

Highland supervisors asked to share wind research

MONTEREY — At their monthly meeting Tuesday, Highland supervisors agreed to set a date to decide on Highland New Wind Development's request for a zoning amendment change — which would grant height variances to all commercial wind turbines — at their Jan. 4 meeting. Deadline for a decision is Jan. 19, and supervisors discussed the need to set a date with winter weather in mind. They plan to set a date that allows time for rescheduling if needed.

At the end of the meeting Tuesday chamber of commerce executive director Carolyn Pohowsky handed the supervisors a memo inviting them to participate in a public information-sharing meeting prior to the date the supervisors will decide on the issue.

Pohowsky wrote: "You, the supervisors, have expressed on numerous occasions your willingness to listen to the public's input on the subject of wind energy, and for that, we are all truly appreciative.

"I know that you are researching all of the ramifications of, both positive and negative, regarding the development of wind industry in Highland County. You drew up a list of questions that you indicated you would like answers to before making a decision. These same questions are of concern to me as a resident and property owner.

"Given the format of a public hearing — including limited comment time from each speaker — you have the opportunity to hear about what is uppermost in the public's mind

with regard to wind energy — everything from personal concerns, to documented research gathered independently or collectively.

"We, on the other hand, have not been privy to all of the research each of you and our county administrator has done. Local citizens, as well as citizens in neighboring counties have also done a lot of research (and, I include our neighbors because any decision regarding 400' structures in Highland County will surely impact them.)

"It concerns me that, as both a resident and property owner, and as director of the chamber of commerce, I may not be as informed as I should be regarding the impact wind energy might have on the future of our county... There are so many considerations involved in a decision of this magnitude. To name a few...

- Economic considerations — the possibility of revenue to the community versus impact on land values and existing economic development initiatives, including tourism.

- The aesthetic and economic value of Highland County's view sheds.

- Environmental considerations.

- The applicant's willingness to provide information which addresses the planning district commission's and the county's concerns.

- Public concerns — are some (i.e., residents, landowners, or visitors) given more weight than others?"

Pohowsky requested supervisors respond before their Jan. 4 meeting.

— Will O'Connor

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