoyed.

Michelle Braswell said she spoke with someone from Bishop Hill who moved because of the wind turbine project. She has been speaking to people who have had effects from living near wind turbines including people who have had to move away due to noise and flicker. She said one case had children who were being affected and after not getting help from NextEra, they paid thousands to move their house two miles away. She said an email from NextEra said sound levels should be set by average levels, but she said it should not be determined by averages.

Ali Kilburg lives near Elwood and said her kids deserve to play in the yard without potential of long-term effects of hearing damage or flicker affects. She referenced a WHO study about hearing loss. She also mentioned the effects of sleep deprivation. She asked for a setback of three miles from property lines.

Kay Pence of rural Scott County said there are legitimate concerns to be considered. She said the climate crisis is impacting our health and communities. She said coal plants are going away and rural Iowa is losing population. She said the USDA is predicting a sharp drop in farm income and the industry is showing it with factory closings and layoffs. She said utility grade wind will bring property tax revenue to the County. She said the leases could mean losing a family farm or not.

Steve Brandenburg, Clinton County resident north of Goose Lake, said he has done a lot of tile projects in the area and worked near a wind farm in Illinois. He said there needs to be consideration for tiles and not an afterthought. He said backed up water could affect downstream neighbors. He said there is no standard for as good or better if tile needs to be replaced if broken by the projects. He said the cranes can crush tile and may not be realized for up to five years.

Alan Sparks of Charlotte followed up on questions he asked at the first meeting about air flight and the National Guard training that flies up into the area. He is also worried about a fire starting a fire in a dry field.

Tom Ribley is an attorney representing some landowners in the area and has been involved in wind turbine-related negotiations in 12 counties. He said he worked with Madison County and he's proud of the ordinance that they created. He said a lot of time people can't put the size of the turbines in perspective nor the setback distances. He said a 600-foot wind turbine is two football fields and the setback is four football fields. He said the wind turbine companies have the same responses. He said an MIT study mentioned earlier is 10 years old. He said he's represented people who moved out of their house and it's been empty since 2019. He said he knows a family that moved to the basement because of the flickering. He said turbines need to be put up in the right place. He said the decrease in land values hasn't been brought up tonight.

Irwin said he is stopping the meeting because it is after 10 p.m. He said the people who were signed up to talk but didn't get to will be able to speak at the start of the October 9 meeting.

The Board of Supervisors adjourned to meet on Monday, September 23, 2024, at 9:00 a.m. at the Clinton County Law Center, 241 7th Ave N, Clinton, IA.

Eric Van Lancker, County Auditor

Jim Irwin, Jr., Chairperson

-APPROVED-

County Auditor

Chairperson