



TRIBUNE-PHONOGRAPH

~ www.centralwinews.com ~

Serving Abbotsford, Colby, Curtiss, Dorchester, Milan and Unity, Wis.

INSIDE



Colby girls track takes second page 12

Vol. 62, No. 13

Wednesday, March 29, 2023

20 pages -- \$1.50

Complaints aired about wind turbine companies *Farmland First, state reps encourage towns to pass ordinances*

By Neal Hogden

Two events transpired on Monday night that gave people clarity on what wind turbine companies are trying to accomplish in Clark and Marathon Counties. The two events, one hosted by RWE Renewables at the Abbotsford City Hall and the other hosted by Farmland First at the Curtiss Fire Hall, showed differing perspectives on the project.

RWE open house

RWE Renewables kicked off the night with their version of an open house-style meeting. Residents could walk up to tables that had experts in the fields of engineering and turbine design, sound and frequency of the turbines, permitting, contract details and more. About 30 or so attendees cycled through for the first half hour of the town hall as they went from station to station.

About a half hour in, Martin Machtan, an organizing member of Farmland First, took charge of the event by grabbing attendees' attention and asking RWE questions about the project.

He began his line of questioning by detailing the events that led up to the meeting. Machtan said he had emailed

RWE on Feb. 22 to invite RWE to attend a March 13 meeting with representatives from both sides of the wind turbine debate in attendance. He said Julie Drennen from RWE was unable to pull a team together in that short of time.

Machtan said he emailed Drennen back four hours later and suggested March 27th as a date that was later and would give RWE enough time to get a team of representatives together. Machtan said he was notified shortly thereafter that the company had decided to plan their own event on that same day.

"Instead of having an open, public discussion, they chose to have a competing event," Machtan said.

Machtan called for a vote on whether the crowd wanted a public discussion or whether people wanted to participate in RWE's "marketing event."

The crowd overwhelmingly voted for a public discussion and RWE officials allowed the event to turn into a question-and-answer session instead.

Machtan facilitated the discussion at the beginning, laying out some of the issues he had with RWE's sales tactics and the way they were answering questions at the open house event.



ADDRESSING THE CROWD - Cory Tomczyk, Wisconsin State Senator for District 29, told the crowd at the Curtiss Fire Hall that the state would not be organized enough to help fight wind turbine development. That needed to be done on a local scale by townships.

STAFF PHOTO/NEAL HOGDEN

See **TURBINES**/ Page 2

From Ukraine to Unity: Escaping the war on Ukraine

By Neal Hogden

The Hnatiuks had lived in Ukraine their whole lives. Their once peaceful home had been anything but over the last year. Although their hometown of Lviv is not located in the eastern part of the country where a majority of the fighting has been taking place, the Hnatiuk family made the tough decision to leave family, friends and their entire lives behind.

Leaving home

Mykola and Olesia Hnatiuk made the decision to leave their home in part because Mykola's brother was killed during the war. Their two kids, Roman, 6 years old, and Dmytro, 3 years old, were at risk of growing up in a world full of conflict and war. The Hnatiuks said they knew they needed to get out of the country if they wanted their children to be able to learn and grow in a safe environment. They would need to flee the country.

The city of Lviv is considered the culture capital of Ukraine. It is the sixth-largest city in Ukraine with a 2022 estimated population of 717,000.

It was fall of 2022 when they decided to leave the country they loved for a new beginning. Although

Mykola might have otherwise been required to stay in the country to potentially serve in the military, he was allowed to leave because of his brother's death in the war.

Olesia said making the decision to leave was not one that was made lightly as they had to leave everything they had known up until that point, for a new life.

"It was very hard. It was a hard decision because you leave all your life, all your relatives, all your friends, all your stuff. Everything you have, you leave," Olesia said.

Olesia said she did not want her kids growing up around rockets, drones and the carnage that war brought upon her area.

"If we stayed there, our children would have no chance to grow, have an education, or have a childhood. No chance," Olesia said. "We were looking for a place for our children to be safe," Mykola reiterated.

She said her city of Lviv only allowed its residents to use electricity for four hours out of the day. She said no one knew when the power would be coming

See **UKRAINE**/ Page 10



THE HNATIUK FAMILY - A family displaced from Ukraine, from left to right: Mykola, Roman, Olesia and Dmytro Hnatiuk, have found a safe haven with Bryce and Maxine Luchterhand of Unity.

SUBMITTED PHOTO



Spring FILTER SALE March 1 - April 30
NOW IS THE TIME TO ORDER YOUR QUALITY NAPA GOLD FILTERS!
 Call in orders, or if you prefer, we can come to you and go over your filter needs.

PROGRAM 1: Orders placed by Feb. 16 will be ready March 1-10
PROGRAM 2: Orders placed by March 16 will be ready April 1-10

You can pre-order Programs 1 & 2 or both.
 ** Pre-orders receive an extra discount **

WALK-IN APRIL 1-30 ONLY (Limited to stock on-hand)
 Due to supply chain issues, we can not guarantee all ordered filters will be delivered.

10% DISCOUNT ON TOOLS DURING THE SPRING FILTER SALE

RiverCountry CO-OP
NAPA AUTO PARTS

Abbotsford 715-223-6371 | Marathon 715-443-3460 | Owen 715-229-2181

Turbines

Continued from page 1

Alex Pinter, an attendee of the event, asked if anyone from RWE had a straightforward answer on what setbacks from tower to surrounding properties might look like. He said he had gone around and asked RWE representatives during the opening portion of the open house but was given non-specific answers which concerned him.

A representative responded with citing Wisconsin Public Service Commission Statute 128.

She said the chart inside PSC 128 would be very helpful to people who were concerned about setbacks. She said the setbacks would be 1,250 feet for non-participating residents homes, 1.1 times the height of the turbine (at maximum blade-tip height) for non-participating property owners' property lines and 1.1 times the height of the maximum blade-tip height for participating residents. For example, a 600-foot tall turbine would need to be placed at least 660 feet away from a participating land owner's home.

Pinter said he specifically asked the employee the question and said she would not respond to him.

Another attendee brought up a scenario where would be unable to build a house on his own property if a tower was 660 feet away from his property line because the property would be within the required 1,250-foot setback to a non-participating residence.

"Because my neighbor wants to get greedy and make some money, I cannot do what I want to do with my land," he said.

The complaints were publicly aired to

RWE employees for about 40 minutes before the event went back to its original format.

Farmland First town hall

Around 300 people packed the Curtiss Fire Hall to gather information on the ongoing wind turbine discussion.

A panel of five members of Farmland First and local politicians spoke to the crowd. Panel members included: Machtan, Ryan LaSee, Jon Beran, Clark County Supervisor Fred Schindler and Clark County Supervisor Tom Wilcox.

The members each talked about ways the wind energy companies were not being honest in their eyes. Schindler kicked off the meeting by talking about the duties of local government to protect the citizens they serve.

"Who has the most power to do something about this in the next 30 to 60 days? The real power is in the township. Yes, a little-bitty six-by-six township with three supervisors. They can pass an ordinance that can protect your health, safety and wellbeing with two votes," Schindler said.

He said the best thing townships can do is follow the lead of the Township of Lincoln in Eau Claire County.

He said they passed an ordinance that prevents wind energy companies from building turbines within a mile of a resident's home and had a few other provisions in it that made it difficult for companies to build the turbines.

He said after the ordinance was made, the wind company that was exploring putting up turbines in that area, packed up and left.



TOWN HALL TURNED Q&A - Left: Town of Colby Chairman Larry Oehmichen (right) spoke to Tyler Beemer of Burns & McDonnell (left) about the development timeline and permits at RWE's open house on Monday. Right: The group then opened the discussion up for a public Q&A session.

STAFF PHOTOS/NEAL HOGDEN

He also talked about the contradiction from farmers accepting money for a wind farm when their farm is enrolled in a farmland preservation program.

"They are signing their farm up for an industrial wind complex," Schindler said. "An industrial wind complex," He reiterated. "And they're in farmland preservation to preserve the farmland. It's totally nuts."

Wilcox told the crowd about the incidental take laws that apply to wind energy companies.

He said the wind energy companies have in their contract that they are allowed to incidentally take bald and golden eagles.

"Last time I checked, if a citizen possesses an eagle feather, the first offense fine is \$100,000 or one year in prison, or both," Wilcox said. "The federal government thinks enough of a bald eagle to fine you for possessing a feather. On the other hand, for green energy, you can get an incidental take permit."

"Their take permit is more eagles per year than I see in a year. How can that be a green energy project?"

Beran spoke next as he laid out the issues with the sales tactics used by the companies after his parents who live in the Town of Johnson, had a first-hand experience with them.

He also dove into the financial impact the turbines could have on property value and tax revenue for governing bodies including the school districts. He said the financial gain from direct payments to landowners and tax payments to governmental entities would not be enough to offset the damage they would cause by decreasing resale value of homes and residents potentially moving away to get away from the turbines.

LaSee detailed the financing motiva-



tions for companies to target Marathon and Clark Counties for their project. He estimated that the companies would make \$1.1 million per year off of a single turbine. He equated this number to close to a \$1 billion in revenue for the wind company for all of its turbines in a wind project throughout the life of a 30-year project.

"We really aren't a very windy area. Well, a penny saved, is a penny earned, right? In this case, an extra million is a million earned," LaSee said.

Machtan finished by going through the injustices in the contracts and how the wind companies have put clauses in there that the common person might not question but could prove to be damaging down the road.

State senators Cory Tomczyk, Jesse James and Karen Hurd were in attendance along with a plethora of local and county officials.

Tomczyk encouraged local politicians to get this done from the ground, up. Hurd said she would work for the people to find answers from a state level.

RWE ribbon cutting

About 15 peaceful protestors held signs reading "No Wind Turbines" at a ribbon-cutting event hosted by the Abby/Colby Crossings Chamber of Commerce and the Clark County Economic Development Corporation on Tuesday, March 28.

Both Colby-Abbotsford police chief Jason Bauer and Clark County Sheriff Scott Haines were in attendance to keep the peace.

A truck driven by LaSee, a founding member of the Farmland First organization, donned a large banner which displayed "No Wind Turbines" as well.

I Believe in Marriage, but not for our two Judges

Our current judge is Lyndsey Brunette. Her husband, Jake Brunette is running to be the second judge in Clark County. Two judges should make it easier for Clark County, not harder. Having two judges should increase the availability of a judge when needed. Two judges can coordinate schedules so one is always available. With two judges that are not married, when one judge is on a family vacation or unavailable because of a family emergency, the other can:

- Cover the daily business of the courts without interruption, delay, or the need to bring in a judge that Clark County did not elect.
- Sign search warrants when needed, so our law enforcement officers don't have to find a judge from another county and travel for a signature, especially at 3:00 a.m.
- Handle hearings that by State Statute must be held within 24 or 48 hours of the event (such as juvenile or mental health cases), without having to bring in a judge from another county.

Judges must decline to hear cases because of a conflict, such as a case involving a relative or close friend. If a married judge has a conflict, most likely the spouse does too—creating the burden and expense of a judge from another county.

Every person under Wisconsin law has a right to ask for an impartial judge to hear his or her case—a "substitution of judge." In counties with more than one judge, the case is often transferred to another judge from the same county. But when the two judges are married, it seems your right to "substitution" is now meaningless—going from husband to wife or vice versa is not really a change of judge at all.

Therefore, vote for WILLIAM BRATCHER, the INDEPENDENT CHOICE we need for our second Clark County Judge.

Authorized and Paid for by Julie Counsell

133836



CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW? - Ryan LaSee drove a truck with a sizeable banner on it past the ribbon cutting of RWE's office building on First Street in Abbotsford.

STAFF PHOTO/NEAL HOGDEN