

A transcript: Hearing on wind energy proposal

Editor's note: Last week's newspaper coverage of the May 19 public hearing on a conditional use permit request from Highland New Wind Development reflected only a small portion of the nearly eight hours of testimony given that night. The meeting, which lasted from 6:30 p.m. to 2 a.m. on the morning of May 20, was record-setting in its length, the number who attended (roughly 500), and in the number of speakers (about 100).

Due to the weight of this issue pending before Highland County, the possible site of Virginia's first industrial wind utility, we felt compelled to provide a complete transcript of those who spoke that night, which follows here on 20 pages. While we do not expect many subscribers to read every word, we hope this can be a good resource for all interested parties in the remaining days before our board of supervisors makes its decision.

Those who read parts of this transcript should be aware it is a nearly verbatim record of the spoken word, complete with sentence fragments or incomplete thoughts, and reflecting the language and tone of the speakers. Some spoke directly from written statements; others spoke without notes.

Allegheny Mountain Radio was kind enough to provide its recording of the hearing to The Recorder, which consisting of eight, one-hour tapes. Consequently, there are a few places where those manning the radio equipment were switching cassette tapes. Those breaks are marked in this text.

We apologize in advance for errors contained in this document, as not every word was intelligible. The Recorder will gladly correct mistakes in next week's issue if we are notified by speakers of our errors.

Supervisors meet Tuesday, June 7 in a regular meeting, at which time they will set a date to vote on this request.

Lisa Hawkins

Good evening. My name is Lisa Hawkins. I'm a land use attorney with the Harrisonburg office of Keeler Obenschain PC. I'm here with my partner, John Flora, to speak on behalf of Highland New Wind Development LLC, the applicant.

John will focus more on the specifics of the application and the issues that have come up over the past several years that this project has been in process in Highland County.

My goal is to provide some context for tonight's decision in terms of the legal framework. I have to say at the outset that I suspect John and I are a little outnumbered. I've been practicing land use law for quite awhile and I have to tell you that's not at all unusual. The applicant is almost always outnumbered. It's a lot easier to get people to appear to speak against something than it is to get people to speak in favor of it, particularly when it's something new. That's especially true where the opposition is extremely vocal and well-organized. It can be a little intimidating, and even frightening, to put yourself out there in support of something when you're going to run into people who are vehemently opposed to it at the local gas station or the grocery store, especially in a small community.

We have supporters here tonight. And we hope that some of them will speak. We know we also have supporters who aren't here tonight. But this isn't a head count. Land use decisions are not about how many people support it, and how many people are opposed. If it were that easy we wouldn't need a board of supervisors to make the determination. It's also not about how loudly those in favor, or against, talk, or how secretly they whisper. It's about what makes sense for the county. And your job is to make a decision that makes sense for the county, even if some people will be upset or angry at that decision.

I think part of the reason there are so many people here tonight is that you have done a very good job in managing this process. It's taken a long time, several years, there have been multiple forums and opportunities to gather and share information. There has also been a lot of time for those who are opposed to the project to orchestrate what you see tonight. That's a good thing, in terms of the process. But I caution you, don't give it more weight than it deserves.

Let's talk about the petition, for example. A lot of people have signed it. But those individuals don't have the benefit of all of the information you have, and your job is to sift through that information, as well as their opinions, and come to your own independent conclusion as to what makes sense for Highland County. You have a number of legal standards that have to govern you in that process, in decision-making, but before I get to those I'd like to spend a few

minutes talking about something that you really needn't concern yourself with and that is the seed of fear that has been planted by the opposition to this project. Specifically the fear that granting a conditional use permit application to Highland New Wind Development will somehow tie your hands with regards to any future wind applications, resulting in a wind turbine on every ridge line in Highland County. That's simply is not the case.

[Passes letter to board members]

That's a letter that analyzes the legal framework that deals with the issue of discrimination in land use decision-making and because of the limited time that we have I won't go through all of the points but I would like to take a few minutes to talk about one case that's cited in those materials.

And that's the most recent supreme court case, Virginia Supreme Court case, that deals with the issue of discrimination in land use. That's the 2001 case of Fairfax County versus McDonald's. McDonald's applied to Fairfax County for a special use permit to add a drive-through window to an existing restaurant. Fairfax County said no. The same day it said no, it said yes to a competing fast food restaurant with a drive through window, shortly on the heels of having said yes to yet another McDonald's suit. The case went all the way to the Virginia Supreme Court, where McDonald's lost.

The Virginia Supreme Court gave us a rule that governs the issue of discrimination in land use. In a nutshell that rule is, a local government can treat two similarly situated applicants differently, can discriminate among them, so long as it has a justification or rational basis for doing so. The interesting thing about the McDonald's case is the court never even got to that test of standard because it decided that mcd and the other restaurants were not even similarly situated and in making that decision, it looked at a number of things particular to the sites — access, traffic patterns, configuration, size, neighborhood, characteristics of the site to say, McDonald's, you're not in the same boat with these other applications so the issue of discrimination is completely irrelevant. So how is that relevant to your decision tonight?

The site that Highland New Wind has selected for its special use application is particularly well-suited to commercial wind development. It has among the best winds that have yet been identified in the eastern region of the United States. It has an existing 69 KV high-powered super-duper transmission line already running through it, and can be connected into the electrical grid without the construction or installation of any additional overhead power lines. It's accessible through state route 250, and the existing access road that will be restored to its pre-project condition when the project is completed. It can be constructed without adversely affecting any woodlands, waterways, watersheds, or flood plains. It's in the westernmost region of the county which is sparsely populated. It can't be seen from Monterey, or any other significant population center in Highland County, or any designated growth area in Highland County. It's so close to the West Virginia line that similar view shed impacts to this project will likely happen anyway, without any economic benefits to Highland County if in fact wind development in WV continues.

How many parcels of land in Highland County do you truly think are similarly situated to that site? And even if you could find one, don't you think you could also find a rational basis for distinguishing this site from that one, this application from that one. That's all the law requires. What else does the law require? Let's talk about that.

We're asking for a conditional use permit. Your ordinances require you to find that that proposed use is compatible with surrounding uses, consistent with the intent of the zoning ordinance and of the land use element of the comprehensive plan, in the public interest, and in compliance with all other provisions of law and ordinance of Highland County.

John Flora will review the impacts that the project poses for adjoining land, real and imagined, and will touch on considerations relevant to determining compatibility with surrounding uses and public interest.

My focus is more on consistency with the comprehensive plan and the zoning ordinance. The proposed site is zoned A-2, as Roberta Lambert mentioned. That's the general agricultural district in Highland County, not the conservation district. It's also not in the area identified in the comprehensive plan as deserving of special view shed treatment, which is the area around McDowell Battlefield. Your ordinance says about A-2, 'The character of the district should remain agricultural in nature, with industry or commercial activities allowed when they will benefit the area without degrading the envi-

ronment.' This project keeps the character of the land agricultural. It will continue to be grazing land, it benefits the county as a whole, and it does not degrade the environment. In fact, it contributes to preservation of the environment. It also furthers a number of specific and general goals set out in the 1999 comprehensive plan of Highland County.

Goal: Retain agricultural as an important economic sector, including recommendations to explore ways of providing farmers with second income opportunities. That's exactly what this project does for the McBride family. It allows them to keep this land as farm land, by providing them with a second-income opportunity.

Goal: Increase the county's financial resources. including recommending to investigate ways to increase the tax base through local regional economic development and analyze the development of alternate sources of tax revenue. As John will discuss in more detail this project has a direct, beneficial bottom-line impact on Highland County.

Goal: Preserve and protect atmospheric quality in Highland County, including a specific recommendation that the county 'seek the establishment of clean industries that do not produce harmful emissions.'

A commercial wind farm is a clean industry that does not produce harmful emissions. and in fact lessens the need for dirty industry that does produce harmful emissions. We also contend that this project would actually improve another economic base for Highland County, which is tourism. Another pervasive theme in the comprehensive plan. John Flora will give some specific examples in support of that position.

Finally, your ordinance requires, requires that you address three concerns in analyzing any conditional use permit application.

1. 'The effect of the proposed use or special exception on existing and projected traffic volumes in the neighborhood.' I trust we can all agree that state route 250 is more than sufficient to meet the minimal traffic demands of this project.

2. 'The current and future need for the proposed use in Highland County and the area.' This gets to the economic development benefit, as well as furthering the county's stated goals that I reviewed, including those related to economic development, tourism, and preservation of local resources, and promotion of clean industries.

3. 'The character of the existing neighborhood and the effect of the proposed use or special exception on existing property values.'

This is really the crux of it, I think, and it's the perfect place to pass the ball to John, who will focus on these questions and related issues.

Thank you very much.

John Flora

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... after all this time I have very little new information of substance to submit to you tonight. As developments have occurred, we have tried to keep you informed as to those developments. One significant change is that tonight we have many supporters and speakers with us. The focus of my remarks will be on why this project should be approved, and more importantly, why this project should be supported by all the citizens of Highland County who care about its future and want to preserve Virginia's Switzerland.

You have a difficult task of balancing the advantages and disadvantages of this project in Highland County. Later this evening you are going to hear about all kinds of bad things pertaining to wind farms. But you know what? It's a rapidly increasing business because most of the things you're going to hear later tonight are exaggerated or simply not true. If wind farms are so bad, why are they everywhere in Europe, even in Switzerland?

[Displays photos to board]

These are a few pictures of wind turbines in Switzerland. Worldwide, wind power generation has tripled over the past five years. If they were noisy, smelly, dangerous, and bad, my bet is, you wouldn't see such tremendous worldwide growth. You wouldn't read about Warren Buffet and Goldman-Sachs investing in wind power, but they are. And Highland County needs to be part of that growth. You will hear that they are noisy. They are not. The turbines are as loud as a refrigerator when you're standing 1,000 feet away, and there are no houses within a 1,000 feet of this project.

You will hear that lighting is excessive or disturbing. It is not. Lighting on wind turbine farms is minimal and non-intrusive. The FAA will be releasing its guidelines later this summer, we've been waiting for this, and we expect those guidelines to be consistent

with the present policy of requiring lights on certain, but not all, of the turbines.

You will hear that the turbines are dangerous because blades fall off and ice throw. They are not. There has been one death reported in the wind industry over the past 20 years throughout the world. That's when a sky diver missed his mark. No deaths have been caused by ice throws or blades falling off.

You will hear that adjacent property owners' land will be greatly devalued. It will not. There is empirical evidence that values will actually increase. We presented to you several months ago, I think it was in December, a 2003 survey prepared by the renewable energy policy project that studied wind farms throughout this country. The conclusion of that 2003 survey, and I quote, "Although there is some variation in the three cases studied, the results point to the same conclusion: the statistical evidence does not support a contention that property values within the view shed of wind development suffer or perform poorer than in a comparable region. For the great majority of projects in all three of the cases studied, property values in the view shed actually go up, faster than values in the comparable region.

You will hear that wind turbines are harmful to birds, bats and endangered species. They are not. Birds do fly into things, but turbines are no more attractive to birds than a cell tower, your car, a five-story building, or a cat. We do not believe there are any endangered species on Red Oak Knob or Tamarack. During the State Corporation Commission's permitting process later this summer we will be required to conduct an environmental study under the auspices of U.S. Fish and Wildlife. My remarks tonight are focused on the impact of this project on this county, not the impact of a flying squirrel that we don't think exists. That's for another day, in another forum.

Now there is one problem — at least some people think it's a problem — and that's that wind turbines are not invisible. The turbine itself is 260 feet high, and when you add the blade at its very top part, at its tip, they're just under 400 feet. Some people do not like to see anything different, particularly in Highland County whether the tower is 400 feet, or 10 feet.

People here have objected to widening 250, the Fast Track, trees being cut at the courthouse, just about anything. Some people have suggested that we mitigate the impact of the turbines by reducing their height to, say, 200 feet. That's not feasible. That's why we have persistently requested permission to construct a 400-foot structure.

After I've listened to all the speeches, and all the objections, it seems to me that the biggest objection is that the wind turbines are not invisible. That's a pure and simple view shed issue. We've heard lots of other objections but I think a lot of people use everything they can find to object because they ultimately just don't want to see wind turbines.

As I've pointed out before, you need to decide how significant that concern really is. Whose view is being impaired by the construction of wind turbines on Allegheny Mountain? Well first of all, there are only four homes of permanent residents who, with some effort, will see some of these turbines in this remote area of the county. In ... New York, there are 35 homes within 800 feet of that new wind farm. The closest of those four residences on Allegheny Mountain to a wind turbine will be approximately a half a mile. Robin, I remember craning our necks from Mr. Brody's porch around the trees to try to see the turbine site.

What about the folks in Mill Gap, or Doe Hill? How often do you think those people will be offended by the site of the wind turbines? Will they ever see them? Many land owners and visitors come out here to hunt, fish, and enjoy nature. This is a big county with lots of trails, fishing spots, and scenic vistas. If someone dislikes seeing the turbines, they can avoid seeing them with minimal effort. You have a wonderful event each year — the maple syrup festival.

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... [Visitors travel over] Monterey Mountain, and then if they want to venture even further, across Lantz Mountain, as I've shown before on the map.

Does that constitute a significant view shed cost? Enough to outweigh the benefits of this wind farm to the county as a whole? Absolutely not. This project is in a remote location. It's in the right location — on the west side of the county where few people travel and few people are impacted by change to the view shed.

Now I want to spend the rest of my time on the benefits. In short, the benefits far outweigh the concerns. What are those benefits? The biggest benefit by far is revenue — tax dollars — no question. But let me cover briefly the other benefits that I can identify. Just focusing on Highland County — not Virginia, not this country, not the world — what are the non-economic benefits of this

project?

Over time, as the wind business and renewable energy business picks up, you will have less coal-burning facilities in our region, and you will have better vision, so you will have a better view shed. Your trout will be better with less acid rain. The positive impact to Highland County is cleaner air, and cleaner water.

The only other non-economic benefit that I can identify is view shed. There are many people who like to look at wind turbines. They believe they are majestic and beautiful to look at. This project will provide significant employment — 80-100 jobs during the construction phase. Some of the specialized labor that is needed, that will come in from outside the county to construct this project, will necessarily spend room and board dollars in Highland County. During construction phase there should be a significant boost to the local economy, particularly in the service sector. On an ongoing basis, this project will create one maybe two permanent jobs to maintain and operate the wind farm.

The wind farm will be a tourist attraction. If you want to be like Switzerland, then you need to build some wind farms and advertise. You need to sell it. Here is a web site from Switzerland, advertising a tour of a wind farm that was built in 1996. Here is a web site from Switzerland advertising a Swiss hotel that sells its proximity to a wind farm. If you want to look and act and be like Switzerland, this is what it looks like. Get a wind farm, and you can be just like them. You can be Virginia's Switzerland.

Now for the big ticket item — as we have discussed before, is tax revenue that this project provides.

Once built, although we don't have an exact and final number, it appears the annual revenue to the county will be \$175,000 to \$250,000 a year, \$35-\$50 million over the 20-year life expectancy of the wind farm. And in the wind farm business, once you cross the 15-year threshold, you do everything you can to keep those things going because usually your debt is behind you. That's just a 20-year figure — \$35 to \$50 million. That's a lot of money for a struggling county.

Now you would prefer that I talk about \$250,000 a year but my client, the McBride family, would prefer that I talk about just \$175,000 a year. And since I'm working for him and he's paying me to stand up in front of this crowd, that's the number I'm going to focus on.

The biggest taxpayer currently in Highland County pays about \$33,000 a year. At \$175,000, that's more than five times the money provided by largest current taxpayer. It seems to me with your real estate tax being your primary source of income ... attracting a taxpayer like a wind farm, that doesn't cost you anything in terms of service demands like this wind project would do, is extremely attractive to the county as a whole, and to every landowner struggling to make ends meet. This type of revenue stream will minimize and delay your need to increase real estate taxes over the next 20 years or maybe more.

We identified the tax issue early on as the key driver and benefit to Highland County. The State Corporation Commission tax computation method produces declining revenue stream for this type of project. As a result of our conversation, I submitted legislation to Sen. Hanger to establish a level, 20-year tax with some cost of living adjustment. That legislation did not succeed, but we will put it in again next year so you can have a reliable steady stream instead of a declining stream of revenue.

Our critics will say we will seek an exemption and you should not approve this unless you absolutely lock up the revenue stream. As you know, we tried to do that, and we just recently got an Attorney General opinion on April 5 that in her opinion, that would not be possible. I think you've worked long enough with my client and my law firm to know that if we say we're not going to seek an exemption, we won't.

When we submit our building permit application, hopefully in early 2006, the county will receive \$120,000 check for the building permit. The revenue generated by this wind farm development is a huge benefit to every citizen in this county who is trying to preserve the county the way it looks today. Without some source of revenue — and this is a huge source of revenue — you will be faced with rising real estate taxes which will generate more subdivisions, more property sales, more houses, and more infrastructure demands, and service demands.

If you have one wind farm, maybe you should have two or three, just like Switzerland. They're not going to crop up on every ridge; they can't. They must have good road access and transmission access. As you work on your long-range comprehensive plan you will ultimately come to some conclusion as to where else besides Allegheny Mountain in your county wind farms are appropriate.

But think a minute about the benefits of three wind farms. Three times \$175,000 is \$525,000. That's almost a third of the revenue you generated last year from real estate taxes. That's a tremendous

boost to your budget. It would provide much needed services and minimize the need for increased real estate tax. I don't see how you can turn that down. The broad-based economic benefits to all citizens of Highland County far outweigh the view shed concerns of a few.

In conclusion, the birds and bats which you will hear about later are not relevant to tonight's forum. That will be handled at the State Corporation Commission and we will deal with that at that time. We cannot proceed with this project without satisfying with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife. Noise is not a factor. View shed directly affects four people. This wind farm project is in the right place, and this is the right time for the county to shore up its financing. If you want to be Virginia's Switzerland, then you need to approve this conditional use permit.

Thank you for all of your work, and your attention.

Lloyd Paisley

Supervisor Jerry Rexrode: Mr. Paisley, I understand you install wind farms, correct?

Install wind farms for a number of developers, assisting in development and installing.

Rexrode: What size pads are on these 400-foot towers — the foundation? I've heard they're anywhere from two acres to four acres. That's why I'm asking. I want to know.

The foundations themselves, there are two types usually used in the U.S. There's the linear foundation, which for the type of machine we're considering here would be somewhere between 14 and 16 feet in diameter and something like 32, well, between 30 and 34 feet deep. But around that during construction we have one that supports the crane and that would be probably 80 feet by 52 feet ... to lay down the equipment. But when it's finished, it will be an area for that type of foundation in diameter something like 50 feet.

There's another type of foundation that's also used that's like a square footer you would use building a commercial building or some other type of building like that. It would generally be ... a hole excavated that would be dug between 12 and 15 feet deep; it would be octagonal in shape and probably somewhere's between 40 and 50 feet across the flat. The bottom piece of the pad would probably be between 6 and 8 feet flat with reinforcing steel around that. And then above that would be a cylindrical ... that supports the tower shaft that would probably be something like 6 feet tall and probably somewhere in the order of 16 to 18 feet in diameter.

Rexrode: You would say no more than 100 feet square?

Probably. When it's final, when it's cleaned up? Yes. That's fair — 100 foot by 100 foot.

Rexrode: Then these power turbines. What's the benefit of those versus the 250-foot turbines?

What happens is the wind speed increases with elevation above the ground and that's just a friction thing ... in the economics of the wind turbines, production is based on square of the velocity at the hub height. Basically if you double the velocity of the wind by increasing the height, you get four times the production. That's basically what it's based on. In most locations as you increase the elevation, the wind speed increases and therefore the cost of producing the energy decreases.

Supervisor Robin Sullenberger: Modern technology is ... things are being, prototype, even the proposed towers, I have had some people say that ... these type of turbines may be outmoded or obsolete long before life-span of the project has ever been completed, within 20 years ... What's your take on that, in terms of constructing these and then having them be here and then be obsolete almost before they're operational?

Let me go back. In the early '80s, we saw the advent of the modern wind age in the USA, mainly in California. It began out there in machines the size of 40 kw-60 kw-180 kilowatt, 15 meter rotors, 45 foot diameter. Only now, 25 years later, are they being replaced. There's the whole issue of economics. Wind projects are ... most of the money happens at the beginning. You borrow the money, and it takes a long time to pay off the debt on the project. And that how it is ... In general you don't see wind projects being repowered until the end of the contract ...

I think one of the other things that people are concerned about is will they get bigger and bigger and bigger like they've been doing. Currently, the largest machine that's been constructed and erected in the world is the 5-megawatt machine. It's on a 108-foot tower, it's 125-meter rotor diameter. It's an enormous machine. There will probably be only one built on land and that's the one that's now constructed and prototyped ... They're designed for the offshore market, where the cost of installation and building wind farms is between two and three times the cost of building one on-shore. So size is really important, and the fewer machines the more economical it is to do so ...

The other issue that will limit the technology for on-shore projects is just transportation alone. Now, we're talking about blades that are 116, 125 feet long. To go much longer, we can't get them to the locations we want to put them ... The roads aren't built in ways to do it. The highways aren't constructed for that. So there will be a physical limit on size of the machines.

So we've seen significant changes the last five years. We've seen machines get bigger, that's correct. But will it continue for the on-shore market? I don't think so.

Sullenberger: Having seen these all over in Europe, virtually every country in Europe has some minimum percentage of renewable energy resources that could run things ... even as much as 10, 15, 20 percent. There is no federal guideline in this country. Nor is there a guideline in the state of Virginia, and we've been somewhat disappointed by the fact that we have no model to operate from in making part of this decision. Do you — and I'm speaking to you as an industry insider here, and we know that Sen. Warner and Alexander have just introduced a bill that's actually going the other direction — do industry insiders feel that it's inevitable that the United States is going to adopt minimum guidelines for production of green power, and is the industry banking on that, in terms of future viability and profitability and the things that go along with this industry?

I think that, I mean, as part of the energy bill a year or so ago there was, at the federal level, the idea people were pushing for what would be called a federal RPS, renewable portfolio standard and I don't believe there ever will be a federal RPS. Personally, I don't believe it will be, and the reason I believe that is that each state would like to regulate its own things rather than have the federal government do that. And I think that's the main reason it won't be. I believe also there are a number of industry players such as the oil and gas industry, the coal industry, and the nuclear industry that have a lot more money to spend on what happens in the federal government. So I don't believe it will happen.

However, about the other question — for example, do we need a state RPS to see a boom in the industry? No. Wyoming doesn't have an RPS. Wyoming has had some of the earliest non-California wind projects built. Oregon and Washington do not have state RPSs. However, the largest wind farm in the United States at one stage in the world, was built there in '97. So no, I don't think the industry is relying on that. We believe that ... the cost of energy is becoming comparative with other forms of energy and that individuals in the country want to buy it. There are green power programs in the state of New York where there currently is no RPS ... but people want to buy, and there were three organizations set up to market green power in the state of New York before there was any idea, and people were demanding the utilities supply it — they paid a premium for it, and that's what the industry's based on.

PROPOSERS

Steve Halterman

My name is Steve Halterman and I reside currently in Bath County, Millboro, but my mother and I still take care of a little piece of Highland County down there in Halterman Hollow.

I wanted to say before I started that Jerry, I apologize to you — Mr. Rexrode, I beg your pardon — I didn't recognize you. When I was a sophomore and you were a senior, you seemed a lot bigger. And Mr. Sullenberger, I wouldn't have recognized you but I recognized your picture, except for the thing on your lip there.

I grew up here and the reason I came up here to speak, the reason I spent quite a few hours researching this, the main reason is, because I consider all of you my family. Anything that I've ever made out of myself — which isn't a lot, I'm just a humble school teacher — but anything that I've ever accomplished, I owe to people from this county.

Mr. Thompson, and Mr. Samples, and Mrs. Hammer, and Leslie Moyers, who used to haul me around in his truck. Those people are people that were my heroes. For those of you that don't know me and they're kind of interested in when I was here, I graduated with, went to college with, even roomed with — and it was probably the worst year of his life one year, and then I left him — Mr. Hooke, Randy Hooke, who's the principal of your high school. And may I say before I start that I've never met a more decent, honest, wonderful — nothing I could say that could really express how I feel about Mr. Hooke, and you're lucky to have him here.

But to start, I tried to come up with something a little different. I started in this investigation because we own a piece of the mountain. We own the highest point on Monterey Mountain — a very

small piece — and I started investigating this because I was kind of against this whole thing.

I lived out west for a number of years — lived in Wyoming, lived with windmills — and so I started with, you know, we don't want that stuff up on the mountain. And so that's the way I started the thing, and then all of sudden in our local newspaper, I started seeing this picture every week of this giant alien, and there was a pickup truck coming over the hill, and the alien was getting ready to gobble up. And I thought, well, you know, that doesn't look like anything I've ever seen, been living with windmills for years. After I wrote the letter you may have noticed they changed over from something from Nebraska, I believe.

So I went a little closer than Switzerland. I went to Tucker County, Mt. Storm — some of you have been up there. And there's millions of, well, not millions, there's hundreds of pictures you can get. There are 68,000 windmills in the world — 68,000 — every country in the world. There's hundreds of pictures you can get, so I went through all the pictures and tried to find something if you were driving up from Vanderpool, and you were looking over on the mountain, and there's a wind farm there, this is approximately the right perspective. These windmills were built two years ago, wind generators. They are the tall ones, and they are actually what you would see. So those of you who have got the impression that a windmill is something that towers over you — I only have five of these if you want to just pass them around — those of you who have never seen a wind generator might just take a quick look. This is a real picture in a real place that's just a couple hours away from us. I'll just get these started.

I have a lot of pictures, I have a lot of data. I have a lot of information if anybody would be interested in it. I also gave to these fellows — and I have a copy — a bunch of references. I'm not a political person. I don't have any agenda. These are government references. There's pro-windmill, anti-windmill, concerned citizens. I tried to go to everything and tried to get a middle of the ground. So if you're interested in looking at these, I'd be glad to show them to you.

Thank you very much.

Roscoe Moyers

My name is Roscoe Moyers. We've got a fine crowd here tonight. I believe we're getting a little more support for the windmills all the time.

I come into Monterey three years ago to pay my taxes one fall. That year real estate had took an awful raise. Me and the lady at the tax office, we were discussing it and I told her then — and my mind's not changed yet — if these little counties like Highland don't have no industry in them to help pay taxes, if something don't happen, there ain't going to be no Highland County. It'll be like the ATC office — you'll go to some other county to get your fertilizer. And talk about these windmills being an eyesore, up at Mt. Storm the state had to go in and make picnic areas to get the visitors and the tourist groups out of the road, from people coming to see them.

And I still think, I believe, a county that don't have no revenue coming in, and I've got tax in Highland County, some of my real estate I would say is at twice the value as the day I go to sell it. And I don't think the taxpayers, and the landowners of Highland County, if they're like me — and I'll tell you a lot of them are — I don't think we can take no more burden.

Thank you.

Stuart Hall

Gentlemen, supervisors, thank you for the opportunity to be here tonight.

I live in Millboro, Virginia. My wife owns approximately 600 acres in the lower end of Highland and as Mr. Moyers said, we do struggle to pay our taxes. I paid about \$4,500 last year in taxes in Highland County and while I don't reside here, I consider Highland just like Bath. It's the closest two places to heaven you'll ever be. And I would dare not say or do anything to hurt either county.

We wrestled with a similar project when we put a dam in, in Bath County, several years ago. It brought in a few dollars more in taxes than what you're going to get, but a lot of people were opposed.

I think you three gentlemen, I think the people of Highland have put their trust in you three gentlemen. I think you're all natives of Highland County and you know everyone in Highland County. I think you know the ability of the people to pay, same way we did in Bath County.

The only difference is, when we put the dam in in Bath County, several people had their land condemned and lost their farm. I'm sorry for that, but I don't think that's the case in Highland County. I think most of the people in Highland County are looking to you

gentlemen to do the right thing in Highland County. I know the tax revenues. I know you're in a position to know the revenues, the mandates by the state and local government, that are put on to these localities just like they are in Bath.

We know the ability of the people to pay, and I know you look around this county as I do when I go through. I've talked to about 35 or 40 people that are real close friends in Highland County, and they've asked me to speak here tonight, too, on their behalf. And they hope as you look at this project that you try to get some tax revenues in here.

When you look around at this county, you see people way past their retirement age, over here working every day trying to make enough to pay their taxes and live. I know, as in Bath County, these people struggle to pay their taxes and they'll do this before they spend anything else. And I know that every year some of these people do without food and medicine in order to pay their taxes. I think the county is in good hands with you three gentlemen and I know you'll do the right thing.

Thank you for your time.

Jacob Hevener

I'm Jacob Hevener. I'm from Hightown, Virginia.

And I'd like to remind you gentlemen, that is, Robin and Jerry, I think it was almost three years ago we went to Pennsylvania at the invitation of a wind farm to look at these things for the first time. And I went along — I got to ride shotgun and Jerry was driving.

Anyway, what I'd like to say is, they wine and dined us. They took us out. It was snowing — about six inches of snow — and you could see these things in the background. You could see the windmills, and I was as close to them probably as to the door over there, and I could hear nothing. I didn't see anything wrong. They were going about this fast, and I didn't see anything wrong with them whatsoever. And I enjoyed that trip. They were trying to sell us on wind farms — that was the whole purpose of it.

Then this past fall Col. Cobb and I went out to Blackwater Falls, West Virginia. You know where that is, next to Davis. And there's a big wind farm there that's got a lot of publicity you see in the paper. And we talked and we got close to them. I was as close to them as the door. I could hear nothing. I could see no problems, and I couldn't see anything wrong with that one, either. We talked to the people at Blackwater Falls where they have a hotel, and a place where people stayed. We talked to them and they thought it was all right. They couldn't see anything wrong with what was right next door to them, just across the hill.

But anyway, this is the way I feel. I feel there's nothing wrong with the windmills. Where I live, I won't see them on Red Oak Ranch. And when I come across Monterey Mountain when it's wintertime, I probably can see them. In summertime, in the fall up there, you can't see out anywhere on those mountains.

[RECORDING INTERRUPTED]

... I may be wrong about this, but I think on the side for these windmills the speculation is how much we're going to get. The gentleman here told us tonight what we get. We don't know that. We don't know what's going to happen. We don't know how much we're going to get out of this. My feelings are primary because of taxation. And the other side of the fence, it's very speculative how much damage these things are going to do. Everybody's saying I won't stay here if you put them up, I won't come here. That's all speculative. You don't know what it's going to be.

And the third thing I'd like to say here is something that hadn't been mentioned, and that's green energy. Green energy in this country is going to be one of the big things coming up. Most of you know who General Electric corporation is — one of the biggest corporations in the world. They're now in this big. I happen to have a little stock in it, so I got a book for a proxy statement. And you read in there, it's got a big picture of the wind farms in Holland, and we're talking about overseas. And this is going to be a big thing for General Electric corporation and they're pushing it very hard now. Green energy, not just the wind mills, any kind of energy that's green energy.

As far as I'm concerned, this meeting and all this behind is about taxation. Taxation is a big problem. And why so many large landowners are here tonight to say what they want to say is because of the taxes on that land that goes up all the time. And I don't know, I'm not going to say how much I pay, I think anybody can go to the commissioner's office they can find out how much taxes I pay. It's enough. And I think the time has come when we have to say when is enough, enough. That's what they're saying all over the state of Virginia on taxation — when is enough, enough? And the only way

we can add to this is some other kind of revenue.

I appreciate you letting me say something. Thank you very much.

Gary Smith

Good evening, board of supervisors. My name is Gary Smith. I'm from Monrovia, Maryland. I'm a non-resident homeowner and landowner in Highland County.

I'd like to express my support for the wind farm generation, power generation. I believe American citizens need to do everything possible to reduce our country's dependence on foreign energy sources and to reinforce our local economies. Wind power is a free, economically safe, environmentally safe, renewable source of energy. I'd urge the board of supervisors to support the development of wind generation in Highland County.

Thank you for your consideration.

Dave Smith

My name's Dave Smith and I live at McDowell. Members of the board of supervisors, I'd like to thank you for the privilege of speaking on a very important project which affects the future of our county and our country.

This is an emotional issue, but please consider the facts and don't be misled by emotions. I know that you will be fair and you will be honest in your judgement. As elected officials, you have a fiscal responsibility to every citizen in this county, whether it be a property owner or a renter.

The two main issues in my judgement are: Number one — property rights. Property rights in a free society lies with the individuals. The nature of ownership determines whether people will be free or they'll be enslaved. Arthur Lee of Virginia correctly stated in 1775, and I quote, 'The right of property is the guardian of every other right. And to deprive the people of this is in fact to deprive them of their liberty.'

The second issue is property taxes. Property tax affects all of our citizens, both renters and owners. This project will bring substantial income to our county through property taxes and building permit fees. The projected real estate estimate of \$175,000 to \$250,000, plus another \$120,000 for the building permit fees, cannot be ignored. It would take approximately 400, \$150,000 homes to generate the \$60 million this project is expected to cost. We have built on average of 25 homes per year in the last six years, if you total up the total and divide it out.

Where would these homes — if we were going to build 500 homes or 400, as people say — where would these homes be built? Who would pay for the additional infrastructure of schools, roads, water, sewer, trash, fire and police protection? While the proposed wind turbines do not require any of these services except for inspection, which will be paid for by the developer. Residential construction does not normally pay for its way in most counties in terms of revenues generated. Industrial and commercial development is where most of the revenue comes from. I hate to say that, being a builder, but that's the facts.

Let's look at the increase in property taxes from 2001 to 2004. The tax rate went from 50 cents to 67 cents per \$100. That alone on my property increased the taxes over \$1,600, not counting the projected increase, estimated increase, of another 6 cents for year, or reassessment. This increase cannot be passed on to farmers and people that lease the ground that we own for grazing purposes. Many of you in this room are farmers, and you understand what I'm talking about. If I come along and increase that rent over \$1,600 in that period of time, you couldn't afford it.

I think that Highland County cannot financially afford to pass up this opportunity, and I urge you to carefully consider this application and to approve that application.

I thank you for your time and your consideration.

Bobbie Hefner

I'm Bobbie Hefner and I live in Monterey.

Change is inevitable and we must move forward with technology. If the trees had not been cut along Main Street about 50 years ago, we'd have one-way traffic through town, which I know would please everybody.

I trust those opposing the wind towers will respect my opinion, as I have respected theirs. My support is strictly financial. Agriculture is our county's most important industry. Without something to bring tax relief, we will not have small farms. Land will have to be sold to pay taxes and an undue burden will also be placed on those with small, fixed incomes.

If we can be assured that revenues will be coming to help our

tax rates, then this project needs to be approved.

Larry Shifflett

My name is Larry Shifflett. I live at Ft. Defiance, Virginia, and I'm a Highland County landowner.

Other than the McBrides, I'm probably affected by this as much as anybody. My family's rented this land for over 25 years. It's an integral part of our farming operation. I feel that if this is a way Mr. McBride can keep it in agriculture and I could probably continue to rent it, it certainly wouldn't harm me as much as houses.

I farm several thousand acres and not a week goes by I don't lose land to residential development. Ofttimes it's not losing the land that's the worst part, it's the type of people that come in that don't understand agriculture.

I see this as a golden opportunity not only for the McBride family but for myself and other agriculture landowners in Highland County to be able to keep this land in agriculture, which I would hope most of you all would want to keep a large portion of Highland in agriculture.

Thank you.

Steve Pitsenbarger

Steve Pitsenbarger, Monterey, Virginia.

First off, Jerry, Lee, Robin, I got to say up front that I have nothing but admiration for you all — this thankless job that you all got voted into represent this county and our government and our decisions.

As far as this windmill issue and stuff like that, I think I'm leaning more toward supporting this effort just due to what I've learned, and since our last meeting. I'm not hearing anything real negative from the folks I'm talking to.

I've been in touch with some of the government bodies out in Tucker County, West Virginia, and we're hearing \$175,000 in potential revenue coming off Mac McBride's property. I do know that it's public knowledge in Tucker County that they received in excess of \$95,000 last year, and they received close to \$15,000 in personal property and real estate taxes. That may not be (enough) to rescue our county, but it would be a good start.

But something I would like to challenge the supervisors to do — and this kind of disheartens me — these petition names that circulated in The Recorder last week, I would like for the supervisors to really scrutinize that. There's a lot of it does not carry no merit. I work with numerous people down at the project in Bath County and I wish I'd have wrote down all the names of the folks whose names is on opposition that did not sign, or in no way, shape or form mention that they oppose the windmills. And I do know — and I can give names — of a couple of individuals that was coerced into supporting these windmill efforts. In other words, they was told that if they didn't sign the petition in support, the land would be taken and the windmills would be built on their property. I disagree with those kind of tactics.

I do know for a fact that our battlefield over in McDowell I think is one of the biggest boosts in tourism that we got going right now, and I understand there is some interference that took place just in the last two weeks that would directly impact the prosperity of that battlefield. And that's not the way we need to go.

But I would challenge all three of you all to make this decision rather rapidly — for or against it don't matter, it's a double-edged sword. You're going to catch it from either decision you make, but I think we need to put it to rest so that we can get the separation that's going on within the county closed back together, and get on with living in this county.

Thank you.

Doug Gutshall

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

I'm Doug Gutshall from Meadowdale and I'm not going to give you all the whole pedigree here but I'd like to challenge anyone in this room to say that they love Highland County more than I do. I've roamed her woods, fished her streams, explored her back roads all my life.

I've studied her history extensively, and I'll be the first to admit there's a lot I don't know. History is to be respected — never exploited or overextended — but history is a study of the past. We live in the present, with hopes for the future — a future full of young people, volunteering and filling the pews of our churches; their kids gracing the halls of our schools and raising the dander of us old fogies running up and down the road. To achieve this we need progressive leaders — leaders not afraid to take chances for the common good.

Wind energy was introduced to several members of the community before it was public knowledge by a man I've known to be a progressive thinker, and pursued by another individual on down the road not afraid to take risks. Wind energy may or may not be the answer for the problems we face in the county, but it's a positive step forward. If thinking of this nature is fostered, perhaps this mind set will lead to something else that will provide jobs and benefits that will encourage young people to stay or move into our county. From my understanding, some ideas are already afoot along this line.

Members of the board, I speak to you humbly — not as an insider or an outsider, both terms that I abhor. But I am a Highlander, and I would like to ask you to vote, three to nothing, in favor of this proposal and give this county a mandate to pass on in to the 21st century.

Thank you.

Tom Beyerly

My name is Tom Beyerly. My address is 4305 Scenic Highway, Mt. Solon, Virginia. I appreciate the opportunity to share a few thoughts that impact the request before you this evening.

I am a beef cattle farmer. My wife and I have owned land in Highland County for 32 years and summer-graze cattle here. I am serving my 15th year on the planning commission in Augusta County. I also have served 10 years on the agri-business council in Richmond, which promotes agriculture and agri-business in Virginia. I spent most of my career in agriculture finance, funding agriculture in this part of Virginia, and am very familiar with the poultry and beef cattle operations in Highland County.

I have a passion for Highland County — to see it continue to be financially viable. You gentlemen have and continue to have a monumental task in operating a county with very limited tax resources. It takes industry, business, agriculture and forest land, and residential real estate to provide for those tax resources. Unfortunately, the opportunity for industry has not been available to you. Business revenue is very limited, therefore leaving only residential and agricultural real estate as your main source for tax revenue. Residential real estate brings about a very real challenge. Due to the services provided normally cost more than the tax revenue generated. In Augusta County, it costs \$1.16 for every \$1 received for residential services. I am not telling you anything you don't already know.

I applaud you on the job you have done trying to balance revenue with basic services needed. I would like the record to show that as a Highland County taxpayer, you gentlemen have gone far beyond the call of duty in doing your due diligence on this request. The citizens of Highland County owe you a debt of gratitude for the yeoman's job of learning about and determining that this request would be right for Highland County.

Here are a few observations that I want to share with you that make this request very positive for the county. Highland County is mainly a grazing county — one of the best in Virginia. As a farmer I have to look at costs if I am to stay in business. As an illustration, using a \$1,500 per acre tax assessment for grazing land in the county, in this county, times the proposed tax rate of 73 cents, equals nearly \$11 per acre tax. If I rent my pasture for \$35 per acre, or \$6 per month for a cow-calf unit, that's more than 30 percent of my income; 10 to 15 percent is the maximum a farmer can pay in taxes. In Augusta County, under land use, my tax is currently \$1.50 per acre, or 4 percent using a \$35 rent per acre. That's seven times higher here without land use. And it certainly appears it would be difficult financially to place land use in Highland County.

The second area I want to lift up is fire and rescue — a basic service. You are so fortunate to have an all-volunteer fire and rescue system, but I did not see an expenditure in the budget for fire and rescue equipment. Therefore I assume the volunteers have to raise funds for the equipment. And I would expect you would like to fund the equipment so that volunteers can meet training requirements and serve, and not (work) on fund-raising. Funding equipment can delay the need for paid fire and rescue. Across Virginia, the challenge is the same of trying to maintain a volunteer operation. As you well know, the cost of paid manpower for this basic service is astronomical. The revenues request from this will assist you in many of the future needs such as this. In the area of revenue ...

[Time expired.]

Keith Shaner

[RECORDING INTERRUPTED]

... I have enjoyed my time here, but I'm afraid that time is coming to an end quick. Highland is a nice place to raise a family. It's quiet and peaceful. There are several reasons that my family and I moved over to Highland County. One is the school system — one

of the best school systems in the state. The other is to help out my in-laws on the farm. My in-laws are James and Judy Ralston.

We were hoping to some day take over the family farm but with land values and property taxes going up and up, I don't think this will happen. Lee and I would love to buy some land out here, but prices are so high we can't afford it. Young people like myself will not be able to afford to live in Highland County. Like myself, if it was not for the turkey house and the farm, I would have to drive the mountain every day. Lee does and it gets old. I did for a year and a half and it gets really old.

What I'm trying to say is, yes, I'm for the wind turbines. I have seen them. I've been to California and seen them and I've heard the rumors about the one in California and they're not true. I have been to Tucker County and I saw them. People against them say the noise is terrible, but the noise from a car is a whole lot louder than the noise of a wind turbine... They are not that bad looking. The power lines that go through this county are a whole lot worse looking than these wind turbines.

The person I feel bad for is Mr. McBride. Mr. McBride has been fighting this battle a year and a half or more. What I'm trying to say is, it's time to end this battle and it's time for this county to get together. I've heard that there may be lawsuits if it goes either way. In that case, a lawsuit takes care of taxpayers' money. The longer this goes on, the more taxpayer money is spent. What I'm saying is, I am for the wind turbines. I think they're good for the county, and I think we should appreciate what these supervisors are trying to do to come up with a decision.

James Ralston

Mr. Chairman, board members Robin and Lee.

James Ralston from McDowell — an old farmer. I was born and raised in Highland County, except for two years and nine months in the military. When I was coming home, I decided to try and stay in Highland County in hopes of making an honest living. It's been rough at times.

On April 10 the family and I motored to Tucker County to see the wind turbines. I talked to a gentleman out there. He thought they was great, which I do, too. He told me American University had had those put in and everything seemed to be going great with them — as far as bird kill, it was very minimal. There's very small amounts of land cleared around these turbines.

I hope you do whatever is possible to make Mr. McBride's permit available so he can proceed with this project. I think all of you — I've expressed at different times — I think all of you know how I feel, so I think you know. I don't guess there's any use for me to say a lot more.

Thank you.

Alden Hathaway

Alden Hathaway, 15126 Shenandoah Road, Percellville, Virginia, in Loudoun County, and director of eco-power programs for Environmental Resources Trust in Washington, D.C. Good evening, board of supervisors and good citizens of Highland County. I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

I am director of eco-power programs for Environmental Resources Trust, Washington, D.C. I am an environmentalist and an engineer, putting my skills to work to help use technology to save and preserve our planet. I live in a solar house and our family drives two hybrid electric cars, one of which we drove here tonight. My family for the first time has come to Highland County and enjoyed the beauty of the mountains tonight out here with me. I work with the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy to promote the purchase of wind power by counties and municipalities seeking to meet federal and state air regulations.

Throughout the decades in Virginia, there has been an unspoken rule. Let me paraphrase, 'Regulations or legislation impacting the wealthy counties should seek to simultaneously benefit the lesser advantaged counties.' This unspoken rule has served both rich and poor counties well throughout the years.

Clean air regulations now in Northern Virginia have prompted at least two wealthy counties — Fairfax County and Arlington — to purchase a significant amount of their electricity from wind power. They are now doing that. They have stated they are willing to pay for wind power from Virginia as a priority — even pay more for it, if such wind power exists. However, since none exists, Fairfax and Arlington County tax dollars are now flowing out of the state to West Virginia or Maryland wind counties. I've got the e-mails attached to these handouts. If Highland County approves Virginia's first wind plant, then Virginia county dollars will flow here, thus making good on the long-standing promise between rich and poor

counties.

Now it has been said that some environmentalists here in Highland County are opposed to wind power because they claim it will destroy the ridges' environmental and scenic significance. That significance is enhanced by the abundance of Highland County's biodiversity and natural colors, particularly in the fall with the largest natural stands of maple trees south of the Mason-Dixon border. Of all the environmental concerns that the Highland County environmentalist are concerned with, they have apparently ignored the one that trumps them all. And this one will impact Highland County with more serious results. This is no longer a surprise to the world that enacted the Kyoto treaty early this year; this is no longer a surprise to the majority of Americans, who according to a recent Wall Street Journal Internet poll earlier this week cited global warming as the most significant threat to the environment. But it's not just a threat to the world. It's a threat to Highland County.

According to the Earth Policy Institute, with Lester Brown I included in your packet, the impacts of rising temperatures brought about by the continued use of coal for electricity will be felt in the polar regions as well as areas of high elevation first. These areas will see temperature changes averaging as much as 10 degrees Fahrenheit in just the next 50 years. I put the projections of those temperature changes in your packet.

Biodiversity cannot be maintained with that kind of temperature increase. It will seek higher and higher places to dwell in the mountains as it tries to find the coolest places to stay, until the peaks are reached and then simply die out. Likewise, the county maple trees will begin to disappear. The things Highland County is most prized for and worried about protecting may be lost.

Instead of opposing wind, Highland County should embrace it. Take the money from the wealthy counties, invest it in solar on schools and encourage other counties to do the same. Make a renewable program for Highland County to protect the biodiversity. We should thank the current landowners seeking to put their land to productive use generating capital for the county and saving the planet. They should be celebrated as heroes, thereby encouraging others to step forward.

The major environmental groups cannot all be mistaken — groups like Environmental Defense, Natural Resources Defense Council, World Resources Institute, Earth Watch Policy Institute, the Union of Concerned Scientists, even The Nature Conservancy. All cite global warming as a high priority environmental concern and call for a worldwide movement away from fossil fuels to renewable energy like wind as our best hope. Certainly global warming brought on by continued use of coal is a greater threat to Highland County than wind generation. As a result, Environmental Resources Trust would conclude that wind turbines provide a net environmental benefit to Highland County.

It has been said that the first half of the 20th century was the greatest generation for their perseverance for good against what appeared to be overwhelming odds of evil in the defeat of Nazi Germany and imperial Japan and the implementation of the Marshall Plan to rebuild the world.

If in the face of overwhelming evidence we fail now to act to preserve those places we consider dear, or for that matter the only planet we know that can sustain human life, what will our children and grandchildren say about our generation?

[RECORDING INTERRUPTED]

Margaret Ralston

... but I can't afford it right now. I don't know that I'll ever be able to afford it. I'd like to be a farmer and follow in the tradition of my ancestors. Eight generations have been in Highland County since 1760. If things keep going the way they're going I'll have to move. I can't make a living in Highland County. I can't find a job here.

So I am for the windmills and bully for Mr. McBride for trying to make an extra dollar. If windmills is what it's going to take to make a living in this county, then please let him have it.

Thank you.

Judith Ralston

Judith Ralston from McDowell.

My husband is one of those over-the-hill ones that's still trying to make a living on the farm and we need to be able to pass it on to our kids, but if prices of land keep going up we can't afford to pass it on to them. The statement has been made that land value would come down. Let it come down. Maybe we can get more money from the state for our schools. As it is now, by the index, we are one of the wealthiest counties in the state, and we can't afford to keep

our schools going the way the money is now. So if the turbines will help get money into the county, even if it does lower land values, let it come.

Thank you.

Roy Gutshall

Good evening. Good evening ladies and gentlemen, chairman of the board of supervisors, and your colleagues.

First of all I want to congratulate you on the job you're doing and the time and patience you've put in this project. I was going to pass up the opportunity to speak but I couldn't stay in those bleachers no longer. Maybe if this project goes forward we can take some of that money and by some cushions, do you reckon?

Makes me feel like Billy Graham standing up here speaking to a full house tonight. First of all, I'd like to hope and pray and trust that the opinions expressed here tonight between neighbors and friends and family does not drive a wedge of anger between anyone. We are all entitled to our opinions. Each person has reasons for their opinions.

So I would like to address a subject that I have not heard about and that is a question that says, 'what if'. What if this project was turned down and what if the landowners would say this is a government taking? Where would Highland County taxpayers come up with \$20 or \$40 or \$50 million to buy this property? There are many court cases in this state and neighboring states that have prevailed on government takings. This is a very serious situation we have in this county.

I would like to express my opinion to the board of supervisors to consider this and I will look forward to hearing your decision whatever it may be. I trust that you will do it tonight. We have carried this on long enough and it's time to move on. I don't think the people in Highland County deserve to be in turmoil any longer. I know in my immediate family, I have daughters that are on one side of the fence, a daughter on the other side of the fence. I have family that is split down the middle on this thing, but we still get along. We still sit down to dinner at night. And I hope that everybody else feels the same as I do, and I don't think anybody in this room loves Highland County more than I do.

Thank you very much.

Al Woodson

My name is Al Woodson. I live in Monterey, Virginia. I'm a native of Nelson County but somehow I got transplanted up here 20 years ago.

First of all I'd like to say I am in favor of this project. I think Mr. McBride is committing a brave act in putting forth his time and his money and using his land to benefit this county.

The main thing I'd like to say is, don't worry about the imaginary horrors connected with this wind power, but instead listen to the facts and you'll come to the right conclusions.

Thank you.

Mitch King

Good evening Chairman Rexrode, members of the board of supervisors, and good citizens of Highland County. Thank you for the opportunity to speak tonight.

I'm Mitch King, president of Old Mill Power Company, a Charlottesville, Virginia-based Mom-and-Pop energy trading business. It's my pleasure to speak to you tonight in support of another Virginia-based family-owned business, Highland New Wind Development, LLC, who has applied to you for a conditional use permit for a substation and a 39-megawatt wind generator facility to be built in Highland County on Red Oak Ranch. I hope you will act favorably on their application.

My company sells electricity and electricity-related products that have been produced by generators that use various kinds of environmentally-friendly renewable energy sources such as energy from the sun, the wind, flowing water, landfill gas, and municipal solid waste. If the Highland New Wind Development project is approved, my company would like to become one of its first customers, as there is already a small market for Virginia-produced renewable energy that we expect will grow significantly over the next few years as more Virginians come to appreciate its many benefits. Paramount among these benefits is the ability of wind turbines to produce significant amounts of useful energy with far less adverse environmental impact than one can expect from any other energy source except the sun.

Excuse me, I'm recovering from laryngitis — that's the reason for my scratchy voice.

Although tonight's meeting is not directly concerned with environmental issues, I have seen so much misleading environmental

information about wind turbines in general, and about the Highland New Wind Development project in particular, published on web sites and in your local newspaper, that I feel compelled to address at least one of those sensitive environmental issues here, where my words cannot be misinterpreted by third parties before reaching your ears. The issue I'd like to focus on is the potential for wind turbines, or any other human-made structure for that matter, to kill birds.

This has always been a topic of special concern to me, but it became particularly poignant on April 21 as I listened to a presentation by a former member of the Environmental Working Group of the Virginia Wind Energy Collaborative who was summarizing the result of his two-year effort to use computerized mapping tools to predict where there was an overlap between environmentally sensitive areas and commercially valuable Virginia wind resources.

The speaker, whom I shall not name, began his presentation by declaring that it was his personal mission to delay the development of utility-scale wind energy projects on Appalachian ridge tops for as long as possible. I can assure you that had this individual informed the Virginia Wind Energy Collaborative, known as VWEC, of this personal agenda before volunteering to participate in VWEC's Environmental Working Group, my company — as one of the VWEC principals — would have objected to this individual's participation in the working group. The reason most often given by environmentalists for objecting to ridge top wind turbine development is the potential for significant bird kills.

This individual then proceeded to praise the nearby coal-fired power plant at Mt. Storm as an environmentally preferred alternative method of generating electricity. Because I knew that the smokestacks on at least some coal-fired power plants had been implicated in major bird kills over the years, I decided to Google the web for relevant web sites. Much to my surprise, I found much more than I expected to in just a few minutes on a web site maintained by an individual claiming to be a vehement opponent of wind plants.

Under the heading, 'A Selection of the Most Significant Bird-Kill Documentation,' this person's web site contained excerpts from a California Energy Commission report called 'Avian Collision and Electrocution: An Annotated Bibliography.' What I discovered, by reading the excerpts and a related article in the San Francisco Chronicle, is that while the worst-case bird kills attributable to wind turbines typically were measured in terms of a couple of bird deaths per turbine per year, or 20,000 bird deaths over 20 years for the 7,000 wind turbines in California's Altamont Pass, the worst-case incidents for other human-made structures such as the smokestacks at certain coal-fired power plants and certain television antennas are measured in thousands of birds killed per evening!

I think the people of Highland County, including its supervisors, are ill-served by a professional opposition that feeds the local newspaper exaggerated stories about the potential for bird kills from wind turbines, while failing to point out that their stated preferred alternative, a coal-fired power plant on a similar ridge 78 miles away, has a smokestack that, at 730 feet, is nearly twice the size of the wind turbines proposed by the applicant; is located in an area inhabited by an endangered subspecies, the West Virginia northern flying squirrel; and uses a fuel — coal — that requires the destruction of tens of thousands of acres of mountaintop habitat in order to be harvested.

By contrast, the applicant's project is half as tall as the environmentalist's preferred alternative, has much less habitat impact, and is not located in an area inhabited by an endangered subspecies.

[Time expired.]

UNDECIDED

Ronnie Moyers

Good evening board of supervisors. It feels good to stand up.

My name's Ronnie Moyers, I live at Hightown. I guess I'm probably one of the closest — as close as any permanent resident — to the proposed wind farm. When I get up in the morning and drink a cup of coffee, if I look out any window on the south side of my house or north side of my house, I'll be looking at the wind farm — and I'm not saying that's bad. I'm trying to decide whether it's good for the county. My major concern, well' you know they're going to get \$200,000, \$250,000 a year' and they might get \$10,000 a year tax revenue from the wind farm.

I hope I'm not the only one that's not completely decided one way or the other, because I've heard so much stuff, negative and pro, that it's extremely difficult to make my mind up. If I look out my window when I get up and go to work and I don't see a wind farm, and I would say that I would be against it, and it could have

benefitted the county, I wouldn't feel good.

And on the other hand, if I would look out my window and see the wind farm two years down the road, and hadn't done enough homework to decide — wrote on stone, if that's possible, exactly how much money can the county of Highland get. A lot of questions. I sure hope I'm not the only one that's not decided.

Thank you.

John Burke

Good evening. My name is John Burke and I'm one of the few and unimportant residents who live next door to the proposed farm.

I've got one thing to say: No. I didn't move to Highland County to live in an industrial park.

Thank you.

Vickie King

Hello, Vickie King, Galltown Gap.

I'm undecided. My name was on the list in the paper as being for the wind turbines. I'm not really for the wind turbines, I am for property rights. If we as a county can tell someone what they can and can't do on their property and maybe a few years down the road I want to do something on my property that I'm not allowed to do, I'd be a hypocrite if I said you can't do what you want on your property.

On the other hand, I'd be a hypocrite if I said I'm for the wind turbines because my family owns property on Allegheny Mountain, and it is one of the most beautiful places in the world, I am convinced. If someone told me well, in a few years we're going to put a wind farm on the ridge — which is across from the Stomp, if anyone knows where that is — I wouldn't want that.

So I'm truly undecided and I don't envy you the task ahead of you. In conclusion, I will say that the flying squirrel does exist because I have had the privilege of seeing it out there.

OPPONENTS

Leslie Goodall

I'm Leslie Goodall. I'm an adjoining landowner. I am not known as just another house, or just an adjoining landowner, I'm a human being. I have a life. I was born in Pennsylvania but that doesn't really matter. I've been here 22 years, I have a son. He was born here, although this whole wind turbine thing has really made things confusing for me because he tries to get me to explain things like, 'Mommy, what do they mean people, you know, that aren't from here?'

And I said, 'Well, you know, people that weren't born here.' 'Well I was born here, Mommy.' 'Yea, I know. I know.'

Maybe you can explain why he doesn't count. Or Mrs. Berman, or the Brodys — us adjoining landowners who weren't born here. I don't know.

It's hard to raise a child now. He hates coming here. He says, 'You all repeat. You say the same things over and over.' I said, 'Well, OK, think of it this way. This is your Boy Scout honor badge for government. We're in a democracy and that means that I get to say what I want because America is run by the people, for the people, et cetera. So they have to listen and they have to do what's best for everybody. They have to consider us.'

OK. Then we talk about zoning. 'Mommy, what's zoning?' 'OK. Zoning — it just means you can't build anything you want, like you can't put a chicken house next to the Highland Inn because it would destroy the opportunities for the Highland Inn to make a living and it would stink up the town.'

'OK, Mommy. Why can they put wind turbines up here?' 'Well, I don't know. They're going to change the zoning.'

'Why are they going to do that, Mommy? What kind of zoning is it?' 'Well, it's agricultural, honey, that means farming, residential.'

'Why can they put an industry up here?' 'I don't know, honey. I don't know.'

'Why are they going to do that to us. Don't they care?' 'I don't know.'

So we have the zoning. I kind of blew that off, like the birds and the bees. He wants to know, he said, "Well, if they put them up here can they put them anywhere else?'

'Well, they're going to have to.'

'Why?'

'Because if they put them on us, that means everybody else gets them, because they can't say no. Because we're people, right? Yeah, we are. They have to treat everybody else the way they treat us. If

they don't give a flying about us then they don't give a flying about anyone else.'

OK, what was the other thing. Property values. We were talking about that, I said, 'Sweetie, you know if these go in, we're going to move. We have to move because of the noise, which is very loud at 1,000 feet, which is just about exactly where our place is, no matter what yo-yo over there thinks. Very noisy.'

So I would assume that would mean if they were going into you all's back yard that that's not going to be an argument for not putting them up — that you can see them, you can hear them, that they won't impact your property values. I dare you to say my property's going to be worth more when he puts those up. I dare you to say that. I dare you to find a Realtor that will sit here and say, 'Wow, that property's got a pond, it's got 25 springs, it's fenced, it's got power, it's got the Internet, it's worth blank right now. When you put the wind mills up well, yeah, it'll be worth more, yea.'

I'm not sure why. You're going to have to do that one too. Maybe you all can it explain it to him. He wants to know why you all are doing this. I said, 'Well, put it this way. These guys got power [supervisors], these guys got money [McBrides]. Kind of the way the world works, I guess. Not like cartoons; the good guys don't win.'

He still said, 'Well they wouldn't put windmills all over Highland County. People don't want that. They said that.'

'Yes, I know that.'

But you keep maintaining that. And I don't really know how to explain to him except to say either these guys truly believe they can only screw us, and truly believe that they can somehow have a leg to stand on and keep them in Allegheny where nobody counts, or maybe they don't really quite understand everything yet. That's the best I can do. You all got any other way to explain to him? Why you're going to destroy this property? Can you all? Jerry, you've got the youngest kid. Can you explain to him what's going on here? Can you explain why we don't matter?

Jerry Rexrode: "Nobody's ever said you don't matter. That's why we're here — to listen."

Well, give us names then. When you say the adjoining landowners, give us names. Don't let people get away with just saying, 'those yo-yo's who weren't born here.' He was born here. He's the only child who is going to be impacted by this. He will be there long after everybody else is dead.

I appreciate your time. I'm pretty upset. I'm pretty upset about the way we've been treated. I'm pretty upset that nobody's really acknowledging the impact it has on people, not a sparsely populated area. It's me, my son, my husband, and everybody else who lives out there.

I try to teach him fairness. I try to teach him to do what's right. He has a pretty good idea of what's fair. You know, if you get the swing the whole recess, that's not fair. It's real hard to explain what's going on.

I know I'm well past three minutes. Am I? You're really nice. Thanks, you all.

Robert Markum

Good evening, folks, citizens of Highland County. A brief statement before I begin my formal comments to the board and that is, I have 20 acres over in McDowell. My wife and I hope to move over here and retire in about three years. That's our dream.

I'm from Louisa County, and about four and a half years ago I bought five acres of land in a little subdivision in Louisa County. Paid \$15,000 for it, and I thought I was getting ripped off then. And about two weeks ago I met a gentleman who was clearing off his five acres of land that he just bought not too far from the five acres that I currently own. And I said, 'Do you mind my asking, what did you pay for this?' \$46,900.

So it went from \$15,000 to \$46,900 in four and a half years. So as much as I appreciate people saying, you know, they can't afford the land, land's getting more expensive, they ain't making any more land and it's getting more expensive. I don't care if you're in Highland County or in Louisa County or wherever you are in this nation, it's getting more expensive. So you're not alone.

Several years ago I lived in a small community of Crimora, Virginia, which is about 10 miles north of Waynesboro. I attended a public hearing at that time, convened by the Augusta County School Board, to take public comments regarding their proposed closing of a small elementary school in the area. Understandably, there was considerable opposition for the proposed closure, for the school was not only there to provide educational needs for the children in the community, but also served as a center for community activities. The school board chairman stated at the beginning of the proceedings that, quote, "For the record we have not reached a final decision regarding this matter and are genuinely interested in hearing the opinions of those concerned parents," end quote.

Speaker after speaker made their way to the podium to state their opposition to the proposed closing. Thoughtful, well-documented reasoning was presented regarding class size increase, lengthy bus trips for the children going to the new school, and the loss of a cherished community focal point, just to mention a few.

With each point of opposition, the chairman followed each of the statements with statements of his own to refute or otherwise negate the concerns of each who spoke. As the list grew shorter, it was finally my turn to present my opinion. However, having listened to the exchange between parents and the school board chairman, I completely changed my prepared statement. Instead, I simply asked the school board if they had truly not made a decision regarding this issue, and asked them to please tell those gathered that evening under what circumstances or conditions would the need be present for them to continue operating the school.

I reminded the school board chairman he was a very intelligent man and he could probably come up with a possible scenario that would keep the school open. He could not provide an answer, nor could any of the school board members. I concluded that if the school board could not even dream up circumstances that would justify keeping the school open that it was obvious to those attending the public hearing that we were simply there going through the motions necessary by law to conduct such a meeting, and that indeed, the board had, in actuality, reached their decision to close the school long before the meeting was conducted that night.

Now, [Highland County administrator] Roberta [Lambert] has told me that, unfortunately, this is now a rhetorical question, in that you are not required to answer questions presented by the people here tonight. But as a rhetorical question, I simply ask the board the same question now that I asked the school board then: Since your own advisory committee and independent planning commission have collectively voiced their opposition to this proposed development of Highland County's ridge lines, and further warned of the slippery slope that you potentially place this county on if the project is approved, would you please state, either individually or collectively, the conditions or circumstances — including planetary alignments if necessary — what must be present for you to deny this request. Or, just tell us now that you have reached your decision and made up your mind, and that no amount of reasoning or collective voices in opposition will change your mind, so we can all go home now, and mourn in private the loss of something that will never be replaced.

Thank you.

Danny Firebaugh

My name's Danny Firebaugh, from Churchville, Virginia. I just want to say that I'm opposed to these wind towers, because my dad and I purchased land about seven years ago on Lantz Mountain, and the proposed project will be directly across from our land. And on clear days, there's nothing better for me to look to the west and see Red Oak Knob, Allegheny Mountain. It's just beautiful country out there. And I just honestly believe that those wind towers will devastate our view.

I do believe Highland County does need some revenue, but these wind towers will offer no full-time employment to any substantial amount at all. If it would add a lot of full-time, good-paying jobs to keep these children over here so they wouldn't have to move away, and keep these people over here making good money, I might be more for it. I'd be willing to sacrifice. But it's not the case.

I just also feel for those people, the handful that it is, on Allegheny Mountain. I put myself in their shoes. And I really have to say I would be upset myself if I knew that those things were going in beside my house.

I thank you for letting me speak, and I just ask you again to deny that request.

David Clatterbaugh

Good evening. My name's David Clatterbaugh. I live in Staunton but I have property near the proposed area.

I should say that I'm not getting paid like the two speakers to start with, because they were pretty smooth, and paint an awful pretty picture, and I believe very little of that, especially one thing. You all probably heard them say they probably didn't need a board of supervisors. I don't think that's right. I think we do need the board of supervisors. But I think — they talk about how hard your job is — to me, it's very simple. You need to listen to, and support, the majority of the people. To me, the majority of the people rules.

I thank you.

Porter Caldwell

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, board. I'm Porter Caldwell. My wife,

Faye. We have some land here in the county. I have spent a considerable amount of money bringing a big, eight-room house from trash to finished. I would hate to think of somebody putting these [towers] around here on top of my house, and I'd have to listen to them 24/7.

I believe it was mentioned about, there's been a lot mentioned about taxes. If Time magazine is anything like correct, I understand that there's considerable tax breaks on these things. I think somebody's pitching the county a snowball on taxes. You can't feed cattle on snowballs; you can't eat them. I would like to recommend to the board to just give this a whole lot of thought.

There's a roomful of people; I understand there's 2,400 people in this county, 1,700 voters; there's 1,200 signed the petition. I think the public has voted.

Thank you, sir.

Stuart Risdon

Thank you for letting me speak. I'm Stuart Risdon. We have property here in Doe Hill. We're part-timers for now. We've been here a couple of years.

I would like to speak out against this project, of course, but this project doesn't affect me so much immediately as it does the young lady that just left with her son a little while ago.

But what does affect me is, last fall I arrived at my property. I found surveyors on my land, not on the state road but on my property. They were surveying, doing mapping, on Jack Mountain. Now from what I know, there is no application for Jack Mountain to have wind towers on it. The surveyors were mapping it just for that purpose. Now I'm curious. If you're going to approve this project, how many others will you be approving in this county? How much more tax revenue does this county need at the expense of other local businesses and other landowners, and frankly, the real estate market?

The people that are worrying about high land values will not ever see the land go back down to \$1,000 an acre or \$200 an acre. That's not going to happen. But I fear that you will be destroying your tax base by bringing this project in, to get some short-term revenue, and ultimately, you'll end up damaging the values of the other people that are here. There will be less people wanting to buy here. Property values will go down and you'll still have to raise taxes. So it won't really help anyone, and I think it's going to be economically damaging to this county.

I urge you to vote this down. And I'm sure, if you can, please tell us sometime in the future — I know you can't answer questions now — in the near future, how many of these other projects do you gentlemen plan to approve in this county? I think the citizens have a right to know.

Thank you.

Sandra Bratton

Hello, again. I'm Sandy Bratton from Warm Springs and I'm a Highland County native and taxpayer.

My purpose in speaking to you tonight is to present you an updated list of people who oppose the project. The resident/landowners new list has grown to 1,246 signatures. And the other list of our family members, visitors, and folks who enjoy Highland for its uniqueness, stands at 170, totalling over 1,400 signatures. No names have been added to the others' list since December 2004. If time and energy allowed, we would have hundreds more signatures on that list.

We have focused on providing you valid documentation of opposing landowners and residents. As you have been told before, our petitions represent either a face-to-face conversation with the signers, or a petition card returned by mail.

None of these petitions were placed in public places. I can assure you that those who signed all of these petitions were adamantly opposed when they signed it. I personally contacted many of these people. If they were hesitant, or on the fence, I did not take their signature. Many of these folks thanked us for our efforts to enable them to communicate to you their opposition. People telephoned us, stopped us on the street, and sought us out so they could sign the petition opposing the wind turbine project.

The petition cards were returned by mail, and they represent strong opposition as well. These signers went to the trouble of completing the card, filling out the information, and taking the cards to the mail. Some were delivered in person, and many contained comments expressing the reasons for their opposition. Several had letters and notes accompanying them.

I become outraged when I hear you say that these petitions mean nothing, and can assure you that these signatures represent hundreds of residents, landowners and others who oppose wind turbines on our unique ridge tops. If you question the validity of these documents, we provided you as much information as possible and I

urge you to take random samplings of the names on these petitions. These petitions do not capture the many letters, e-mails and telephone calls that you have received in your offices or at home, or the public forum comments opposing commercial wind turbines.

Have you carefully examined the motivations of those who say they are for the project? What about those who tell you they want to put them up on their property? Have they had a wind feasibility study done? Do they have the millions of dollars to invest, or do they have a wind company to back them with our tax dollars? Are they prepared to deal with the ire of their neighbors when transmission lines are run to harness this inefficient energy? Or are they simply opposed to the people who speak in opposition?

I have heard a lot about property rights. Do the McBrides' property rights supercede their neighbors' property rights? Isn't that why we have zoning, to protect everyone's property rights? As I've said before, the opposition of the neighbors should alone be enough to deny this application.

What about the Hises, the Moyerses, the Wilsons, Brodys and Goodalls — adjoining landowners who live and work up there? Their lives will be changed forever.

What about the Sweckers, Armstrongs, Mongers, Nesselrods, Bermans, Warnocks, Waybrights, Thompsons, my family and many others? Although we are not permanent residents up there, we visit and enjoy and desire to protect our land. The proposed project would negatively impact us as well.

What about the Gums, Hises, Honakers, Rexrodes, Puffenbargers, Elliots, Rowlands, Rogerses, Weissenborns, and many folks who live on the high elevations of the Blue Grass Valley? These turbines would be in their faces 24 hours a day.

We have all expressed to you our opposition. What about everyone, residents and tourists, who cross Monterey Mountain? These are just a few folks who would be negatively impacted and have asked you to turn down this application.

This issue has dragged on too long, but I commend you for taking the time to consider the facts. I agree that the McBrides need a decision. This has been costly for them in time, energy and dollars, as it has for many of us. To my knowledge, however, no one asked them to pursue this endeavor. You owe the McBride family nothing but a decision.

The negatives far outweigh any potential, positive benefits to anyone except the applicant. I urge you to end this tonight by voting no to this application. I'm presenting to you our updated list and am asking Roberta to keep a copy of the petition for public record. Please read each name carefully. You have before you an unprecedented expression of what residents, landowners, and visitors want for their beloved county. Please don't sell us out.

Charlotte Stephenson

Good evening, everyone.

People stay in Highland County and purchase land in Highland County ...

[RECORDING INTERRUPTED]

... It has been enough in the past that neighbors alone objecting to a proposed conditional use or variance to the zoning ordinance has stopped the project. Mr. McBride has submitted an application that has never found a valid place in Highland County's zoning ordinance. If it had, the residential height requirements would not have been negated with the recent changes made to accommodate his application. His request goes far beyond a conditional use or variance. The information gathered this past number of months about wind turbines, and the effects that could fall on Highland County, has prompted an overwhelming number of residents, landowners, and their families to become involved in this process in order to demonstrate to the board of supervisors that the majority does not want this variance or conditional use permit accepted. We do not want commercial grade wind turbines anywhere in the county.

The recent introduction of Senate Bill 1034, sponsored by Sen. Lamar Alexander of Tennessee and Sen. John Warner from Virginia, validate the concerns we have spoken to for months. In his remarks, Sen. Alexander makes reference to the following, and I paraphrase: If Congress continues its sustained generous subsidies for wind production for the next 10 years, it will guarantee that United States has about 100,000 of these windmills by 2025. According to the treasury department, the wind subsidy, if renewed each year for the next five years, will reimburse wind investors for 25 percent of the cost of wind production, and cost taxpayers billions of dollars over those five years.

Sen. Alexander goes on to say there are serious questions about how much relying on wind power will raise the cost of electricity, and whether there are better ways to spend billions of dollars, and whether wind even produces the amount of energy that is claimed.

Americans need large amounts of low-cost, reliable power. Wind produces puny amounts of high-cost, unreliable power. We need lower prices. Wind power raises prices. This windmill legislation introduction denotes these windmills are wider than a 747 jumbo jet, with blades turning 100 miles per hour. Their flashing red lights can be seen from more than 25 miles away. The noise, as described by a resident, sounds like a brick wrapped in a towel tumbling in a clothes dryer — on a perpetual basis.

They ask, what will this do to our tourism industry? What happens to electric rates when the federal subsidy disappears? Who will take down these massive structures if we decide we don't want them, or we don't like them? Who's making the money in all of this? Why are European countries, who pioneered wind farms, now slowing down or even stopping their construction in some places?

Clearly there are more sensible ways to provide clean energy than spending \$3.7 billion of taxpayers' money to destroy the American landscape. So the purpose of this legislation is to give citizens an opportunity to have some say in where these massive structures are located in their communities, and make sure that Congress does not subsidize the destruction of the American landscape near our national parks or other highly scenic areas, or build such tall structures dangerously close to our military bases.

Under the direction of you, the board of supervisors, we can fight for the landscape of Highland County. We can say no to Mr. McBride's application to place commercial wind turbines on the ridge tops of Red Oak Knob. Our zoning ordinance and comprehensive plan confirm that there are no provisions for wind turbines in Highland County, and we do not have to accept them.

If Mr. McBride decides to sue our county over another zoning matter, our county has the means to defend our ordinances and the will of the people. If we allow Mr. McBride to construct wind turbines on Red Oak Knob, the door will be open, and we do not have enough money in our county treasury to fight developers. And they know it.

[Time expired.]

Deborah Huso

Deborah Huso, Blue Grass, Virginia.

Plenty of people at this public hearing tonight are going to talk to you about the negative impact of wind turbines in Highland County, including their negative effect on land values, tourism, and wildlife, as well as their incompatibility with the comprehensive plan, the fact that both the planning commission and IDA have recommended against siting them here, and the fact that residents in numbers too large to be ignored have spoken their view that wind turbines are not right for this community.

I don't need to redress those issues. What I would like to talk about is loss.

If you open the floodgates and allow wind turbines on Highland County's ridge lines, we will all lose. We will lose one of the East's last, great, privately held, scenic mountain landscapes. In his recent remarks on the Senate floor when introducing the Environmentally Responsible Wind Development Act of 2005, Sen. Lamar Alexander stated, 'In the United States of America, the wholesale destruction of the American landscape is not an incidental concern. The Great American Outdoors is an essential part of the American character.'

It is also an essential part of Highland's character. As a travel writer, I have traversed every state in the continental United States, and I can say with the utmost sincerity that east of the Mississippi, there are virtually no landscapes that can compare to Highland's. So far as I can tell, only in the back country of the Smokies in the dead of winter will you consistently find endless views of forested ridges and deep quiet that may be found in almost every corner of Highland on any day of the year.

To begin dotting our precious ridge tops with wind turbines is to desecrate one of the country's best remaining rural Appalachian landscapes. And it is to destroy the quality of life that so many people here cherish—a quality of life linked irreparably to the natural character of these mountains, mountains unscarred by careless development and callous industry.

Three years ago I came to Highland carrying a childhood dream and invested everything I had in the world to live and work here. There are others like me, many of them sitting here tonight. And there are also those who have lived here all their lives — for many generations in fact — and who have fought the hard fight to stay here even when they might have had greater wealth and prosperity somewhere else. Why do you think they stayed? Why do you think I came? It is because there is no place on earth like Highland.

It is your people, your constituents who will keep this community vibrant, not wind turbines. If you allow wind turbines in Highland, we will all pay. We will pay through our federal tax dollars that support wind energy that is at best unreliable. We will pay with

increased utility costs once the federal subsidies that support these wind farms have been relinquished. And we will pay when our children leave us and families stop coming here to live and work because there is nothing special to hold them here or draw them here.

Consider what is at stake. Our forested mountains are our wealth, our trademark, our very identity. Keep them safe for us. Please.

Jeff Burton

[Statement read by Deborah Huso]

Jeff Burton is a Highland County landowner, resident of Virginia Beach.

Dear supervisors, this is in regard to the consideration by the Highland County supervisors to allow commercial windmills within Highland County.

While I am not currently a county resident, I am a landowner, having purchased this past June 160 acres in the southern part of the county, property known as Little Egypt. I wish to express my very strong view that the county should not allow commercial windmills. I've lived in several places in this beautiful country, including the mountains of Colorado, and can say without contradiction, Highland County is second to none in its unspoiled beauty and tremendously nice people. I can also say, as one who will one day soon be a county resident, that the economy of the county will in my view be adversely affected by allowing windmills.

There are numerous people such as myself who love the beauty of your place, which stems from what Mother Nature has done and what man has not yet spoiled. And we are willing to invest in the area because of these traits. Most of us will bring very little, if any, tax burden, and will gladly pay our fair share of taxes and employ local workers, and purchase services.

However, if windmills are allowed, I believe any short-term economic gain will be soon be negated many times over by lost tourism, lost retirees, and lost beauty that can never be regained. You have far more to gain economically by preserving what you have than selling the rights to such incredible views.

I am sure you have heard all these arguments, but I need to register my vote. Once upon a time only landowners could vote against the windmills and in favor of keeping Highland County beautiful.

Thank you for your consideration, Jeffrey H. Burton.

Nelson Hoy

My name is Nelson Hoy. I live in Williamsville, Virginia. My wife, Elizabeth Biggs, and I are opposed to granting a conditional use permit to the Highland New Wind Development company.

Our community, gentlemen, is at an extraordinary crossroads. The right turn will take us, together along with our children and grandchildren, into a prosperous and harmonious future. The wrong turn will tear apart the fabric of this community and it will pillage our natural resources.

Please. Please do not underestimate the negative consequences of allowing windmills into this county. Nothing since the Great Depression and Sherman's march to the sea compares. This does not have to be so. There are two men in this room today who can bring an end to these rumbling thunderheads of tragedy.

Mac McBride clearly, without question, possesses the talent, most likely the resources, and obviously the tenacity necessary to create successful business enterprises other than wind turbine farms. And this community has more than sufficient resources to generate dozens and dozens and dozens of fruitful ideas should he choose to change his mind. And we will support him. And I'll be the first.

Our supervisors, and Jerry in particular, surely can rise with distinction to the leadership challenge of creating an extraordinary home and work place for the citizens of Highland County — out one, five, 10, 25 years. We don't have to mortgage the farm for tomorrow. Without the generation of electricity by industrial wind facilities, he can assume the solemn responsibility, which he already has, of the stewardship of our community heritage — our mountains, our farms and our forests.

We arrive today, with 1,970 registered voters in this county, and there are many more than 1,200 of you who have signed petitions against windmills. For those I would share the words of Winston Churchill: 'Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never give in — in nothing great or small, large or petty — never give in except to convictions of honor and good sense.'

Art Applegate

Art and Susan Applegate. We live in Bolar, Virginia. I have a written statement.

I am here to voice Susan's and my own absolute opposition to Highland New Wind Development corporation's request to construct

industrial wind turbine facilities on Allegheny Mountain.

We have seen these installations close up, and they are definitely not suited to Highland County. The installation and proliferation of these enormous machines would forever change our rural, agricultural heritage and recklessly endanger all manner of plants and animals that call Highland County home.

Undeniable beauty is perhaps the most important issue of all. Beauty is the reason people come here. It is the very heart and soul of tourism. The quality that makes heartbeats faster and eyes mist. Susan and I have traveled a bit, in the United States in particular, and have not found a more spectacular place anywhere. We are humbled by its magnificence and thankful we can call it home. Highland County is a jewel in the crown of creation, and we are obliged to keep it that way.

We all struggle daily to make ends meet. The county is no exception. We do need to continually investigate appropriate new sources of revenue and critically examine our spending to find new ways of saving money. Education in particular, because of its tremendous impact on our county budget, should be thoroughly reviewed.

I would like to take a moment to express our disappointment in the way this process has been handled. An issue of this unprecedented importance deserves every advantage democracy has to offer. Public hearings are critical to understanding the issue, but in the end, a fair and controlled way of determining public opinion is essential. This is a moral responsibility of a truly democratic government.

In conclusion, we ask the board of supervisors to reject Highland New Wind Development corporation's request on the grounds it is not suited to our rural way of life, poses an unacceptable risk to our environment, and would be a crime against creation.

Furthermore, we ask you to convey our sincere regrets to Highland New Wind, as we are not blind to the time, energy and the resources they have invested in this project.

A rejection of this proposal would be heard around the world, and would give hope and inspiration to the millions who constantly struggle to protect and to preserve our planet.

We respectfully submit this for the record this 19th day of May, 2005. Thank you.

Pat Patterson

My name is Pat Patterson. I've been a resident of Highland County for approximately 10 years, but have frequented the county for six years prior to that time.

How and why I came to this locality has been given before by many, and probably repeated before by many tonight. My wife and I both retired and found the beauty, peace and serenity of the area a perfect place to buy land, build a home, and live out our remaining years being a part of this wonderland. We had a vision, a dream.

However, not all dreams come true. There have been other issues arise that have been cause for concern over the years, but not of the magnitude of the one that has brought about this hearing. If construction of these wind turbines would solve the need for energy, there may be a ray of hope. But reality has to be considered. The amount of energy generated by these turbines is but a speck compared to the demand that's needed now, and just to the south of us is another reality about to take place that will increase that demand yet beyond today's need.

It's happening all around us. Housing and business construction is on the rise. These turbines, and many more to come, will never put a dent in the required demand. I have heard about taxes going up. My wife and I are on fixed incomes. Taxes concern us. But nothing's been said tonight about the cost of gasoline that farmers use to farm their land, tend their cattle and drive their cars. About the cost of bread going up. About the cost of milk going up. The insurance that we pay. Our hospitalization. And many more commodities that we use daily. Nothing has been said that would try to do to reduce that. These wind turbines and the money that they generate will do nothing to bring those costs down.

Let us look past the dollars that have been speculated — because that's all it is, is speculation. So I ask, Mr. Supervisors, what is your vision of Highland County five, 10, 15 even 20 years from now?

My wife and I respectfully ask that you do not approve this permit.

Austin Shepherd

I'm Austin Shepherd, retired Highland County extension agent, and I think you know that I have worked extremely hard for the benefit of all the people of Highland County.

But I would like for you to know that I am opposed to the wind development, mainly because you permit this one, we will be an

entire wind farm. They'll be in the valleys — of course they're saying now you can put them on the ridges — but with the height and everything, and the way it blows up high in the valley, they can even be put in the valleys. So we can be a total wind farm, and I don't think we need this.

Most everything I wanted to say has been said, but I want to repeat it a little bit. We are already for wind turbines. The federal government is subsidizing the big corporations to do this. And who knows when they will come in with the right of eminent domain, let them put them anywhere they want to. In other words, there'd be no restrictions on them.

Let's just take a look at how will wind turbines benefit Highland County. Jobs? A few when it's under construction, maybe one technician for like the one Mac wants to put in. That's not really doing anything for our economy.

Tax break? Who knows? I've heard it repeated by several people here that are in favor of this that we'll get thousands of dollars. I would almost bet my last copper that we won't get over 1 percent of our total budget. What does that amount to? Nothing.

I really would like to know why we would want to put in wind turbines when the wind turbines — say they develop all over the country — will only produce 6 to 8 percent of the electrical power for the nation. What is that? That isn't even a drop in the bucket.

One thing that concerns me is, I have heard in several statements that we should sacrifice Highland County to benefit the nation. Should we sacrifice Highland County? I should say it in one word: No.

Thank you.

Ernie Elliot

I'm Ernie Elliot. I live in Hightown on route 250. I will have a perfect view of the towers proposed for Red Oak Knob.

I just want to say, Allegheny Mountain Radio probably didn't need to be here tonight, judging from the size of this crowd here. Everybody in Highland County is here.

I live in Highland County and I feel it's a special place. I consider it a privilege to live here. I pay taxes here. I vote here. I adamantly oppose approval of the conditional use permit of McBride's to build commercial wind turbines on Allegheny Mountain. The opposition to this project by the residents, taxpayers and voters of Highland County is overwhelming — 1,500 people have signed petitions against this plan. When was the last time a petition in this county collected so many signatures? My guess is never.

Of course Mr. Blagg, in a statement that shows so much respect for his fellow Highlanders, says, 'Highlanders will sign anything.' Where, then, are the petitions in support of the commercial wind turbines? Have any been presented to you? I'll bet the answer is no. No one, it seems, who supports these turbines thought it important enough to collect signatures. Or maybe they couldn't find a sufficient number of supporters to justify a petition. Maybe even Mr. Blagg is wrong, and Highlanders will not sign just anything.

Right now, right now, control of Highland County's future is in your hands. It's in your hands, Mr. Rexrode. It's in your hands, Mr. Sullenberger. And it's in your hands, Mr. Blagg. However, if you approve Mr. McBride's request for a conditional use permit, control of Highland's future, with regard to commercial wind turbines, will slip from your grasp. You'll become irrelevant in this process.

Again, I strongly urge you to deny this conditional use permit. Please, just say no — now. Later will be too late.

Chris Elliot

Hi, my name is Chris Elliot and I live in Hightown. Well actually, just a little east of Hightown.

I thought long and hard about what I could tell you that might convince you to vote no concerning Mr. McBride's application. I know, Mr. Blagg, you were concerned about property rights. And I thought about Hank Williams' song with the line, 'No matter how I struggle and strive, I'll never get out of this world alive.' How in a sense, we don't really own property, but just have the use of it for the short time we are here.

If we cannot improve the world, we should at least leave it no worse than when we came here. And I ask why, when we speak of property rights, why aren't the rights of Mr. McBride's neighbors as important as Mr. McBride's? It seems like all we hear about are how important his property rights are.

I thought about Mr. Sullenberger's comment that he wondered why more people weren't behind wind energy as green energy. I'm not sure how green an energy it really is. Sure it makes use of wind, but what is the true expense? It isn't free. I've looked, and have been unable to find any information on how much energy is expended in putting up one of these industrial wind turbines.

Also, there has been no explanation of why, if adequate wind is

achieved at 120 feet, why they have to be built 400 feet. No studies have been done at 400 feet. And if you think of an eight-foot pick up truck, if you make it 40, 50 feet long, is it a better truck? We've just been told that they were more efficient but I have seen no support for this theory that 400 feet is more efficient than 120.

I have seen information that said no other forms of energy production have been able to be shut down because wind energy is produced. In fact, I just read that using wind energy is actually causing more pollution, because energy plants that are supplementing can no longer be run at peak production. And if you've seen recently, GE has ads that show they are developing a way of producing clean energy from coal.

There's another thing, too, I've thought of. Virginia is now being required to accept garbage from New York. Maybe we can use New York's garbage to make energy to send back to them.

However, there was one thing that stayed with me, after we were on our tour this summer of the proposed site on Mr. McBride's property. Mr. Rexrode told me and some others that just saying no was not enough. I would respectfully disagree. When it comes to smoking, we tell our children, just say no. When it comes to drugs, we tell our children, just say no. When it comes to drinking, we tell our children, just say no. 'No' is always more powerful than 'yes.' Just ask the mother of a two-year-old. 'No' is so powerful that we give our president the power to veto a bill passed by Congress. We do not, however, give our president the right to say yes when Congress, who is the people's representatives, has defeated a bill. I, and most of the people of Highland County, are telling you to just say no to Mr. McBride's conditional use application.

And I would like to make a couple of other comments that I thought of listening to other people. We hear that people want lower taxes. And yet at the same time ...

[RECORDING INTERRUPTED]

... who disparaged us in Highland County as being uninformed. I would disagree. She also said, was talking about, lawsuits. Well, lawsuits can still be brought, even if Highland County wins them they still have to be paid for, and anyone can bring a lawsuit. We see that all the time.

The first speaker in favor of the windmills, or I should say wind turbines. 'Windmills' are really a very bucolic idea; it reminds me of Pa Wilder and his friends digging a well by hand and then putting up a windmill to bring up the water that was needed for their animals and for their crops and for their families. These are anything but 'windmills.' These are industrial wind turbines.

This first speaker said that there are 68,000 wind turbines worldwide. Now, we know that most of them are not 400 feet tall. We get a prospectus each year from Dominion Resources, and we figured out that it would take 50,000, 400-foot wind turbines just to cover the energy use that Dominion Resources produces right now.

Charlotte Stephenson mentioned that in 2025 there would probably be 100,000 wind turbines in the United States. That would only cover two Dominion Resource companies.

Thank you.

Carolyn Pohowsky

Carolyn Pohowsky, Hightown.

As most of you know, I work for the chamber of commerce, and I'm not here to speak on behalf of the chamber of commerce, I'm here to speak on behalf of myself. But it's hard to disassociate what I do and have done for eight years from who I am as a resident living in Hightown.

For eight years I've been on the front lines, taking requests from tourists and people who want to relocate here. In the eight years that I've been here, I've watched the relocation requests rise from an average of two or three a month to an average of one a day.

I'm very disturbed by the fact that so many of the people that are calling our office at the moment are expressing serious reservations about the wind turbine industry in Highland County. These are people that were planning to move here who are now reconsidering. I don't think that reflects well on the property values, and whether or not they're going to go up in this county.

As far as tourism is concerned, again, that's what I do. It's hard for me to imagine that many people in this room are going to plan a holiday in the next year or two to a wind turbine farm. Possible, but I think if you really think about it, it's not likely.

So now I have to ask myself, how many tourists will continue to come to Highland County? In 1989 we had four lodging facilities in Highland County. Today we have 16. That's considerable growth. We have businesses that survive because of the tourists. These are jobs — job opportunities for our young people. These are businesses

for our community. The wind turbines are not going to bring in jobs.

As far as the tax revenues are concerned, that's an important issue. It's important to our farmers; it's important to all our property owners here in Highland County. But we all watched a project a few years ago to improve our road, in which we were promised a great sum of money by our state — and it wasn't forthcoming. The money comes, the money goes; it doesn't often come to Highland County. This is a heavily subsidized industry and I have to ask myself — and I would hope every property owner here would be asking himself — if our property values are going to go down and that money is not forthcoming, what do we have left? What will we have left in 10 or 20 years in Highland County?

If wind turns out to be our biggest asset — bigger than our view sheds, bigger than our natural beauty that we already have here in Highland County — then it's an asset that we should be selling to the highest bidder, not to the first bidder, the highest bidder. I would suggest that you wait five years, see if the wind increases in value. If it does, make the most of it for our county. If it's really going to support our farmers, wait. Be conservative, and let's see what happens.

Thank you.

Winnie Richardson

Thank you, gentlemen. I'm Winnie Richardson from the Pines, north of Monterey. Before I start I want to thank Alan and Doug, if they're around anywhere, for working so late tonight setting everything up for everybody.

My goal tonight is to get you all to use your imaginations to visualize the impact the wind turbines will have on a personal level. Now I want you all, this is kind of silly, but close your eyes. And imagine that it is one of those very rare, hot and humid summer nights in Highland County and you can't sleep. The window is open, but no air is moving, and the only sound you hear is the sound of that brand new silent fan.

Now imagine that you open up your eyes and there are little red lights blinking on all the blades. That is an unpleasant thought.

Now it's time to really stretch your imagination. Think of that fan being 400 times as big, and sticking up on the top of a mountain just above your house. That is exactly what the Goodalls, and every other resident of Allegheny Mountain, will have to put up with day and night. And I might add that myself, and every other resident who lives in the foothills of Jack Mountain, will probably have to put up with them in the near future after that.

Are you having trouble imagining how tall 400 feet really is? Show of hands — how many have been to the Statue of Liberty? Not many. How many have seen the Washington Monument? A few more.

I'm going to tell you in real life how big 400 feet is. A fan is about 12 inches. The one in my classroom way down at the end of the hall is about 10 inches. A fan will fit, a regular house fan, will fit in one of those little square tiles that every one of you walked over when you came in here tonight. Imagine putting 400 of those end-to-end. Kind of hard to do? Well, I'll tell you what. If you start at the wall at the elementary hall where you all came in on the far side, and you go straight through the two offices there, and through those green doors that are right up here, and all the way down to the high school hall, past the office, past the main entrance, past both gym doors, to the last two little blue doors that nobody ever uses except myself and Mrs. Beasley. That is 400 feet. Now imagine that hallway stuck straight up in the air. That is what a wind turbine will look like.

And by the way, a few people have suggested, this is true, wind turbines are not invisible or silent.

With the couple seconds that I have left, I want to give you all a bit of a tidbit of the real, true value of our view shed. A couple years ago I read in the AAA magazine, that goes to people throughout the entire East Coast of the United States, a little article that said that this area is the most valuable area on the entire East Coast of the United States, from Maine to Florida, for stargazing. The reason is because there is no light pollution. The wind turbines, with their little red lights, will produce light pollution. People from all over the East Coast come to this area to view stars. They ain't going to come anymore, folks. Thank you.

Larry Held

Good evening, gentlemen. My name is Larry Held. I live on the side of Jack Mountain. I'm a voting resident of Highland County.

I speak in opposition to granting the conditional use permit to Mr. McBride, although I strongly feel we shouldn't even be in the position we're in tonight, since Mr. McBride's neighbors, your properly appointed economic development commission, and planning commission, have all said no.

I know each of you claim to have done research on this matter, and I hope by now you have learned that wind power does not live up to the claims made by its advocates. On the contrary, its impact on the environment and on people's lives is far from benign. The money we taxpayers are paying to reimburse these exploiters who sponsor construction of these monstrous towers could well be more effectively spent elsewhere.

But I don't want to speak to you about the wasted funds. I'd like to just follow Winnie up by talking a little bit about the size. These 400-foot towers each support a turbine the size of a bus. At 120 feet long, they sweep over an acre of air that's moved at 100 miles per hour at the tip. The total weight for the tower assembly is over 163 tons. That, gentlemen, is 326,000 pounds.

One of the biggest investors in wind turbines, Florida Power and Light — which, by the way, paid no taxes in 2002 or 2003 because of the taxpayer breaks that we gave them, that our Congress gave them — estimates that the turbine site requires a foundation holding over 1,000 tons of concrete reinforced with steel. On most of our mountain ridges, it would be necessary to blast into the bedrock to put these foundations in. This could possibly disrupt the well water sources which are located on the tops of these mountains. Of course, getting all the construction equipment into the sites is also going to be very difficult. Straight, wide roads will be required to be built on our ridges. Public roads in hilly areas are often inadequate. The construction of Buffalo Mountain wind project in Tennessee required the builder to widen the roads and eliminate switchbacks — a major job in this county. In addition, roads used by the contractor were severely damaged and had to be rebuilt.

I realize Mr. McBride's site is mostly in meadowlands, but if you approve this permit, I don't care what the other side says, there's going to be other people coming in looking to build wind towers. You need to clear the forests at the top for maximum wind efficiency. For towers the size of those proposed at Red Oak, that would mean cutting acres per tower. The destructive impact of this on our environment is obvious. Erosion, destruction of water flow, destruction of wild habitat and plant life are sure to occur.

Now I know all of you want to do your part in making America energy independent. But rather than jeopardize our landscape and the natural environment that our future generations are entitled to enjoy, why not just replace one incandescent light bulb in your house with an efficient compact fluorescent? If everyone in America would make that change, it would decrease emissions by 90 billion pounds every year — the equivalent of taking 7.5 million cars off the road. That's certainly a lot easier than building wind towers on our ridges.

In summary, gentlemen, we're talking about industrial and commercial installations that do not belong on the ridge tops of Highland County, and I beg you to vote a resounding no on the conditional use permit. Thank you.

Randy Richardson

[RECORDING INTERRUPTED]

... I just want to remind you all of a few historical things. Lisa [Hawkins] had earlier said that it's a lot easier for people to speak against something than for something, but she might not be so familiar with Highland County history.

Going back a few years to 2001, to the U.S. 250 project, some 700 people signed petitions in favor of that. I guess that's an unusual circumstance in Virginia. Those were people obviously in favor of something, not against it.

She also gave you more or less what I would say is the ammunition you need to deny this permit. She said they could deny McDonald's. I certainly don't think that McBride or his constituents represent that kind of economic power. And she stood up here and gave you that, and argued that you have every reason in the world to deny it.

Then Mr. Flora came up next and turned around and said, yes, you can deny all this, but one project might not be good enough for the county — maybe we ought to consider two or three. I'm kind of confused about that. It seems on the one hand we're told we don't have to have anymore, but on the other hand, maybe you ought to have three or four more.

And lastly, about the petitions, getting back to U.S. 250 — Jerry, at that time you told the paper that the people who signed petitions were the kind of people you would like to support. In fact, you said in the paper, you said you want to support the kind and quality of people who expressed interest in this project — these are the kind of people who had taken the time to sign a petition, express their opinion. These were hundreds of people. And at the end of that article you also stated that you would not make your mind up until after the public hearing. Well, I still hope you are open-minded about these matters and I think the people have spoken.

At the last board of supervisors meeting, on an issue as trivial as the Dumpsters, you gentlemen said that you had to take a hard look

at that issue and listen to what the people wanted. I hope you're willing to do that again tonight.

Thank you.

Beth Mollihan

Good evening. My name is Beth Mollihan, and I have traveled over the hills from the west, from Webster County, West Virginia, this afternoon, to speak to you about the placement of this windmill farm and its impact on the Civil War battlefield, Camp Allegheny, located just over the county line in Pocahontas County, West Virginia.

As a Civil War historical site, Camp Allegheny is unique. Today it looks very much as it did in December of 1861 when Confederate troops were in winter quarters there. The old Parkersburg and Staunton turnpike still winds across the landscape — a dirt road just as it was in 1861 when soldiers were stationed there to halt any advancing Union troops. The trenches where the guns were placed are still clearly visible, as well as the stones of the chimneys of the old cabin barracks. When you stand in the trenches on the height of Camp Allegheny and look out over the valley, you see very much the same view as a Confederate soldier would have seen in that long ago December.

Before you turn where the old turnpike winds across the ridge behind you, the hills roll away over Highland County. There are no subdivisions, no fast food places, no billboards to distract from this wonderful vision of the past. If, however, the windmill farm is constructed, one will then look from the height of Camp Allegheny to a vision of these long-armed monsters that have the look of a robot that just escaped from the latest Star Wars fantasy.

It is for the honor of these men, both Confederate and Union, who were willing to give up their very lives so that we might have a stronger, better country, that I have come here tonight to ask that you be mindful of the wonderful legacy they have left you right here in your community. They have left you a piece of their reality, a reminder of what they sacrificed. I ask you, as you gather here to make plans for the future of this area, and the future of your children, that you pause to remember those who made this gathering here tonight possible.

The future is, indeed, the place where we live, but we do have to hold on to our piece of the past, otherwise we will have no milestone, no marker to judge the distance we have traveled from our past.

I do have a few facts about wind energy I would like to share with you very quickly. Wind energy consumption was .11 percent of United States energy consumption in 2003, the latest year for which data was available, according to the energy information administration. That percentage is only expected to increase to .36 percent by 2025.

In our state, wind farms enjoy very favorable tax treatment compared to other property owners and businesses. Property taxes on the turbines are based on their salvage value, which is 5 percent of the original cost. Comparatively, property taxes on land are based on 90 percent to 110 percent of market value. Business and occupational tax is calculated based on the taxable generating capacity, which for wind farms equates to 5 percent of the official capacity of the wind farms. Other new electrical generating units pay B and O taxes based on 40 percent of official capability.

And I think I will no longer take up any of your time.

Ann Wefer

Ann Wefer, McDowell, Virginia.

I want to talk about the new ordinance that you adopted that essentially took height out of the variance approval procedure and put it in conditional use approval procedure. The variance process provides relief from development standards such as setbacks, lot coverage, height.

A variance can be approved only if certain criteria are met, for example, a property is being denied a property right possessed by other properties in the same vicinity and zone. Uses, on the other hand, are processed by conditional use permit. All zones allow certain uses by CUP and are specifically listed in each zone. Height is a development standard. It is not a use.

You cannot bypass the criteria requirements of a variance by substituting a less demanding process just for Mr. McBride, just because he has a very, very serious height problem. Mr. McBride has not even submitted a site plan showing where these 400-foot wind turbines are going to be located. So what possible criteria could you use for approval, and not be arbitrary and capricious? There isn't any.

But you know that. Melissa Dowd knows that. The Shenandoah regional planning district knows that. Those determined here in the audience know that. Your own planning commission knows that.

But you deliberately adopted that new ordinance anyway. You can hide behind the judicial shield of legislative prerogative on a lot of things, but not on this one.

Thank you.

Susan Webb

My name is Susan Webb and I'm from Mustoe. I'm a native of Augusta County, and I'm a retired teacher from the Albemarle County school system. I currently reside near Mustoe, and I'm a Highland County taxpayer and voter and full-time resident.

I oppose the granting of a conditional use permit to Highland New Wind Development to construct and operate an electric substation and wind turbines on Allegheny Mountain. I oppose the siting of this, or any, industrial wind farm on Highland County's mountain ridges. Besides the loss of view shed, the threat to wildlife, and the infringement on citizens' property rights and businesses, a real concern to me is the loss of property value.

My husband and I are currently building a house here. We plan to live here the rest of our lives. Our 58-acre property is the most valuable asset that we have to leave to our children, and I'm certain that our land will lose value if the pastoral nature of this county changes.

People move out here for the peace and quiet, the wildlife and the views, the prettiest as it has been called, as if scenic value should not be a consideration in buying property. Who would want to invest in property and a home out here with large-scale wind turbines in your face? Buyers are already putting their building plans on hold until they know the outcome of this decision.

We know this permit won't be the last of it. There are other wind companies just waiting to plow through the ridge top forests and set up their turbines. Wind turbines could sit on Allegheny Mountain, Lantz Mountain, on Middle Mountain, on Monterey Mountain, Back Creek, Jack Mountain. Picture the view you'd get from the crest of Shenandoah Mountain as you come into Highland.

You may say I'm exaggerating, but you know it's a real possibility. Don't take such risks with our unique natural resources. Protect our property values. Protect the beauty that draws hikers, fishermen, birders and so many good people to our lovely county. Protect the unique sense of community that Highlanders have enjoyed.

I've heard it said that this issue is dividing our community. I don't think so. Did you read all those names on those petitions? Opponents to this project are in the majority, and they come from every corner of Highland. Our community has come together over this issue, bridging real or imagined gaps between natives, newcomers, farmers, academics, young, and old, and in-between. We are a community — a community of your constituents who are saying no wind turbines in Highland County. Reject Highland New Wind Development's application for a conditional use permit.

Thank you.

I have a very short comment by someone who lives in Monterey I'd like to read. They gave it to me tonight. This is from Mr. and Mrs. H. Wilson Wright, and this is their comment: 'This is to notify the Highland County supervisors, Highland IDA, and significant others that we are opposed to wind farm development and the transmission lines that are to follow. Highland already sends electricity to Richmond from the Back Creek storage facility over our county's mountains. Enough is enough.' Mr. and Mrs. H. Wilson Wright.

Rick Webb

My name is Rick Webb. My address is HC4, Box 15, Monterey.

I am opposed to the Highland New Wind Development project and I request that the board of supervisors not issue a conditional use permit because:

1. There is real potential for environmental harm.
2. The potential for environmental harm has not been properly evaluated, and
3. The applicant has presented erroneous and misleading information to the supervisors concerning environmental permitting and review process.

Aside from being a resident with a commitment to protection of the values that make our county unique, I approach this issue as an environmental scientist. In my position with the University of Virginia, I study the ecology of forested mountain watersheds in western Virginia. My primary research focus concerns the harmful effects of air pollution on mountain streams — I'm talking about acid rain. I am well aware of the need for clean and renewable sources of energy.

However, an objective analysis indicates that wind projects such as the one under consideration will make only a trivial contribution to meeting our energy needs and that the costs may outweigh the

benefits. Before we make decisions that may forever alter our forested mountain landscape, we need the kind of information that would be provided by independent environmental assessment and cost-benefit analysis, and this has not been done.

Concern about the lack of any assessment process to support decisions about large-scale wind energy development led me to take part in the development of guidance for wind project siting in Virginia. For the last two years I have worked with the Environmental Working Group of the Virginia Wind Energy Collaborative in producing a landscape classification system report that identifies areas with known environmental sensitivities and addresses the need for assessment prior to wind energy development. This report is posted on the Virginia Wind Environmental Working Group web site, vawind.org. Along with a copy of my comments, I have attached an example map showing some of the types of information presented in the landscape classification system report and on the web site.

The example map focuses on our area of the state, including the Highland New Wind project site. The areas shown on this map fall into three classes: Unsuitable, flagged, and unclassified. 'Unsuitable' refers to areas that, for mainly legal reasons, are automatically excluded from utility-scale wind energy development. 'Flagged' refers to areas for which there are specific, known environmental issues. 'Unclassified' refers to all other areas, and should definitely not be interpreted as meaning suitable.

A basic premise of the landscape classification system is that there are no areas that can be deemed suitable without proper environmental assessment.

The example map shows that the Highland New Wind project site is in an area that is classified as flagged. This classification is based on the fact that the area is designated by The Nature Conservancy as critical for preservation of regional biological diversity. The landscape classification system also considers factors that cannot be represented on maps, and some areas are classified as unsuitable/unmapped. The Highland New Wind project is located in such an area due to the presence of an endangered species, the northern flying squirrel.

Although many locations that support endangered species are not known, and therefore not mapped, the presence of the northern flying squirrel at the Highland New Wind site is well-documented. Based on the landscape classification system, this site is unsuitable for utility-scale wind energy development.

The Highland New Wind project area would probably also fall in the unsuitable/unmapped classification as a significant migratory route for birds and bats. These areas can only be identified based on ... site-specific pre-development studies, which have evidently not been done for this project. However, problems with fatalities of migrating birds and bats have occurred elsewhere in the central Appalachian region, suggesting that this may be a problem site.

For example, in 2003, during the first year of operation at the first wind turbine project constructed in West Virginia, an estimated 2,000-4,000 migrating bats were killed by flying into turbine rotors. This represents the largest wildlife mortality ever reported for a wind energy project, and a comparably high number of bats were killed in 2004. A leading expert has estimated that almost 60,000 bats per year will be killed if all the proposed projects within 70 miles of this site are actually built.

No one, not even the consultants on the industry payroll, are going to argue that bat populations can sustain this level of impact. In addition, at this same site, 33 migrating birds were killed in a single night when they flew into the turbine rotors, representing the largest bird mortality incident ever reported for a wind project. Although this event was dismissed by the company's consultant as an anomaly associated with low cloud cover and lights, such cloud conditions are not uncommon on our ridges and birds are also known to fly into unlighted towers.

[Interrupted by Jerry Rexrode and told to wrap up.]

I don't have too much more to say.

Rexrode: You're already way over five minutes.

I'm aware of how you enforce your rules, and I was in a public hearing last week ...

Rexrode: I'm sorry, sir, we've been trying to give everybody ... we still have two pages left...

I'm going to finish what I'm saying.

Rexrode: No, Mr. Webb. Do we have a deputy here?

In addition, at this same site, 33 migrating birds were killed in a single night when they flew into the turbine rotors, representing the largest bird mortality incident ever reported for a wind project. Although this event was dismissed by the company's consultant ...

Rexrode: Mr. Webb, we tried to be generous with everybody and other people would like to speak.

You're not treating people equal.

Rexrode: We're cutting them off at five minutes.

Well, apparently some people are more equal than others.

[Webb is escorted from the podium by deputies.]

Scott Foster

My name is Scott Foster and I live south of Hightown. My father and I own a piece of land in Pendleton County, West Virginia, along the Staunton Parkersburg turnpike.

When route 250 veered off from the turnpike years ago, at the top of Allegheny, by chance the turnpike and Camp Allegheny were spared. This battlefield and encampment are now listed on the National Historic Register, which should offer some protection. Mr. McBride failed to contact the owners of this battlefield — both private owners and the Monongahela National Forest — and the commissioners of Pocahontas County.

From the battlefield lines, you'll see the 400-foot turbines on Tamarack Ridge, one mile away. This is a rare historic site, in that no modern intrusions exist. The complete historic atmosphere is intact. You cannot place that in a museum. However, no formal process exists that requires McBride to inform the owners.

So by chance this site was preserved, and by chance this site will be defiled. Do not grant a conditional use permit under Mr. McBride's conditions.

Terry Floriano

My name is Terry Floriano from Doe Hill, and I'm a concerned citizen — so far a disappointed and angry resident of Highland County.

I believe that the county supervisors are not listening, or if you are listening, you don't seem to care about the wishes and feelings of your constituents in this matter of commercial wind turbines in this county.

I even understand that one of you made the comment that people in Highland County will sign anything, referring to the petition against the wind turbines. I think that this is an insult and slap in the face to the people of Highland County, of which my husband and I are two. We certainly don't sign everything, but we did sign the petition, even though our names were inadvertently left off the list published in The Recorder. So for the record, Ray and Terry Floriano are against the wind turbines in Highland County.

As I said at the last meeting, we have moved here from other parts of the country because of the beauty of this area. Now I commute every day from Doe Hill to Hot Springs, 55 miles each way, through Highland and Bath counties. I enjoy some of the most beautiful scenery in our great nation.

It disturbs me that wherever we have lived, beautiful places are constantly under assault. I consider this proposal to put in commercial wind turbines on the beautiful ridges of the Alleghenies as an assault against nature — we are nature-lovers — and an assault against those who live in the area and enjoy and cherish the natural wonders that God has put here.

I can't do anything about West Virginia building wind turbines on ridges seen from our house, but I can do something about Virginia. That's why I'm here tonight. I'm not against clean energy sources. I'm against wind turbines in this place. Not only do I not just sign anything, but I, and my neighbors who are here this evening — I'm sure I speak for most of the people here, and I'm in good company by the way — did not give up another evening at home and come out and sit here and speak for just anything. This is a very important issue, whether the county supervisors realize it or not.

I want to commend the people of Highland County and other concerned friends for coming out tonight. I think these people are here with heartfelt concern, and are here because of wisdom and commitment to keeping our country beautiful and, in its natural state, as much as possible, not only for our enjoyment and for the environment, but as a legacy for our children and grandchildren. It is my hope and my prayer that our county elected officials will heed the voice of the people whom they represent, and vote against this project, which would bring, as I see it, no good, and only harm, to Highland County.

I thank God every day for the gift of living in such a place. Some may think that because we've been here less than a year that we have less of a voice and less of a concern about this issue. Well, the friendly people of Highland County have made us feel most welcome here, and I think they realize that we are one of them in our great concern for this uniquely blessed county.

We have seen the time-lapse photography of how other places have been ruined once the door was opened to such things as commercial wind turbines. I think whether you've lived here a year or your whole life, it doesn't matter. What matters is that we live here now, and we love this place. We are here either because we've cho-

sen to move here, or we've chosen to stay here.

I think that the people in this room are but the tip of the iceberg. Those who have made a way to come out tonight — some couldn't be here for various reasons but I have no doubt that the vast majority of the residents of this county are against these wind turbines. We are against these man-made monsters installed on the mountains.

And by the way, money ain't everything. Our supervisors need to respect our wishes, or step down.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak here tonight. Thank you.

Jim Brown

Thank you. My name's Jim Brown. I'm from Rockbridge County. I own a farm just over the mountains here in the Blue Grass Valley.

Wesley Woods is a very highly respected appraiser in central and western Virginia. I'll keep this very brief, but he wants to reiterate that this is a land use decision. It has the potential to affect the adjoining property owners and their property value. He feels very strongly that property values will go down if these things go into place, and everywhere else in the county as well if they're allowed on other ridge tops. Quite simply, it's not a compatible use for the area and for the zoning that's in place.

I've been in real estate for 20 years. I've been coming here for 40 years, and I'm very concerned for the landowners that surround us. They all spoke according to the public record; all the adjoining landowners are opposed to this project.

I've invested my resources in this property. We'll be able to see it from our farm. We're very concerned about that. I know as a broker that I've talked to many people who are very concerned about what's going on here, and if they would want to invest here because people want to have their good views, that's why they would come here.

Instead of going into technical things, I'll just say that I took my daughter into West Virginia to look at the wind turbines out there. She had her Walkman on. She didn't want to go on the trip. She was slunk down in her seat, as most 15-year-olds would be. As we got closer and started seeing the wind turbines, she sat up. She turned off her walkman. When we got out of the car and went up to it, she turned back around to me with tears in her eyes and said, 'Dad, please don't let this happen in Highland County.'

Wesley Woods is opposed to it. I'm opposed to it. Thank you.

Dennis Coppege

I'm Dennis Coppege. I live in Madison County but my wife and I have a house here in Highland. Thank you for the opportunity to address you here.

I had some prepared notes. I changed my mind when I heard Mr. Flora's comments about the growth industry, growth of the wind industry in the United States.

This is growing because it's a tax scam. If you take away the tax write-off, these people could care less about green energy. If they didn't have the tax write-off, we wouldn't be here tonight and there'd never be another wind farm built in the country. And you can be assured that the same lobbyist who got the federal income tax deductions for them are going to be working in Richmond to remove the property tax on these wind turbines.

You may get \$175,000 a year. You might not get \$175. You really need to think about it before you pass this based on the tax income. I feel sorry for all the farmers that are having to pay more taxes, but I would suggest that you all look into a land use tax system to help them on their hay and pasture land. I don't want to pay any more taxes here on my house, but I will to help them out.

Thank you.

Andrew Luther

I had some prepared remarks I wanted to address this evening, but after hearing the presentations, I have very significant concerns considering the financial aspects of the proposal.

I came here expecting to hear a very sophisticated analysis with respects to the financial aspects of this project. You have a multi-million-dollar project. You've been working on it for several years, and there's no sophistication. You lead us to believe that there's \$175,000 of tax revenue coming in for the next 20 years. I've been in products planning for many years. I have a financial background. Things don't work that way.

I expected you to address things like risk analysis. What's the risk of the \$175,000 coming in every year? If we look at where we are in this phase of the product planning cycle, you would probably put a really low probability factor on your cash flows. And if you take the \$175,000 and you apply, let's say, a 30 percent probability it's going to happen, do the math. You're looking at some relatively

low numbers.

Another aspect of your project — this is a multi-year project — we get involved with something called economic value analysis. It takes into consideration the time value of money. That \$175,000 you're talking about today is not going to be worth that in just seven years. In other words, if you take a discount factor of 10 percent in seven years, you're going to knock 50 percent off the value of that cash flow.

So, again, I was looking for a sophisticated analysis. This is a multi-million-dollar project. If you were in a corporate board room, and you presented these financials the way you did this evening, they would have disapproved your project. Completely rejected it. I think you ought to do a lot more homework with respect to your financials, because that's what we're all betting on, here. We're looking for this cash flow coming in, and from my point of view, and from any type of sophisticated analysis that you should have used, I didn't see anything of that coming out.

And then finally — I was in the computer industry for almost 20 years — you talked about technology tonight. I recently knew product planning, and I had situations where I went out, looking at a new software package and we were willing to give that writer a million dollars up front for the rights to sell that package. We had situations where the very next day, we would see a software package advertised in the Wall Street Journal that would run circles around it.

Technology is ever-changing. And here again, to bet on \$175,000 a year for the next 20 years, to me, that's stretching it. If you read today's Wall Street Journal, there was an article in there about solar panels — big breakthrough today, big breakthrough. Cypress semiconductors — take a look at them. And these are the things you're going to be confronted with as you go through time with your project. These are all new projects that may impact your program. I didn't see any type of analyses that address the impact on the program. To me, that's very significant. As businessmen, I think you should require a very sophisticated financial analysis on this project. And don't expect to see \$175,000 per year coming in for the next 20 years. I would bet against it. Thank you.

David Bailey

Good evening, Mr. Chairman, members of the board.

As you know I'm David Bailey, and I'm an attorney here representing some folks in the Highland County area, and I think I'm entitled to six minutes. As I said before, I'd hope you'd be generous enough to give me a couple more because I have to respond to two attorneys on that side over there. I guess my stature is increasing.

I want to thank the board members for the opportunity to speak tonight. I know there's a lot of tense feelings tonight, but basically I want to compliment the board, and I have no problems putting on the record the openness to public comment that really has exemplified all your proceedings to date, and I congratulate you on that and hope that you will continue to do it.

And tonight, you've already heard from many people and some have been emotional and others are probably going to be emotional yet. And some of this stuff is going to be repetitive, because that's the nature of public hearings. I also expected the comments tonight — and I can already see, as they have been for every public proceeding that you've held on this issue — that the majority view is against approval of the wind turbine project.

Now there have been some side issues here, with people talking about why there's not so many people in favor or why they don't come forward. You know, come on, people come to these meetings to speak to you from their heart because this is an important issue to them. There's a huge number of people here tonight opposing this project because it's important to them. Not because they're trying to intimidate Mr. McBride or any of the other folks here supporting this project. It's important to them. If it's important to them, it's important to you.

Now, I understand that board members do not rely on public opinion polls to make decisions about land use. That's not right. But in this case, the majority opinion here expressed to you tonight, and expressed to you in the paper, and expressed to you on the street, and everywhere you go, it's not just opinion. It's a collective view of the Highland community about county land use. That view is important to you because as the elected representatives of this community, it is not your function — it is not your function — to substitute your personal view for those expressed by the people you represent. It's not about polls. It's about recognizing what the community vision is for this county and as the elected representatives, carrying forth that vision.

I had planned to discuss many of the untruths tonight, issues about wind turbines, and I'd be here much longer than my eight minutes to go through all that individual stuff. But I don't have to,

because consistently in this whole process, I personally, as an attorney, and the people I represent, tried to give to you hard, factual information, not blowing smoke. I don't have to come to you tonight and refute all these comments about the glories of wind turbines because Sen. Warner has done it for me. And if you can't trust him, the senior senator from Virginia, probably one of the most conservative republicans around, then I don't know who the heck you do trust.

Following me is someone who is going to be presenting to you a press release which has been referred to a couple times already. I'll take about four minutes to read it into the record. If you don't want me to read it into the record, I'll read parts of it, for Sen. Warner explains the whole mess that is wind energy development. And it is a mess. He describes it very clearly, and I'm not going to repeat what other people are going to say, but it is not the panacea, either — for taxpayers, or for global warming, or anything else. It's a tax-subsidized profit for a few people. That's what drives this whole thing, and you've heard that already tonight.

I also had planned to address the McBrides' site tonight. But the recent release of the site criteria and wind maps from the Virginia Wind Energy Collaborative — certainly not an organization that we've been really friends with — now makes it clear that under their independent criteria, there are a lot of problems with the McBrides' site. It probably is either unqualified, or maybe even unsuitable. Now Rick [Webb] didn't get to read through the whole thing there, but that's the bottom line. This site is not the greatest site in the world, and it's going to have lots of problems with it.

This is the same opinion previously given to you by experts on bird and bat mortality. And you've heard a lot of the same old stuff that was brought up last year in public hearings — that one bird per turbine per year. That's all been debunked. It's baloney. It's old. We gave you the written opinion of the leading bird and bat expert, doing work mostly for power companies on bird and bat mortality, and the problem with locating a wind turbine facility on a ridge in a migratory bird route, where there are lots of bats in the middle of wooded cover and undulating ridges, it's an environment which creates the opportunity for a lot of mortality. That's the facts. From the best expert there is. We gave you that document. It's not just me telling you that. There's going to be bird and bat mortality here. There's going to be lot of problems with that. I'm not going to say anymore about that.

I had planned to develop and submit to you, in an effort to try to help you tonight, a list of conditions that you might consider for mitigation that you can impose, because you can impose conditions on this project that would effectively mitigate the impact from these wind turbines on surrounding landowners. I put a lot of time on this. You already have all the long list of mitigating possibilities from the central planning district. You have the environmental impact statement that we gave you, prepared for the federal government, which goes through this whole long laundry list and talks about all these problems like noise and other issues, which are real. They're not fake. And they're in that document.

But I couldn't prepare a list of mitigations for you. And the reason I couldn't prepare a list of mitigations and conditions for you is that this is one of those hardball decisions you're going to have to make. You are not going to protect the Goodalls' property by any conditions you put in this permit, because any conditions you impose that will protect their property, is not going to make this project possible. The Brodys — the Brodys came into this county and they built a business on what is the heart and soul of this county — recreational areas and the scenic views. People have an opportunity to come and see that. You will destroy that business. You cannot mitigate it. You cannot put those turbines in their front yard and expect them to continue to exist.

For all those reasons — I could go on, but I won't — for all those reasons, I ask that you deny it. Thank you.

John Pagels

Thank you. My name is John Pagels. I live in Chesterfield County, Virginia. To add a little credibility to it though, in the last 20 years I've spent more than 100 nights in the Montvallee Motel.

I am a professor of biology at VCU — Virginia Commonwealth University. I do some administrative work also, and I do a lot of research. I started studying mammals in the mountains of Virginia in 1971, and my intense activity on northern flying squirrel work started in '85, when the northern flying squirrel was placed on the federal list of endangered species.

Through the graciousness of the McBrides, their property was one of many areas where I checked, and that's been about from '85 to '96. And northern flying squirrels were, I only found northern flying squirrels at two sites — one up in the Laurel Fork area, the Laurel Fork area on the U.S. Forest Service, and also on several

different occasions on McBride property.

And, by the way, since I got my bachelor's degree, my master's degree, and my Ph.D. 36 years ago, I've never had another professional call me a liar, and I'm not sure where people's information comes from.

OK, why, in the wind project area, were we looking for the squirrel? Because it's one of the special areas of Canadian life zone habitat. There's very little of this in the Eastern United States. It is there. And these can be considered like mountain islands. They're separated from other places. But then ... should special plants and animals, including the endangered northern flying squirrel, and the state endangered water shrew — which was also collected on that property — be of any concern to you as far as this project goes?

It is kind of sad that we have to have an endangered species or a threatened or rare species before we can even get anybody excited. Some of the gentlemen up here with the farms and everything, they're going to be very sad that they don't have an endangered species when their land is condemned for new power lines or something. It works sometimes for you.

To put it in better perspective, many people travel here from all over the country to see this beautiful area. If you want to see something different, you can get away from here. You can drive to Richmond, Staunton, wherever. You can go and get a fast food sandwich. You can go take your kids out and count the number of semi's that go by in an hour. The number of red ones. Great fun.

But if we want to get away, we have to come up here. And there aren't many places like this. I sometimes jokingly ask people up here, 'Where would you like to live if you couldn't live here?' And they say, 'I wouldn't, I couldn't live there. I'd die.' Well, so would the animals die if they couldn't live here.

What you have here, and the critters that live here, are very special. I'm often asked — and this is important — I'm often asked what effect might the turbines have on the northern flying squirrel?

We don't know. Maybe they'll go for a long glide after they climb off the edge of one of these things. But we've got to prove, you know, we've got to determine that the project will not cause harm. It is not my duty to prove, as some people suggest, after the fact, that harm will occur. We have to first know that it won't.

So anyhow, I urge everybody, not just the board of supervisors, but the McBride family as well, for you people to think of your legacies; the gentleman's gone now who sometimes brings in the Bible and everything — the lobbyist for the millionaire wind company. Don't any of you start to feel guilty because you're not helping clean the air by not supporting this. Don't any of you feel you're not going to go to heaven if you're against these wind turbines, as the argument is used sometimes by the gentleman who's the million-dollar lobbyist out of Northern Virginia.

People, energy from turbines on special mountain ridges is not green energy. Destroying more habitat, or further destroying special habitat, is not green energy. Global warming is very real, but destroying a special area or special areas on ridge tops is not going to cure global warming. Thank you.

Dan Foster

I'm Dan Foster. I'm here as a director of the Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District.

Over the years, our responsibilities have increased as directors. Most recently, the Virginia General Assembly, through House Bill 1890, instructs directors to identify soil and water issues.

Obviously the issue here is how will wind industry development affect the ground water, surface water, and the real property of landowners ...

[RECORDING INTERRUPTED]

... and soil and water quality protection and improvement.

As supervisors, your role can be huge. You have more power right now than if you grant this conditional use permit. Right now, you can — to the best of our abilities with the efforts of hydrologists, professional engineers, soil scientists, erosion and sediment control technicians — we can enhance the state law, the state erosion and sediment control law. Basically, we can make that through our local ordinances and guidelines more specific to our soil types, topography, hydrology and this special development.

It is still about erosion and sediment control. We will not eliminate sedimentation. We will not eliminate changes in the morphology of streams. We can lessen the effect, but you can only do that if you retain the power you have right now. Do not give away your power by granting a conditional use permit which gives some of your power to the proffers of the developer and minimizes what law we have as far as erosion and sediment control, specifically.

We would have to fall back to the Virginia erosion and sediment control laws, which are written for the coastal plains, the Piedmont, the Blue Ridge and this little bit of plateau we have out there. We

need to be more specific. If you're serious about protecting as much property as you can, in order to say we've done the best we can, we need to enhance what we already have. And you need to keep the power you have, not give it away through granting this conditional use permit.

There are cases out here in our region where you can go and talk to people who have been up against a big company. The county had given permits to this one company which were inadequate to protect this landowner, and he finds himself without any local protection. You can go talk to this man. There are quite a few cases locally that you can see.

I guess, from talking to, trying to garner as much information as I can from professional engineers and E&S technicians, what they're telling me to tell you is, you need to set the guidelines, not the developer. That's not perfect, but it's better than going with the conditional use and using their proffers. You have, basically you have the power to prevent certain damages. But we don't have the resources to fix those damages. I can't help you as a director. We're very inefficient with our programs, as Lee remembers.

I guess in closing, whether you're for this wind energy or not, whether this is the right time or not, do not grant a conditional use permit under the conditions set by this developer. Thank you.

Steve Johnsen

My name is Steve Johnsen. I live in Doe Hill.

I first moved out to this county in 1998, bought property in Doe Hill in '99. But well before that, I had the experience of coming out to Highland County as early as 1989 in the exploration of the caves and karst in this area — very unique. If you think Highland County is beautiful above the ground, you should see how beautiful it is below ground.

Some of our deepest caves in Highland County are on the ridge tops, and the karst that has been upturned has a vertical strike. That makes for very deep caves. Some of the deepest caves that we've now explored with the Highland County cave survey are at over 435 feet deep, and we're still going deeper. That's where your ground water comes from. And that's environment for a lot of endangered species, as well as the environment for bats which I definitely know are on the endangered species list.

Industrial development does not belong on top of our karst, and does not belong on top of our ridge tops. It's bad planning. It just flies against the face of everything that is, should be, proper with planning.

I'm going to read a few excerpts from the GAO report on renewable energy as it relates to wind power's contribution to electric power generation, and the impacts on farms and rural communities. There are eight major steps in the wind power project development process. Step No. 1 is a detailed wind analysis.

Step No. 2 is an environmental impact assessment. This hasn't been done yet. We're putting the cart before the horse. Finally, the fourth step out of eight is permission to construct and operate the project from local permitting authorities, including land use and construction permits.

This project is not being effectively managed properly. It's wrong how this process is going forward. We don't have enough information on environmental impacts, and the environmental impact — I can tell you from what I've seen in exploring the caves in Highland County — is going to be great.

The bat kill at the Tucker County wind facility was phenomenal. And I know for a fact that we have endangered bat species that live in caves all throughout Highland County and neighboring Pendleton County. There are over 267 caves that are now known and mapped in Highland County that we're working on with the Highland County cave survey.

It's a very unique environment, very beautiful, and it's something that we need to protect. Industrial development does not belong on the tops of our ridge tops and on top of our karst. Thank you.

Tom Brody

It's been a long night for everybody here, and I'm not going to keep you all. I've written one letter which I would like to present to the board. I wrote it this morning, and then I wrote another one this afternoon for you all to read. I would like to request that you do read these. I know I've submitted a lot of letters to you. How many of you have read them, raise your hand. Thank you. Yeah, great. I haven't written that many letters but every time I do, it's just a time-consuming event, and I'm not very much of a speaker. Sometimes I'm a better writer, so what you'll get in writing is going to be a lot better presented than my speech to you tonight.

Anyway, for some of you in the audience that don't know me, my name has been mentioned in the meeting. In the beginning of

the meeting, it was mentioned by the applicant's attorney, Mr. Flora. And then it was mentioned again by some other folks. We really appreciate it.

We are not adjoining landowners. But I'm going to say that I've heard the speakers tonight present some just impassioned, very heartfelt speeches or talks, or whatever, or concerns. It's amazing. I mean, this is quite a community of people that can come out here and express themselves, whether you're for it or against it. It's really amazing. And it's really amazing that we're here tonight. But I'm going to get to the issue. I have some concerns.

Patti and I own and operate a business on Allegheny Mountain. We do not adjoin the proposed project, but we are within one mile of this project. We can see the project site on Red Oak Knob. Our home and business is actually located within one mile of this project.

We operate sort of a lodging facility, like Ms. Pohowsky was talking about, and we also offer an educational facility and a retreat facility for people to come experience a very unique place — Highland County. Like I tell people, we are a small business, and we promote this county, and many of our past visitors come back year after year.

We can say that we are the small farmer in the business world of tourism. We are the small farmer in the business world of tourism. And with this proposed project — Highland New Wind project on Allegheny Mountain — we are facing the prospect of losing the family farm, and the legacy that we want to leave our children.

We are the small farmer, and so are many out here who spoke tonight. Sometimes we feel like David and Goliath, you know, with us, Highland County, being David and Goliath being the entire wind industry. I mean, it's frightening. This is big business. This is corporations. This is General Electric, it was brought up.

Sen. Alexander and Sen. Warner are concerned. So are congressmen Rahall and Congressman Mollihan in West Virginia. Pocahontas County is our neighbor. Pendleton County is our neighbor. We ought to be concerned about that.

I would like to ask the board if I could have just a couple extra minutes. I'm concerned about the way that, well actually, just to be brief and finish up here, I went over the conditional use permit application submitted by this developer. And I believe that it's lacking in some very detailed information that you should have, if this is all he's presented. Just like this other fellow said — no financial statement. Well, I don't even see a site plan here. I don't see a visual impact analysis. I don't see a noise impact analysis. For one thing, Mr. McBride, the applicant here, and his family, have never contacted anyone on this mountain to ask if they were concerned. This is a violation of our property rights, which are in jeopardy with this proposed project.

We are not happy. We are not happy, Mr. McBride. We are not happy at all, Lola, and Tal, and your legal friends. Not happy at all.

I respect my neighbors, but this man has tried to put in a shooting range without a permit. He drilled a gas well without a permit. He put in four anemometers on that mountain without a permit. He would have put these wind turbines on there without a permit.

Thank you.

Patti Reum

Hi, I'm Patti Reum. I live in Hightown. Couple things.

Little Switzerland — what does that mean? I don't think it meant we wanted to have turbines. I think it meant we value our mountains. And by the way, Switzerland, at this point, has turned to nuclear power.

I'm going to give you a quick quote: 'In Switzerland, research programs in popular opposition are threatening to paralyze projects aimed at boosting wind power in Switzerland. Even environmentalists are raising doubts about the energy source, and not just on aesthetic grounds. They are changing to nuclear energy.'

Why are they giving up wind power? We must ask that question here.

The other thing I want to talk about is this: For two years, our pictures have been in the paper. We've been quoted. I'm sick of it. I want to go back to being a person who can do some positive things, whether it's through our business as environmental educators, or whether it's through my job as a teacher here. We value this community. We're not fighting you, but we are fighting for what we believe in. We are threatened by this. This is our life. This is our business. We are threatened by that. That's all I have to say.

But I do have a few things to say from other people who have sent me information. I'm not going to read them, and I'm going to submit them.

First of all, a young gentleman by the name of Derek Botkin wrote me a great letter. He says it's not all about money. Ellen Phillips, who used to work for the Highland Inn, says tourists come here for the mountains, to get away from the city. Karen Craig says, stop wind turbines, among other things. And Keith Kyle, who comes

here from Frederick, Md., says, 'We urge you to vote no to wind turbines. Why should one family's greed negatively impact the lives of others?'

Thank you for letting me speak.

Lucile Miller

I'm Lucile Miller and I'm a landowner in the Laurel Fork area.

First thing I would like to say is that when I first came to this county, I went to Bear Mountain retreat to learn how to put a solar energy system in for my cabin. And the educational programs that are offered there are valuable — not only for people from Highland County, but for people from all over the country. And I would like to see it continue.

Another thing that I've done, that maybe no one else has done in the room, and some people have spoken to somewhat, is I've gone to three, three-day workshops on the affects of wind turbines on birds and bats. And the first one, the wind industry had control of the scientists. They were definitely down-playing what was happening. And then a young graduate student saw bats littered under the turbines. Actually, she saw a bobcat out eating something under the turbines and she went to investigate, and there were dead bats all over.

So then, Merlin Tuttle, who is the head of Bat Conservation International, got involved with research the next year and he issued warnings saying if we continue to build these wind turbines, there will be bat populations that cannot sustain the loss. They're huge. You see pictures of bats littered under the turbines. We watched the movies of bats getting hit by turbines. So I can assure you, it's real. Just watch who you read your information from.

The other thing I wanted to address tonight is one part of the statement from Alexander and Sen. Warner, and clearly they are disturbed by the footprint of wind turbines:

'If Virginia were to produce 10 percent of its power from wind and the subsidies continue, it would probably mean more than 1,700 windmills. These windmills would take up enough land to take up the land mass of three cities the size of Richmond, Virginia. So if present policies are continued, we could expect to see hundreds of football field-sized towers with flashing red lights atop the blue ridges of Virginia, above the Shenandoah Valley, along the foothills of the Great Smokey Mountains, and on top of Signal Mountain, and on top of Lookout Mountain, and Rune Mountain in Tennessee, and down the Tennessee River Gorge, which the city of Chattanooga has just spent 25 years protecting.

'I hope,' and he's addressing the president, he says, 'I hope we decide, Mr. President, that there are better ways to provide clean energy than to spend \$3.7 billion of taxpayer money over the next five years on windmills. I hope we decide that we need a real national energy policy instead of a national windmill policy. I hope we decide that there are better and cheaper ways to discuss carbon.'

And he goes on to say that that \$3.7 billion would provide us enough money to give 185,000 Americans a \$2,000 subsidy to buy a hybrid or clean diesel vehicle, which would about double the number of hybrid cars expected to be sold in the U.S. in 2005. I can vouch for hybrid cars because I drive one, and I get 50 miles to a gallon of gas.

\$3.7 billion would provide enough money for loan guarantees to help launch a dozen new clean coal gasification plants, and help transform the marketplace with a new technology for clean, American-produced energy that would lower natural gas prices and reduce our dependence on foreign oil.

I think these are important statements because they're coming from a very conservative senator, and slowly people are starting to recognize that wind energy is not the panacea. I urge you to say no. If in five years they have found a way to mitigate or prevent bat kills, if they have found ways to make wind energy a real viable source of clean energy, then — and only then — should we reconsider. Thank you so much.

Laurie Berman

I'm Laurie Berman and I own a farm up on Allegheny Mountain.

I think that by now, we've had enough testimony, enough information. This has been going on for a long time. And I appreciate the opportunity to speak again. I appreciate that we're having another open forum. But it really is time to make a decision, and it really is time for you all to decide that, no, we don't want this in Highland County now.

We have been told a lot of things. There's been a lot of promises made. The applicant has stated a lot of things. A lot of things were said today — not all of them are true. Of course, you probably think some of the things that people who are against have said also maybe aren't true.

But I'm just going to look at something historical that's happened in Highland County. Actually, Tom Brody brought it up a minute ago. I have to applaud the work of the board of supervisors from 1993 — 12 years ago. A very important and wonderful decision was made which upheld the rights of the landowners up on Allegheny Mountain — the same people that were up here today, and that have been letting you know for three years now, that we want peace and quiet. We want our property to maintain its value, its scenic beauty, and all the things that it had when God gave it to us when we found it, and hopefully, it will be like that when our children live on beyond us.

In 1993, McBride constructed a commercial shooting range — without applying for a conditional use permit — on his property. Somehow, he managed to convince our zoning administrator that his shooting range was going to be a target practice facility. And with that in mind, it did appear he didn't need a conditional use permit.

The neighborhood was severely affected by his poor choice of locations to place this facility, even though he owns a lot of property and could have placed it somewhere that might not have affected the neighborhood. He chose to put it in a location that the sound resounded all over the mountain for miles away and offended all of the neighborhood.

When we realized what was going on, because none of us had been asked — just like this project. We were never asked if we would like to see turbines, even though in the beginning of this process we were told by the different developers that if people in the neighborhood do not want wind turbines, we certainly will not develop Highland County. But this project has gone on. Three years we've all been put through the stress. All of us have worked hard. McBride — we're supposed to feel sorry for Mr. McBride and the family for all the work and money they've put into this. Well the rest of us have, too. Tireless hours, loss of work, money spent, time.

And what happened with the last time was, the county — we finally asked — it was decided we should have a public hearing. It needs a conditional use permit to run it. The public hearing was had. He was asked to make a compromise with his neighbors.

At the time, I personally contacted a professional shooting range planner, and both Tom Brody and myself, and the other neighbors, offered to move his shooting range — for free. We were going to pay the planner to design a new system, a new shooting range, as well as physically move his shooting range to another location on his farm. We offered to do this as a compromise, which is what we were asked to do by the planning commission.

McBride, instead of taking that and saying OK we'll do it — let's do it, let's work out the neighborhood, we can do it; he can have his shooting range, we can have our peace and quiet — he came back to the planning commission with, no, I don't accept that. I'm going to keep my range and I'm going to build another one, too. He didn't want our help.

And luckily, the board of supervisors made a very important decision. Because things weren't done as asked — he did not reliably satisfy the request made of him — they denied his conditional use permit. The shooting range was shut down. That's not what we wanted. We wanted to work together as a neighborhood, as a family.

How can we trust that what's being offered to us now is what we're going to get? We already know that we don't really know how much money we're going to get from this project. One day it's this amount of money, next day it's another. There's no promises, there's no true site plan. We went for a site visit — nothing was staked out. There weren't any stakes in the ground. There were no signs that said, this is where one's going to go, this is where another one's going to go, this is exactly how big they're going to be. Nothing has been laid out clearly. We don't have any answers. We can't say yes to this project. Please consider that there are more than one family up on this mountain. There are other property rights. There are other people to be defended here. Please say no to this project. It is not consistent with our present comprehensive plan, or our current zoning.

Thank you.

Judy Skeen

Thank you for letting me speak.

I'd like to address first, last week in the paper, Robin — and many people have addressed this tonight and I'm grateful — you said that we should step up and promote green energy if we're all such big environmentalists. Well, I am a big environmentalist. I mean, I believe that we can't replace what were going to wipe out.

I've lived in Highland for 28 years on a farm, and I can just hear a lot of the local people that I really love saying, 'Aw, bats. Who cares about bats?'

Well you'd better care about bats. I don't think we've got enough insecticide to make up for them and the birds, the insects that they eat, and I really mean that. Not only that, we can't — we can't create the things that we're going to wipe out.

I can't quote figures very well — my feeble brain won't keep them in place — but I'd like to call on a big gun. I jumped on board last December against these things because I heard a very conservative Republican — and he's a big gun. Sen. John McCain was interviewed on NPR. He's become a big environmentalist but he also believes in big business. And he said, when they asked him about wind energy — and I'm sorry that I'm shaking but I'm truly exhausted — he said if you put one of these turbines on every vacant lot in America, they wouldn't generate enough energy to make any difference, and I have the means to research that. I don't mean I have, he said he did, and I believe that he has. So add his name to the list of U.S. senators — conservative, business-oriented people that don't think they're worth the risk.

Secondly, I'd like to address that in the 28 years I've been here, I've seen a lot of fights in this county. Been in a few of them, but not in a very big way. I mean about issues.

And I've never seen this community pull together like this. The people who have had led the pulling together have had so many legitimate concerns, and they've done it. Sandy Bratton is not somebody you ever mistrust. That's a woman with a lot of integrity, and a lot of ethics, and when she brings you a damn list, you better believe the people signed it. They really signed it.

[INTERRUPTED BY APPLAUSE]

I'm sorry, I didn't want them to clap.

I want to say this. My best friend is an old-timer born here, and he's as tough a mountain man as they come. I came over here and signed him up to speak for us against these things and his damn backhoe broke and he's over there working on it. He doesn't have to work at 81. He works because he loves to work. But he's against these things, and I've never seen him against anything industrial in my life. He said to say he'll spend money that he's earned working hard to fight these things. He will support the litigation against them.

Now you have a chance here to do something that's nobody's done ...

[RECORDING INTERRUPTED]

Mike McCray

My name is Mike McCray. My dad and I own Spruce Hill Excavating and I'm a so-called native of the county. I've lived in McDowell for 35 years.

First couple of years, I'd been asked many times about my position about wind turbines. My answer has been, I'm not for or against windmills, but I am for the survival of Highland County.

My greatest fear is that we'll lose our school system to dwindling attendance, lack of funding to provide an education that meets minimum state standards. Once your school system is gone, it will not be long before we become part of either Augusta or Bath County. Again, that's my belief. I'll bet no one in this room wants that to happen.

So it seems that we need to explore every economic opportunity that presents itself. The question that we need to answer, in my mind, is how do we save the county? The answer is economic growth. We need to generate jobs that attract people and their families to the county. We also need jobs for children once they've finished their education, and so the question becomes, what kind of jobs can we get? Manufacturing would be nice, but finding companies that would be willing to locate an hour's drive from any major highway are hard to find.

So let's talk about windmills. The construction of them would create a few jobs until they were completed. But there will not be long-term employment for more than one or two people. If windmills are built, they will generate tax revenue for the county. The exact amount is not known or guaranteed. What is guaranteed is the amount of tax will reduce each year due to depreciation. The only thing left for the county in my mind is tourism.

Now, it took me a long time to realize tourism affects a lot of people. Will building windmills increase tourism? I think it will for awhile. But the kind of tourist that it brings is someone who drives to the county for a day, buys two meals, and then leaves. I did just that. Tracy and I went to Tucker County. We stayed for the day, and we spent \$150 in the county, and we haven't been back since.

We want people in the county for tourism — tourists that come to our county. We want someone that will come, they will like it so much, and we want them to stay. We want them to buy land. We want them to build homes. We want them to spend money here.

It took me a long time to realize that tourism generates business for someone in the construction industry. And these absentee land-

owners that we all talk about are the ones funding the county's economic growth right now. If you read the list of names that have signed the petition against windmills, it reads like a customer list for every excavator, builder, electrician, plumber, carpenter, banker, real estate office, store, restaurant, in the county. This tells me that if we build windmills in the county, these people will stop coming to some degree.

Instead of increasing jobs for the county, we'll be losing jobs. We will attract a different demographic of people, most likely people that don't care about the success of the county or that don't have the time and money to spend in our civic organizations, or to spend money that would help our economy. We're a service-based community. The people that we are servicing have time, energy, and money for the county. In a business, you listen to your customers. These people are the county's customers and we need to listen to them, or be prepared to find other customers to replace them.

Finally, I don't want any of the three of you to abstain from voting for fear of upsetting some group or someone. I don't want you to make a hasty decision based on somebody getting on your nerves, and I don't want you to vote because of, just to show somebody you have the power to do what you want to do. I want you to vote because the county needs you. I voted for the three of you. I believed the three of you were the best candidates to make the best, well-informed decisions for the county. The choice is very clear to me what you should do, but the decision is in your hands. You need to make a decision. These people need an answer one way or the other. They don't need to keep spending money just to be spending money, wasting your time, my time.

I probably wouldn't be up here tonight if my name hadn't appeared on the wrong side of the list. All that being said, please make a decision, make it quick, and make the right one.

Debora Ellington

Good evening. It's getting late, but I still have what I have to say. I'm Deborah Ellington. I live at the Forks of Water, in the view shed of Jack Mountain.

At the last public hearing, Lee made the comment that he didn't know what we want. Well, what we want has not changed. We don't want any ordinance or conditional use that will allow industrial wind turbines on our ridges and ruin our view shed, which is what draws people here — tourists, and new landowners. We want you to say no to any industrial wind development that will destroy a 20-year-old business that has been built from the ground up, and followed the appropriate zoning land use, and felt protected by the existing zoning laws.

We want you to say no to Mr. McBride — an absentee landowner who, when asked about his neighbors, he replied, "What neighbors? I don't have any neighbors."

But here in Highland, we're all neighbors, and we are all affected by this decision. And if you think you can say yes to Mr. McBride and only hurt a few, you are wrong. The wind companies will continue to come. And any money the county might receive from this project will need to be put in a special account to pay the legal fees to keep the turbines from proliferating on these ridge tops. And even then, there probably wouldn't be enough money to keep them away.

A county near Ellenberg, Washington, already lost a case when they tried saying no to the second wind turbine development. For years, our county has been marketed for its scenic beauty, and in our comprehensive plan it states that we should ensure that new businesses and industrial development occur in suitable locations, and be compatible with the county's environment, scenic and rural character. Let's not lose the greatest asset to industrial wind development.

Senators Alexander from Tennessee and Warner from Virginia believe scenic beauty such as ours should be protected. Let's show them it matters to us, too.

In addition to the signatures on the petition, nearly 250 Highlanders have written, e-mailed, and spoken prior to this meeting in opposition to industrial wind development. We want you to stand up and vote like most of us want you to vote. Just say no.

Hamil Jones

Good evening, thank you. My name is Hamil Jones. I'm from Richmond, Virginia. I'm a lawyer there. I've practiced in Richmond for over 30 years and I'm here — I drove up here today for several reasons.

One, for about 42 years I've owned the ridge line of Jack Mountain. If you're in Monterey and looking back toward Richmond, and look to the right of 250 where it goes through, I own the top of that mountain there, the very top, and I'm obviously very interested in this.

But more than that, I'm interested in Highland County. My great-grandfather started the practice of law here — Charles Pinkney Jones, right after the Civil War. And his son, Edmund Jones, and my uncle, Turner Jones — we have lots of family here. My cousins Mary Hille McCoy and Elizabeth McCoy, of course, who live in the old homeplace.

I've felt very close to Highland County over the years. I've spent many happy days here as a youngster visiting. Robin and I were friends, playmates, kin, and everything else. I just feel very strongly, although I don't live here, about this issue.

Now in my practice of law, although I'm not a land use attorney, I have been involved in land use and zoning cases. I will make a couple of points about them that I've observed over the years.

No. 1, notwithstanding the very best representation of applicants and their counsel, if you were to view most zoning, conditional use type cases 10 or 20 years down the road, they're not going to bear any resemblance to the representations made in good faith at the time of the hearing. It's just the way things work.

No. 2, in my opinion, if you approve this application you are going to start down the slippery slope. You are going to sooner or later — maybe in a year or two — legally counsel is correct, it doesn't have to expand, but the practical reality of things, they will expand. You will see a proliferation which in my opinion 20-30 years down the road will not be in the county's best interest.

The third point I wanted to make — and this is your county and what you do, but just an observation — I have never been involved in a zoning case in the Richmond area where there was this much opposition. And with this much public support in opposition, it almost appears to me that the three of you should deny the application just based solely on the local opposition, which seems so strong.

Thank you very much.

McChesney Goodall

Mr. Chairman, fellow board members. I appreciate your giving me a chance to speak tonight. It's been a long night. I know we've all put a lot of time and energy into this, and we need to just bring it to closure.

I've been coming up here since I was a little boy — crossing over on 250, those curvy mountain roads, throwing up a few times as a kid. Stopping along the way on the top of Allegheny and looking out over the Allegheny Front, seeing that beautiful front that lies, stretches as far as the eye can see, from Red Oak across our property, Bear Camp, on up to Sapling, and way far out there all the way to Spruce Knob in West Virginia.

As a landowner whose family has owned property in the Alleghenies for three generations, we're distraught that Red Oak and Tamarack Ridge could be developed with a commercial wind farm. With over three miles of common boundary with McBride property, our losses would be significant. We are dismayed that such a development would even be considered by the board, and are horrified that it may well happen.

This project is not about conservation and reducing coal emissions or our dependence on foreign oil, as Mr. McBride and his attorneys would have us believe. It is basically about one man seeking to profit at the expense of his neighbors, the unspoiled natural beauty of our mountain tops, and a promising tourism industry. This project is, however, about private property rights, and one man's desire to trample the rights of his neighbors by creating a commercial wind complex that will deflate our property values, not inflate them, as Mr. Flora would have us believe. In addition, it will illuminate our night skies, disturb our quiet enjoyment, and desecrate a precious and remote landscape we all cherish.

I ask, what kind of man in the face of such widespread, heartfelt opposition would stubbornly advance this kind of self-serving scheme to the detriment of Highland County and its tight-knit community? Are the negative impacts imposed by this project really any different than those emanating from a power plant, spewing forth smoke and filth on surrounding properties? Are they any different than an industrial facility that dumps toxic waste in nearby streams, letting its neighbors downstream suffer the consequences? Though the form of impact varies, the destructive effect is just as pervasive.

This is not some little benign project neatly confined within the property lines of an individual farm. This project smashes down conventional boundaries that separate one good neighbor from another, imposing its will on everyone and everything surrounding it. The impact will reach well beyond his property lines. They will reach into our backyards, into our pristine view shed, and our sparkling night sky.

You, the Highland County Board of Supervisors, are about to make a decision that will impact the future vitality and well-being of Highland County forever.

After nearly three years, you've heard the impassioned voices of citizens throughout the county. Why have you chosen to ignore their desperate pleas? Why do you dismiss the practical advice of unbiased parties, who have suggested revamping and upgrading the comprehensive plan and adopting a zoning ordinance that addresses the development and future use of our mountain tops? ... Why would you create a heavy industrial zone in one of the most scenic, visible, and ecologically unique areas of Highland County? And why, as elected officials, have you not been more open and forthcoming with the very people whom you represent?

Make no mistake about it. If you grant Mr. McBride a conditional use permit to build his wind farm on Red Oak, then you open the floodgates for wind development elsewhere, and transmission upgrades as well. This will be your legacy for Highland County — one of transforming a county blessed with unparalleled scenic wonder and a burgeoning tourism industry to just another rural county who sold their soul on some false hope, hollow promise, and short-sighted vision. Is this what you want for the citizens and the future generations of Highland County? I certainly hope not.

Thank you very much for your time.

Chris Scott

Gentlemen, ladies. My name is Chris Scott, and I'm a fairly recent resident of McDowell.

I rise today, at the end of a very long meeting — a very emotional meeting — to emphatically, unequivocally, and honestly, emotionally, to implore you, beg you if that's what we need, to turn down this request. Turn down this request.

In some ways I actually feel sorry for Mr. McBride to sit here and listen to actually the clear majority of the county come out and oppose this project. The people are speaking and we're asking you to hear. This is a community — a beautiful, precious, precious community — and we need to do all that we can to preserve this community.

I've lived elsewhere. I've seen elsewhere, as you all have. This is an area you don't want to trade away for unsubstantiated promises. What the government promises, the government can easily, and often does, take away. We need to be careful. We need to watch what we sell our soul for. We need to preserve the community, the integrity, the neighborhood of this community.

Thank you, and I urge you to say no.

Jessie Gutshall

I have no speech, and I don't know how I got on that list, but I live in Goochland, 140 miles down the road. Everyone says I live in Richmond but I don't like anyone to say I live in Richmond, and Goochland is also a beautiful county, and they tried to preserve their, whatever, the character of the county.

I live out in the country in Goochland and I think it's absolutely beautiful — until I come here. And there's no comparisons. Even the lighting up here is different, photographers have said that the lighting is muted. I just feel like, well, I told my husband, I said, 'I'm going up there and get up and say what God has joined together let no man put asunder,' which is really how I feel about these mountains.

I was born and raised here. I grew up here, I know all these guys and I know they'll do the right thing. I'm nervous. I know everybody's tired, but the Lord gave us this beautiful county. I've been to several other states and out of the country and there is no comparison. It has wonderful people. I never meet a stranger that, even the new people when I come up here. It's God's country, it truly is God's country. I just, I've just been really upset. I read the paper, read all of the paper, and please, please don't destroy this county with something that down the road it will be obsolete. I give it five years, and they'll be obsolete.

Thank you for your time, and please, please vote no. Good night.

John Sweet

I think all three of you gentlemen know how I feel about this. I've said it any number of times and I'm not going to say it again other than just to get it on the record: I am strongly opposed.

My wife is out of town on a long-planned trip and couldn't be here tonight, but she wrote a letter which I'll turn in, and I won't read but just a short part of it: 'The board of supervisors has made some decisions which have weakened the ordinance which Highland had in place, and the reasons are obscure. Public discourse has been adversarial. I am aware of only one public meeting where there was true discussion and debate with reasoned arguments on both sides, not just statements of opinion. And the supervisors have been ominously silent about their thought processes, as though we had no right to hear what they say, or what they think. Highland is so

beautiful, what we have here is so rare. Don't you feel that? I am deeply dismayed by what has been happening. We've accomplished so much here with sheer grit and cooperation. When this community is behind something, wonderful things result — a library, a medical center, a community center. Working together is what this place is all about. There may be possible revenue advantages to the county from this project, but there isn't enough money to repair the feelings of distrust, betrayal and disharmony that are growing.'

I think, actually, we've drawn a lot of the community together over this. There is a great deal of adversarial feeling, but certainly the community is drawing together in opposition to this project.

The meeting she referred to, I believe, is one of the meetings of the industrial development authority. Actually, there were two — I was at all three meetings — there were two of them where there was really a democratic process in action. Everybody was able to speak and have their turn and argue back and forth. There were some voices raised, there was no inappropriate discussion. I admire Dave Smith for allowing these conversations to take place with a lot of give and take. I greatly dislike what he did to turn around the vote of the industrial development authority after it had taken place, but he certainly is to be commended for allowing this public discussion to take place.

I've spoken to a lot of my neighbors around Mustoe. Margaret Hamilton is the former postmaster at Mustoe, who couldn't be here tonight. She gets around on a walker and didn't think she could come out, and I'm certain she wouldn't have stayed to this hour tonight. She wrote, 'I was born and lived in Highland County all of my life, which is now 91 years. Born in February 1914, I've seen a lot of changes in my time, but do not want to see this change.'

I spoke to Irene McAllister who couldn't be here tonight. She signed the petition, and when I told her that I hoped she would come and speak because some people were discounting the petition she said, 'Why would anybody do that?' She was rather offended that people would think that — that people would sign this petition without knowing what they were signing.

I spoke to Hazel Hannah Corbett, Tony Marshall, Troy and Todd Perdue, and a number of other people. They all expressed the same sort of thing and volunteered the same sort of comment.

I guess I'll close by saying that I have heard it said that perhaps there are some dead people on the petition list. I think that might refer to Mary Sweitzer, who was not dead when she signed. I think what Mary has done enough for Highland County, that her opinion — even though she's now in the grave — her opinion should be valued.

I appreciate you giving me this time to speak, and I hope that you will take the wishes of the residents and so on of Highland County into account and vote no on this application.

Lee Beasley

Lee Beasley, I live in Monterey. I'm a teacher here at this school. My brother, Tom Brody, introduced me to Highland County 30 years ago, and 16 years ago I moved here with my husband. Now I have a son, who's 10 years old, and I've been a resident for 16 years. Nine of those years I spent in Hightown — very beautiful — looking at the Blue Grass Valley.

I am a homeowner in Monterey and I want you to know, Mr. Flora, that Highland County wants to be like Highland County, not Switzerland. Chocolate isn't good for me, anyway.

I am opposed to the wind project for this county. I come here not with facts and statistics but because my heart is aching for what this has done to my family. It has been devastating and disrupting for my brother, Tom, his wife Patti, for my extended family, Laurie Berman, and even for Penn Goodall. These are the people I've known for 30 years. I'm deeply concerned about the division that this issue has caused. This project has affected everyone, including my 10-year-old son.

This is a beautiful, remote and unique community. If money is a concern, I agree with Art Applegate, we must be better served to research other, better sources of income that will not divide this county. If this project impacts only one family in this county, that is one family too many.

I agree with Joni Mitchell who sang this song, and I quote: 'Give me spots on my apples, and leave me the birds in the trees, please, you don't know what you've got till it's gone.' Don't pave Paradise and put up 400-foot-wind turbines.

Highland County, do not feel guilty for urging our supervisors to vote no. If you, supervisors, are at all yet uncertain, please vote no. Tonight. Thank you.

Tim Beasley

Tim Beasley, Monterey. I started a new business here — contracting — and two of my clients waived the jobs that I had with

them, waiting to see what the outcome with you people were. That affected me. I have plenty of work, this county, as you know, does in the contracting business. I personally don't feel like I've lost anything. But I'm eating at the A&D, that's down in Bath County, right now. I should be eating at High's or somewhere. We spend about — there's three of us in the little company — I spent about \$150 a week. That's not a lot of money. But also, I only do the building. I don't do the excavation and things, so how many jobs have been lost just because of the two clients that disappeared on me because of this controversy?

[RECORDING INTERRUPTED]

... Laurie Berman and Tom Brody — they blessed me with work up there for three and a half years, right where these windmills are going. Anyone that's not been up on that mountain, they don't know what we do have to lose. Vote no, and let's get on with life in this county. Thank you.

Ken Schaal

Good evening, and thank you, everyone, for caring about Highland County. That you all would spend so much time on these issues is truly amazing.

My name is Ken Schaal. My wife and I live in Hanover County, near Richmond. We always come to Highland for our wedding anniversary week vacation, and as many other times as we can.

We own several home sites in the High Valley community — ready for homes to be built, thanks to Mike McCray. Those homes will not need electricity from industrial scale coal, nuclear, or wind generating facilities. They will be what's called off-grid. One of their primary assets is the sweeping view from Jack Mountain on the east to the Blue Grass Valley and beyond to Allegheny Mountain in the west.

These homes will provide a place for my family, and others, to live all year in Highland, to contribute to the economy, and the community of Highland. The dollars normally used to purchase energy from corporations outside of Highland can instead be spent in Highland. These homes will provide permanent contributions in tax base and more importantly, people to participate in this community.

How wonderful it is that so many people from so many areas care so much about the future of Highland County. The allure of Highland is, I believe, epitomized by the grandeur of the view from the breastworks on Shenandoah Mountain as one first enters Highland. That view, and many others throughout Highland, are what stir our souls to want to do what is best for the future of this area.

In fact, throughout the Appalachian Mountains, this same discussion is taking place. Now I should point out that I strongly believe in the need for renewable energy. That is how I made my living for over 35 years. I am very familiar with the area where these utility-scale wind turbines are proposed, as I normally stay with Tom and Patti at Bear Mountain. Actually, the first time I went there was for a workshop on solar energy. And as I drive out Route 601 across the ridge past Red Oak Ranch, I always think, what a magnificent part of the world.

And yes, for many of those years I thought, what a great place for wind turbines. I can understand how Mr. McBride thought the same thing. As someone who, from the first time I visited Highland, has thought about the need for economic development here, I can understand how Robin thought that utility scale wind might have been a good thing.

Five or 10 years ago when this first began, 'utility-scale' was a much smaller scale. The industry has learned bitter lessons in the mountain passes of California. Turbines were being designed for the vast wind resources of the great plains, from West Texas to Central Canada. But since this technology was first considered for Highland, and the rest of the Appalachian ridges, the turbines designed for the plains have grown way out of scale for these ridges. They simply are no longer appropriate for Highland County.

Now we find ourselves in extended debate about what is appropriate for Highland. We have real needs for money to pay for the goods and services needed to ensure the long-term health of our economy. You supervisors are under severe pressure to find the right solutions, and passions have risen as the stakes have become clear. Fortunately this community, of all whom care about Highland County, can now put this idea aside and concentrate our energies — maybe after a brief rest — on finding and developing the policies, zoning practices, and economic activities that will find consensus within this community as to how best to proceed.

We are a small community, relatively, and we must proceed with shared goals and actions. I think we all recognize that we can do just that. Thank you all for caring so much.

Ske Ellington

I think everything's been covered, I just want to go over a couple things. It boils down, to me, that, Jerry, this is not a financial issue. And you told many people that they just don't understand — we question that. I think we do understand that it's not a financial issue; it's not about money.

It's about land use. Well, land use is not just the developer's privilege. It affects his neighbors, as we've heard tonight. It affects all of us. And Lee, I'd like to address you about this. I know that you care about your neighbors, and I know you care about how it affects others because on the 24th of February there was a public hearing considering Armstrong's sawmill over in your neck of the woods. I think Jerry asked had anyone been over there to see it, and you said, and I'm going to quote this because I wrote it down that night: 'I've been there. And it's out of sight and sound from anybody. So I see no problem with it at all.'

I'd like you to think about this as you all make this decision — and I hope you'll do it tonight — and turn this thing down, because we really don't want it. I hope you believe that. Thank you.

Sandy Hevener

I'm Sandy Hevener, live in the middle of the Blue Grass Valley between two of the sugar camps, between the Rexrodes and the Puffenbargers.

Lantz Mountain is between us and Red Oak Knob. You may think that a turbine on top of Red Oak, or many turbines, would not be something visible from the Blue Grass Valley. Don't fool yourself into thinking that. When that gas test well was on top of Red Oak we clearly saw the lights at night in the middle of the valley. No kidding. And that's nowhere near as tall as what they're talking about up there.

You guys were elected to represent the people that elected you, and I hope you really, truly will do that. You've heard many people up here saying about the vast majority, and we entrusted the power to make the decisions to you. And you have the legal right to make the decisions however you make them. But you have an ethical responsibility to base those decisions on what the majority says out here — and I hope you really listen to them.

Lee, when this first started, we were on the phone one day and you said — or I don't remember who asked it first, maybe I asked first — 'What do you think about this windmill project?'

And you said, 'I don't know, I'm kind of on the fence on it. I don't know enough about it to really go one way or the other.'

And then you said, 'Well what do you think about it?' And I said, 'I don't know. I'm on the fence and I don't know which side to go on it. I don't have enough information.'

Then I saw you in the farm store parking lot the other day and I said, 'Lee, I don't think either of us are on top of that fence anymore. I think you're on one side and I'm on the other.' And you said, 'Well, yeah.'

I kind of begged you, I said, 'Please don't vote for this. We don't need this.' And you said, 'I can't *not* vote for it.'

When you said that, all I could think was, you can't *not* vote for it? Have you made up your mind? Why are we having a public hearing? You really need to look at the majority.

I want to complement and thank Robin. I know that the other week — it's been a couple weeks now — when we had the previous public hearing on the zoning thing. I doubt very seriously if it was easy for you to give the negative vote on that. It takes a really good leader to base their decision on what most of the people, a large group of the people, want to be done, and not on their personal opinion. I want to thank you for that. It's not easy.

Anyway, please, we don't want this.

Jim White

I'm Jim White from Jack Mountain and I'm pretty much brain-dead. We were on the road yesterday, so we left Louisiana about eight and got back early this morning, so I'm kind of just barely here, but I just wanted to support all the people that spoke here today — both for and against.

We really hadn't seen much 'for' before this evening, and I applaud people for standing up and saying something rather than being silent. I do believe that all the people in this room, and those that were here earlier and had to leave for whatever the reason, do love Highland County. And I believe that the board does as well.

I also feel that we may differ on what's important. On the trip from Texas it was sort of, we just happened to be down there for a graduation for one of our kids. But anyway, it was a long ride back and I didn't see one windmill the whole trip. And on the coast of

Texas, where we spent part of the time — Galveston, where my son graduated from — the wind blew constantly. There were kites up in the air that weren't even manned, they just never moved. It was just all wind, all the time and I was somewhat dismayed, to think that in Highland County, the power that may or may not be generated won't stay here, and won't benefit our people — except for the nebulous that we're not sure of and that you're faced with.

I have a degree in environmental science ... I used to keep this book called 'Producing Your Own Power.' I believe in green energy and in producing our own power whenever we can. And I'd like to state that I think that any farmer in Highland County that wants to put up his own windmill, that he should have the right to do that. Not the 400-footers, you know, they've had windmills for years. In the Amish country in Pennsylvania they have windmills. But they don't affect their neighbors. And this is the issue here — when you look at a person's property rights, when those property rights affect people around them — in this case a whole community — we can't pretend that we don't have some kind of moral, ethical responsibility to think about their rights as well.

It seems to me that it would be really hard for me to look these people in the eye — this great group of people — and tell them that they really don't matter, and that being an American doesn't really apply in Highland County. You have to include everyone's opinions and they are just that — they're opinions.

You've heard some very good deliveries this evening of people who really cared, and done some research, and you guys all know about the research — it's about that thick — and you have all seen a lot of it. I guess the main point is, that the people in this room really aren't invisible. They all do matter, and I really think that in the best interest of the county and the people you represent, that you should deny the request.

I guess I'm somewhat disappointed in Mr. McBride — I'm not trying to put the gentleman down, but I would have real trouble intentionally doing something that we know is going to hurt people. How do we justify that? How do we walk around and go to our churches and do all the things that we think are proper, and intentionally hurt other people, especially of this magnitude? We've differed on a lot of issues in the past, but this is a monumental issue, and we can't pretend that it isn't.

Thank you for the opportunity. You have a monumental task, and we know it's not easy. But we hope you make the right choice for the right reasons. Thanks.

Lorraine White

I'm Lorraine White, also from Jack Mountain.

From a very practical standpoint there are two main issues that you need to be looking at as supervisors. The first is, what guarantee do we have that this project will provide significant long-term income for this county? We've heard both high and low estimates, and we need to recognize they're based on a depreciation schedule — declining income every year. What happens five years from now when the depreciated wind turbines are no longer producing a significant level of income? And inflation's gone up, and the taxes are continuing to rise, and that income is going down? Will there be any net gain income tax revenues at all if property values are negatively affected? You know, maybe property values won't be affected in some areas, but the people who come here are looking for a beautiful area (and) it will affect property values here. So it could mean that by the time the income begins to decline with depreciation and houses are not being built, that we'll end up with a negative income as a result of this.

Another important issue to consider is if we approve this — if you approve this conditional use — can we deny future applications? Have we set a precedent that can only open the county to multiple wind projects or expensive lawsuits to try to control them? One pro-wind lawyer tonight said we can control them, but what would it cost us? Are you prepared for multi lawsuits? And what if people decide not to settle their families here due to windmill proliferation? One gentleman already talked about two building jobs that he had that were on hold. You know the school population is just beginning to turn around and grow. If families stop settling here because of these wind turbines, how is that going to affect the school? Don't jeopardize that beginning growth.

As citizens we have an obligation to ask certain questions as well. Is this really efficient green energy? The fact is that wind generating sites exist only because of government subsidies. Maybe this money would be better spent researching alternative fuels to run our cars and trucks. If every ridge top in Highland County were covered with windmills, we would still have global warming, because electric generation only uses a very small amount of oil. Maybe instead of subsidizing wind production we should urge our government officials to research alternative fuels to get our cars and trucks

off of gasoline.

Another question is, what happens if Mr. McBride sells his project to a public utility like Florida Power and Light? Do public utilities have the right to condemn land for power line construction? And how many sites will be approved? A possibility of three sites has been mentioned. Are there plans for more than one? And where do you think these sites should be approved? It's interesting to note that the farther away from Allegheny Mountain you get, the more people are in favor of it. Some people seem to think that wind turbines at the far end of the county won't bother anybody. Would they still feel the same way about other sites?

It seems there are too many questions and not enough answers. It's been said that many people support the turbines but are unwilling to speak out. There are also many who oppose them who are also unwilling to make public statements. And there are many people who just don't know how they feel because the don't have enough information.

We really don't have enough answers to approve this conditional use. What will you say to your neighbors and the people who voted for you if a few years down the road we have multiple ridge tops covered with wind turbines and no income to show for it, and you still need to raise taxes?

Please don't approve this project just because some people believe we have to say yes to something. The county needs a long-term plan to address this issue. We need to see how wind turbine development plays out in other parts of the state. Let's not be Virginia's guinea pig on the issue of how to regulate wind turbines. Please say no to this conditional wind use permit that would put obscenely high 400-foot towers on our ridge tops without a guarantee that we could control future development, or generate significant long-term tax dollars from them. Thank you.

Leo Schwartz

Good evening, Roberta, Melissa, gentlemen. You three fellows going to fix breakfast?

Well I was going to come here to speak against the proposal, and I assume you got my letter I sent recently. If you don't I'm sure Roberta has it for you.

I learned quite a bit here tonight, especially from listening to attorneys. I like to listen to attorneys. I learned that we could trust Sen. Warner. Mr. Flora has a pretty thick skin, so he won't mind if I pick at him just a little bit, but he was mentioning all the big companies that have gotten involved with wind energy; the one he forgot to mention was Enron.

I'm opposed to this project for some very simple reasons and I have mentioned them before. Congress has no constitutional authority to subsidize wind power — has no constitutional authority to subsidize many things that it does subsidize — and you gentlemen, who have taken an oath to defend the constitution, have no lawful constitutional power to allow this type of project in the county. If Mr. McBride were considering a completely, privately-financed project with no federal subsidies, I think that would be something completely different that you could consider.

It also has everything to do with property rights. I've heard a lot about property rights this evening — some of it right on target, some of it was not — but I suggest people go back and read Sir William Blackstone's thoughts on property rights. I think that will clear up a lot of misunderstandings.

The issue of eminent domain was brought up. That was something that I was concerned about and I am very concerned that the board, in approving that height ordinance change, really left the county open to legal actions on that issue. I think that was a big mistake.

I'm sort of an optimist in the respect that I have faith that in the very near future Americans are going to realize what a scam wind energy is — technically, scientifically and economically. So I don't think it's going to be around very long. In the meantime, a lot of damage could be done here in the county. I don't think it will be Sherman's march to the sea, but I think there could be some damage, particularly to people that are close to it.

And just one comment in closing. Now I think Mr. McBride is probably a pretty astute businessman. I think if he were sitting up there, and you were sitting over here, and Mr. Flora was in Melissa's place — and I'm sure that they will dispute me on this — but you know, I don't think that they would have anything to do with this deal.

I didn't mean to offend you, I'm just switching everybody around. And I don't mean to offend Mr. McBride either, but I think they're astute enough to know that if they had their personal resources on the line, that they wouldn't want to have much to do with this deal. Sorry, I tend to be long-winded.

My final comment is that there's supposedly 1,500 or so people

opposed to this. If there were 1,500 people in favor of it, I would still be standing here opposing it. Thank you.

Jim East

Hi, I'm Jim East and I brake for squirrels.

My wife Linda and I moved here about three years ago and we moved here for many of the reasons that many of the previous speakers mentioned regarding the wonderful nature of the landscape and the people.

I guess I don't want to dwell on that. Basically what I have done was take the time to look at the conditional use permit application that I think was supplied to you all. And there are a number of things in that application that just cause me to stop and think and question and wonder about this. So I sort of jotted down a couple of these, and I thought I would just bring them up for the ...

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... the Highland New Wind Development LLC. One part of that bothers me, in today's litigation and environment and everything else. Limited liability corporations are a way to sort of shelter yourself from things when they go wrong and now I'm a little concerned when I see this. They may not have necessarily the confidence that this is going to be a successful and profitable venture.

You know, at the same time, Mr. McBride is identified as the lessor of the property, and what have you, but there's not been a lease signed. At least at the time of this submission, there had not been a lease signed for this. So I'm not exactly sure whether we've sincerely got the properties locked up and the agreements all made. These things may be taking place in the interim time, even as I speak, but it concerns me that things are so open-ended on this.

We heard earlier this evening from a gentleman who was a financial analyst, and he had provided insights into the various steps and processes and models, and what have you, that you do in the course of developing a business plan, of developing a business, and I don't see any evidence of that.

And then we heard from another gentleman over here who said that really there's this eight-step process to seeing wind turbines go into a generation capability and initial operating condition, and we haven't been provided any insight into that.

You know, trickle down into the application and there's some questions about whether there are any restrictions on the property, and the application said none, but there's obviously a variety of restrictions that were associated, especially at the time we had height restrictions. So I'm not exactly sure, you know, what other things we might have left out there.

On page 2, you go on to look at and it says to provide a brief description and discussion about what you intend to do. And so I got into starting to look at that, and started looking at wind turbines, and saw some that said well, there will be 18 turbines. And then another that says there are going to be 22 turbines, and then finally, it says there's going to be 20 turbines. I don't know. How many turbines is it going to be? What are you guys going to approve or disapprove? From what's in the application I'm not sure that you can. And then, you have to excuse me. I got new glasses the other day and they really didn't do too good of a job.

It says, another is, the exact configuration of the turbines is unknown, and won't be able to be determined until the construction phase begins. You mean we're going to get all the way to the point where we're going to do the construction, right after the construction begins, and then we're going to figure out what it is? What the real design is? Or not? I don't know. I was left questioning that.

I'd like to just conclude by saying that, you know, I feel a little bit like Don Quixote up here. We're tilting at windmills here, except in Don Quixote's case, he thought they were dragons. I know for a fact that these are monsters that we're talking about putting up here on the mountain and we don't want to do that.

Thank you very much.

Paul Tribble

Well, to keep it brief my name is Paul Tribble. I live about three miles south of the Collins intersection on jet route six, between New York City and Dallas-Fort Worth, otherwise known as Blue Grass, Virginia.

One of my favorite things to do as a captain on a clear beautiful day is to point out my house, and my farm and beautiful Highland County to all these people from New York City who think Highland County is fly-over country. Well, it isn't fly-over country. For those of you who don't know what fly-over country is, that's something that a lot of people on the East Coast discuss. The people on the East Coast and the people on the West Coast, when they're going from one side to the other side of the country, they think everything in between is fly-over country and nobody lives here. Well, a lot of people live here and I am one of them.

I don't know why I came here other than the fact that the good Lord led me here. And I'm here for a purpose. And maybe that purpose is to sit up here and speak tonight.

But basically, what this all comes down to is green. We've heard a lot about green energy but it isn't about green energy. It's about green. It's about the green I'm holding up right here [holds up money]. That's the green that it's about. It's about this man who wants some green, and the green he's going to get is from the taxpayers of the United States. That's how this project is going to be funded. That's the only reason it's commercially viable, is because it's subsidized by the federal government.

So he may give you your 30 pieces of silver if you accept this project, but the 30 pieces of silver is coming out of your pocket.

Thank you very much.

Larry Thomas

I'm not sure whether to say good evening or good morning to you. Anyway I appreciate being able to get up here. I didn't come here to talk, but when I got here somebody asked me to get up and do it.

My name is Larry Thomas and I'm from Pendleton County, West Virginia, which is just to the north — your neighbor. And unfortunately on Dec. 2, 2004, we learned that we had a wind developer in our county through our newspaper, not by a process like this, but just through our newspaper. And a part of that disclosure was the fact that our county commission had already signed an agreement with that group to make sure that they had a transmission line up through the middle of our valley.

When I heard that, I went to the county commission meeting, which was I guess was one of the worse examples of government I've ever seen, because they were grilled, and they were grilled hard, by people who were very passionate, just like many of the people that came up here tonight. And I heard every one of them ask a specific question and that was, 'How much time did you spend researching wind energy before you signed that agreement?' And to the man, each one of them said, 'Zero.' So I'm really glad to see this process. I applaud you for doing it.

But after that, I said, gee, they said in that meeting that this is the greatest economic activity that's ever going to hit Pendleton County, West Virginia, but yet they didn't do any research to make sure that that was true, and they also did not involve our economic development authority, which is a group that they appoint to look at the economic activities in Pendleton County.

So I started doing some of my own research and since then, I've spent my whole life, I think. That's the same for many of the people in this room, and I've learned a lot — a lot of what has been said here tonight. But I've come to the conclusion we shouldn't have it in Pendleton County for many of the reasons here, but there's one other reason that I don't think's been brought up here, and that is, the report that I read by a very good energy expert, who made a calculation and said according to the department of energy's requirements — well, not requirements but what they're projecting for the year 2020 — we will need in excess of 66,000 of these 400-foot turbines. If we go back to the smaller ones, the number doubles. If we go back to the 200-foot ones, it's 133,000 of them, and that West Virginia proportionately would have to provide 3,000 of those.

You look at the area of West Virginia — there's only five counties — and I've seen projections for Highland County included in that — for these wind turbines. And to put that many wind turbines it's going to require just about using all of the mountain tops, when you exclude all the national forest that's been bought.

So anyway, I just wanted to get up and say in Pendleton County, we're going through the same thing. I wish we would have the same process, because I see right now that our commission and our EDA aren't even involved, even though they're out there, and even though the wind developer has withdrawn his application.

He withdrew it for a reason. He was provided with a set of interrogatories by our public service commission and asked to respond to those. I think you all have been provided a copy of them. It's the requirements the PSC has now developed on Jan. 5 of 2005. The wind developer was there, and he said to the commission, 'If you adopt this set of rules, nobody will apply to site one of these in the state of West Virginia.'

It's the same kind of requirements that I think should be done in Virginia, and they should be done before anything is approved because it provides all the documentation that's necessary. I heard the man say this evening that some of it's going to be done, but it's going to probably be done after you make your decision. And that's what they tried to do in West Virginia. They submitted an application with no support whatsoever and asked for expedited treatment.

Well, I'll just close by saying please look at everything. Don't ignore what these gentlemen say. Don't ignore all the information

that's available from all over the world right now on this subject.

Carol Bandy

Carol Bandy, Blue Grass.

There have been a lot of pros and cons about wind turbines tonight, but I'd like you to focus for a minute on the requirements for granting a conditional use permit. According to the zoning ordinance, page 45, the requirements for granting a conditional use permit are, and I quote, 'The proposed use is compatible with surrounding uses. It is consistent with the intent of this ordinance and with the land use element of the comprehensive plan, is in the public interest, and will comply with all the provisions of law and ordinances.'

It says all these terms must be met. Not just one. Take a look at the requirements one at a time. Are the wind turbines compatible with surrounding uses? No. Definitely not compatible with Bear Mountain lodge, historic Camp Allegheny Battlefield, or the natural habitat up there.

Are the wind turbines consistent with the intent of the ordinance and with the land use element of the comprehensive plan? No. On page 169 of the comprehensive plan in the section on land use it says, and I quote, 'Highland is distinguished by breathtaking mountain scenery, vast stretches of pastoral land, and a unique role in American history. The most desirable developments will be those that complement the county's natural and cultural settings.' Wind turbines do not belong in this setting.

Are wind turbines in the public interest? No. It will not bring more than one or two jobs. In fact, employment could go down if home-building declines. It will not provide electricity for Highland County. And income for the county cannot be guaranteed, and therefore is not a valid reason.

I'm asking you to vote no on the conditional use permit application for Mr. McBride. You have solid grounds to vote no because the requirements for a permit will not be met by wind turbines.

Thank you.

Larry Bandy

I'm Larry Bandy. I live between Hightown and Blue Grass with my wife there. I'm going to give you all the late-night version — it's the same as the other version.

Both sides in the controversy have brought up property rights, and I think it's the most basic issue in question. The Founding Fathers were influenced by thinkers who equated liberty with property rights. Free men could do anything they wanted with their property as long as they did not harm society or its members. The Founding Fathers' reason for government was to impartially protect property rights and all other rights. With rights come responsibilities. Mr. McBride's rights end where he infringes on the rights of so many others.

Public hearings exist to find out the nature and extent of opposition to changes. The great majority of us here tonight are not seeking special favors. We're asking for your protection. What an opportunity you men have to declare that the property rights of all are respected, and that Highland County is not the dominion of the rich and well-connected.

Or, you can say that the poor or politically impotent own property at the whim of special interests.

Thank you.

Shawna Bratton

Thank you, board of supervisors, Miss Lambert, Ms. Dowd, for the opportunity to speak here tonight. I know it's getting to be a late evening.

As you've heard this evening, there's been a lot of discussion about the proposal on Red Oak. We've been waiting for nearly a year to get some answers on this proposal, and so far, there have been few forthcoming.

Highland County is a special place. Many speakers before me have spoken about the beauty of Highland County. In my job, I purchase things that are produced from all over the world. I can tell you that there are things that can turn into a commodity pretty quickly, can be copied, can be shipped across the water, and produce a little bit of money. But the hardest things for me to find are those things that are unique. That's what Highland County has.

I may not live here right now, but I spend an awful lot of time here. As you know, my family has land interest and business interest in Highland County, and you need to hope that I'm one of your future taxpayers here.

But when you look at Highland County, it is unique. And that's the single, biggest asset that it has, and the single biggest economic engine that it has right now. Granted ...

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... One of the questions I've been asking — this project obviously is going to affect a lot of people. There are over 1,000 people who have told you through their petition that they are very concerned about the impact that this project will have on their property, and on the investment that they have made in this county. And it affects their hope and dreams too. If the project is going to affect that many people, then there has to be some sort of real, real positive benefit in order to let the interest of one person supercede the interest of so many other people, and so far, the only thing we've heard a little bit about is this might generate some tax dollars for Highland County.

I look at this project, and we're talking about an investment where there's government money plus a combination of private, whatever, of close to \$40 million. In return for that investment, we don't get any additional sales tax generation because people don't go there to buy stuff. To me, the economy of Highland County is much more stable if people support local businesses — if they can drive their cars, shop at local gas stations, shop at local convenience stores, pay their taxes, do construction work, and invest in their community, invest in their local bank. A broader based economy is much more stable for Highland County. With the best estimate on tax revenue, if they come true, and if the state corporation doesn't get their hands of this revenue, is for a couple hundred thousand dollars a year. With the county budget, with inflation, with new federal and state mandates, that couple hundred thousand dollars we gain in a year is going to be wiped out very quickly. And you are risking the biggest, some of the biggest value that you have if you just focus on the wind turbines.

So, I'm looking here tonight. I still don't see any solid answers. I don't see a site plan. How can you build a \$40 million project with no site plan in place and no answers to how this will impact the county? I know you have a really tough decision to make and I applaud you for taking the time to listen to these concerns. But the biggest thing for me — sometimes the toughest decisions in life, whether they're about marriage, family, career, work, whatever — you may not have a crystal ball in front of you that will tell you everything you need to know, but sometimes you know, deep down in your heart and soul, what's right. And sometimes you have to make a decision knowing deep down what you feel, that's the right way to go.

Annetta Neighbor

Good morning, my name is Annetta Neighbor and I have co-owned land with my life partner, Dan Coffman, for three years now near Monterey and we recently moved here full-time.

I gave up a career as a psychologist in the Washington, D.C. area to live here. I have lived and traveled on three continents — Europe, Africa, North America, and the Caribbean. I've seen many beautiful places. But I chose to settle here in Highland County.

What's so special about it? I guess I could tell you about the mountains, the endless mountains, the luscious green valleys, birds I've never seen anywhere else before and I'm still learning their names, fresh clean air, pure streams and rivers, animals grazing in the field, a small community of independent, proud, creative people — and we've seen a lot of them here tonight — people who take pride in their properties and their work, and their community — the black night sky where you can watch the stars. The slower pace of life. But beyond all of this, and we've heard this over and over again tonight, there is something here that's more intangible than this, what I have just mentioned.

You can't touch it, you can't measure it, you can't assess it for tax purposes. And I can only call it the soul. S-o-u-l. The soul of Highland County. That atmosphere of natural beauty mixed with what people contribute through their life, their work, their creative energy, that makes a place that is still real, genuine, down to earth, that has a sense of freedom and possibility. I think this is what our forefathers and foremothers were looking for when they came here.

When the mist rises from the valley in the morning, it feels to me like God is creating this place from scratch and slowly unveiling it to us as the mist rises up. To me that is a spiritual experience. Now this soul piece that I'm talking about, that's what people are desperate for, and they will go to great lengths and pay a lot of money to find it, even if only for a week or two weeks out of a year on their vacation. We've got that here.

Highland County has that soul that people are looking for. And unfortunately, there are fewer and fewer places left on this planet that are like that — that satisfy people's cravings for that uniqueness, and that satisfaction. But we have a choice. We can maintain stewardship over this place — this soul place called Highland

County. And we can preserve it for ourselves and future generations.

When the argument is made that Highland County must do its share to contribute to the national energy needs, I say whoa, hold on. Highland County is contributing something already that is worth more than a few additional megawatts of energy. Something that is priceless and could never be reclaimed after setting up industrial size wind turbines on our mountain tops.

If you truly love and appreciate the uniqueness of this place, you can't sell it out. Not for the benefits of a few local landowners. Certainly not for the huge profits of the people who own these wind conglomerates. In light of the strong opposition of the people of Highland County — and here tonight, the people have spoken, and they have spoken over the last months, and years, very clearly — in light of the recommendations against wind farms by both the planning commission, and the IDA, I'm puzzled why the board of supervisors still has not made a decision.

I would like to ask a hard question, and considering you are in public service and you are familiar with ethical issues, I think this feeds right into that. Do any of you on the board of supervisors, any of your family members or business partners, own any mountain top land that could be leased eventually for wind use? In that case, it would be highly unethical, if not illegal, for you to pass the vote in favor of wind farms because of this serious conflict of interest here. And I guess we can only hope for your integrity in this matter.

There are other places in the country who welcome wind farms — Kansas, Texas, what have you. But they're not right in Highland County. Please vote no.

Doug Craft

Good morning, my name is Doug Craft and I'm a two-year resident now of Highland County, property owner and resident, my family lives here.

I'm against industrial wind turbines. But that's not what I'm going to talk about tonight. That's not what I'm going to talk about. What I'm going to talk about is the arrogance, bulliness, and general disregard of the wishes, rights and desires of the people of Highland County for monetary gain — monetary gain that we can't quantify in some cases. And monetary gain that will not stay in this county, and will go out of this county. As I said, the bulliness. I don't like bullies. I don't like bullies that are elected officials and I don't like bullies in my neighborhood. With that in mind, I'm going to finish the letter Mr. Webb was so rudely but professionally interrupted — professionally by the deputies, rudely by the supervisors. I'll continue his letter:

'In addition, at this same site, 33 migrating birds were killed in a single night when they flew into the turbine rotors, representing the largest bird mortality incident ever reported for a wind project. Although this event was dismissed by the company's consultant as an anomaly associated with low cloud cover and lights, such cloud conditions are not uncommon on our ridges and birds are also known to fly into unlighted towers. Recent studies in the Appalachian region have documented that large numbers of birds and bats fly over the ridges at heights that can bring them into contact with turbine rotors. For example a study conducted in the fall of 2003 on the Allegheny Front, north of the proposed Highland Wind Development project site, showed that nearly 300,000 nocturnal migrants passed over at turbine height. In addition, large numbers of raptors, which migrate in the day time, have been observed flying at low elevation along Highland County ridges during low cloud cover. So we have a problem, and it's my impression that the industry is not interested in addressing it in an objective and open manner. In particular, it seems that the applicant, Highland New Wind Development, is seeking to avoid meaningful environmental assessment or even meaningful discussion of the issues.

'For example, consider that Highland New Wind Development was on USDA's list to receive a \$500,000 grant to support its development. This, however, triggered the National Environmental Policy Act, which may have provided the kind of assessment that is needed. Highland New Wind Development declined to pursue the grant, passing up on half a million dollars, but thereby avoiding the NEPA assessment process.

Highland New Wind Development indicated to the board of supervisors that it intended to rely on environmental studies to be conducted for another project in West Virginia. Given the potential problems associated with the site and the clear need for a site-specific assessment, this is completely inadequate. This other project is at least 20 miles away, and information about the design and results of any such studies has not been made available to the public nor, presumably, to the supervisors.

'The Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission advised that environmental reviews should be completed prior to issuance

of local permits. This makes sense, but Highland New Wind Development has advised the supervisors that this is not possible because preliminary studies indicate that environmental review will take up to 12 months, and that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will require a review as part of the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality permit process. If preliminary studies have been conducted, Highland New Wind Development has thus far not shared that information with the community, and moreover, there is no such permit required from the DEQ.

'The information provided to the supervisors by Highland New Wind Development on this issue is simply incorrect and it cannot properly serve as the basis for informed decision making.

'Finally, I call the supervisors' attention to the fact that just within the last week, Tennessee Senator Lamar Alexander and Virginia Senator John Warner introduced what is called the Environmentally Responsible Wind Power Act of 2005. If passed into law, this may have the effect of establishing an environmental review process. It seems that we are beginning to wake up to the fact that utility-scale wind energy may not be as green and beneficial as its proponents claim. As time goes on, there will certainly be additional opportunities for the type of objective assessment that is needed before strings of 400-foot turbines are put up on our mountain ridges and transmission lines are draped across our countryside. However, serious mistakes will be made in the interim, and it is these mistakes that will ultimately provide the impetus for a meaningful regulatory process.

'Highland County is at a crossroads. We have a choice. We can either be one of the mistakes or we can wait and take advantage of better opportunities for assessment and informed decision-making.

'And finally, and I'll submit this to the supervisors, this is a map that shows areas that are suitable for wind development and it's my intention to go down to the county office tomorrow, actually today, and see who does own this land that is wind class three-plus areas.'

Thank you.

Ann McCaig

Hi, I'm Ann McCaig. I live about three miles north of Williamsville.

First thing I'd like to say is, I wasn't born in Highland County, but I got here as quick as I could.

I'm dismayed by what I'm seeing here tonight. I thank you all for listening to all these people but if I were Mr. McBride, I would consider this a question of honor, and I would honorably withdraw that application. There's so much opposition. The risk is all on the side of the county, and us. It's all our risk and it's all his money. And that's just a crazy, crazy bargain to make.

It's late, and thank you. Please, I live in the hind tip section of the county, I really don't count. I don't know you all, I've never met you all, but I've got to take it on faith that you're going to really, really look at this hard and make the right decision for the county, and not for a whole bunch of baloney.

Elizabeth McCoy

I'm Elizabeth McCoy. I live in exciting, downtown Monterey.

Sometimes, to escape some of that excitement, we go to a little farm in the Blue Grass Valley where we can see the stars at night. At one time, we had a neighbor who had one of these night lights that came on, and it was right across the valley from our cottage, and oh, what a terrible, terrible nuisance it was ... and that was one bright light. I really sympathize with people who would be coping with how many bright lights every night.

It has been said that it's easy to speak against something. It isn't really easy for me to speak for or against anything. It's not really easy for me to speak publicly. However, I felt that I would sure be letting a lot of people down if I didn't go on record as being unalterably opposed to this proposal. Someone said that dead people were on that petition. I'm not talking about the petition now. I'm talking about some dead people who would be disappointed in me if I did not take a stand on this issue. That would include — not to be sentimental about this whole thing — but it would include my mother. It would include aunts and uncles, all born and raised in Highland County, Monterey. And lots of cousins, one of whom traveled from Richmond tonight to speak and had to go back a few minutes ago because he has an 8 o'clock appointment tomorrow morning in Richmond. So that's how much it meant to him.

It's obvious that it means so much to so many of us. It's also been said earlier that this is about what makes sense for Highland County. The speaker who said that was in favor of this proposal. What really makes sense for Highland County has been expressed in the past couple of hours by, we've lost count of how many speakers. It was said that some people don't want to see anything different, especially in Highland County. We don't want to see certain

things change, that's true. We want to see things as they are, and as some of the speakers have said, the way the creator made it.

It's been said that this is a remote area of Highland County, where it won't matter because it's so remote. Our remoteness is the reason that this area we're talking about — Red Oak Knob and Tamarack — the reason that it is so pristine and precious is because it is so remote. I don't want to belabor this, and it's something that's been said many times tonight by people who can speak much better than I can, that we do not want this project to go forward. Some have said we don't want wind turbines in Highland County. It can't be said any plainer than that. And that speaker really is speaking for the majority of those present tonight, it seems to me, and for all those names on the petition against this project.

The speaker before me, Ann McCaig, scooped what I had to say when she said something to the effect that the applicant could withdraw his application right now, tonight. We would all heave a great sigh of relief and any problems that we have with it would be solved. I don't see why Mr. McBride has to be a silent partner, spectator, at this event. Why couldn't he step forward at this time and withdraw his application in the face of all this opposition from the residents of Highland County? He has also said — that's not a rhetorical question, I'm in hopes that he will do that — he has also said, with various amounts of money expressed ... Time up? Oh, I thought I was being so brief. I would like to say, what do they do on a rainy night in Monterey? This is what they do.

Steve Fullerton

Good evening, gentlemen, Melissa and Roberta.

You know, I've been sitting back there for a long time and it's almost been kind of a surreal experience to sit here and watch this. I keep waiting for you guys to go, 'OK, OK, were not going to do it.'

When you listen to the pro positions on this, the only thing you can get to at any given point in time that makes any sense whatsoever — forget the green and all that, because I know you guys don't care about that, and birds and bats and all those things — it does come down to a business decision in a whole lot of respects. They've thrown the reason out there — that it's the money. Here's this big carrot, go grab it. And that's exactly what I think it is — it's a trap. Boom, take the bait. It's a bad trap.

I've talked to you guys several times about the money, the budget and all that good stuff, and I think that the county is kind of in a trap. And it's that way because we're kind of behind the power curve, only because of the excitement there is about the community and the love that everybody has for it. That's what makes land values go up. All those are good things, believe me. The last thing you want as a board of supervisors is your land values going down. It's a nightmare.

But there's so many other things that could be done for \$175,000 a year. It's nothing. There's so many other things that could be done. I've shared that with you guys — economic development opportunities. I've said to every one of you guys I don't know how you do it. I don't know how you do it without an economic development officer. Roberta does 90 percent of everything that's there on a day-to-day basis. You guys don't have the time to do it, but an economic development advisory committee — there's plenty of people that would volunteer for that, including myself.

But there's got to be other alternatives, and what I don't want you to do is grab that bait and take it, because it is a bad trap. There's so many other alternatives, economic development-wise. Michael McCray did a yeoman's job — very well-thought out presentation. But there are some other things other than tourism. There's fulfillment centers for call centers, all those kind of things. You've got high-speed lines here, wonderful opportunities there. It just takes time and effort. I think this group here would spend that time and effort long before they would agree to do anything from a wind turbine standpoint.

So I just kind of beg you guys, from a financial perspective, don't take the bait. It's easy to do. It's easy money. It sounds like an easy win, and Lee, if you did say that you can't not vote for it, the only reason you'd say that is for money. So don't take that bait. It's really easy to do. I understand it, because it is a difficult situation, but I do not believe the county's in dire financial straits. I've told you guys that before. I think there are other alternatives.

Thank you for your time.

Richard Shamrock

Richard Shamrock, Route 84.

I ask the three of you tonight to have a 3-0 vote and turn this application down. Do not base your decision on money alone.

What disturbed me earlier is, I heard one of the speakers say this money that you think you'd get will be a good thing for Highland

County, and it may not be a bad thing if we don't have as many people coming into this county. That would be a tragic mistake. You want people to move into this county, and Jerry, you realize that. When you go back to the McNulty place, and you rezoned it — you rezoned it so we could have a development there and have more people ...

[RECORDING INTERRUPTED]

... The overwhelming majority of people have spoken. You need to listen to the majority of the people in this county. I think it's an easy decision for you. I don't know what else you need from the people of this county.

The people who live in this county — and as you know, I'm in real estate. All the people we've worked with — we have worked with many, many people. There is not one single person that moved to this county that we didn't like. They're all good people. Those are the people — when the person mentioned you don't want to have so many moving in here because it's going to have some negative impact on your fire and your rescue, well that's totally wrong. The people moving in this county, they are the ones supporting the fire department and the rescue squads. A lot of them coming in here have the financial means to do that. Everybody doesn't have that. Many of these people do. They not only support the fire department and rescue squad, they support The Highland Center, the medical center, the library, and the SPCA. The list goes on. These are people who are involved in this community. Some of them may not be able to volunteer their time, but many of them volunteer their money, or vice versa. I ask you do not — do not — approve this application.

Thank you.

Nancy Witschey

I'm Nancy Witschey from Blue Grass.

I have stood here before to say vote no. I'm saying again, vote no. My position has not changed.

Mr. Blagg, were you quoted correctly, that you said you could not not vote for this project? I'm assuming by your lack of answer that that's a direct and accurate quote.

I don't know how many of the rest of the three of you have made up your minds, but I, for one, don't appreciate having my time wasted in this manner. If you've already made up your minds, there was no point in going through this charade, and I tell you that many of us feel that is exactly what has happened. You've shown no respect for the fact, Mr. Blagg, that over two-thirds, and Mr. Rexrode and Mr. Sullenberger, over two-thirds of the property owners and residents of Highland County have told you exactly what it is that they want. They want you to vote no. If that's not clear, Mr. Blagg, I'm sorry.

Sara Bell

Good evening, good morning. My name is Sara Bell I live near Mustoe, Virginia.

We are not native to this county — that seems to be very important to some people. But rather, we actively chose to move here 25 years ago and make this our home, largely based on the appearance of this county. It's magnificence, for the time being.

I appreciate the weight of this decision for you. I know it's not easy. There's little precedent for you to follow, but there are also a lot of consequences that will follow the decision you make.

We do not fully understand the ramifications of this project and I mean we, collectively — you and us, and the ones that will try to follow afterwards. Merely basing the decision on economic speculation — which is what it is, speculation — and ignoring the impact on all of the neighbors and the natural resources, is simply unjust. This is a public hearing and you are charged to listen carefully to each one of our voices as we articulate our opinions. Many of them have been extremely eloquent and impassioned this evening. And most of the time, you've looked alert and listening, so that's good. But there are other voices that cannot speak for themselves. You've heard them mentioned a few times tonight, but I just wanted to remind you once again that the voices of the wild creatures and the land itself will not speak here tonight. They are mute and silent but they are something that we have to protect as stewards.

Ultimately, though, what you're going to listen to is what's in your own heart — each and every one of you. I urge you now to deny this request because the applicant has made absolutely no compelling case for the greater good of the community or the state of Virginia. Thank you.

Somers Stephenson

My name is Somers Stephenson. I live in Vanderpool and I am born and raised here.

It seems to me that the issue before us is simply, No. 1 — What are the absolute, long-term benefits to Highland County if you allow wind turbines on our ridges? And number 2 — Are wind turbines consistent with our comprehensive plan and zoning? We know that they're not consistent with our comprehensive plan and zoning laws. They're not even mentioned in them. So the real question that needs to be answered is, what are the good things that are going to come out of this, and how long are they going to last?

Jerry, Lee, Robin, won't you please, please help us understand what these benefits are? You must know something that we don't know. Why else would you have prolonged this as long as you have? I think that you, as our elected officials, owe every person in this room the answer to that question, and I don't mean second-handedly. I mean straight out of your mouth. If each of you would give us just one absolute, long-term benefit that allowing these wind turbines on our ridges will bring to Highland County, perhaps all the people in this room could, somehow, make sense out of what seems to make no sense, and that is, why are we even considering an action that stands to ruin not only everything that Highland County stands for, but also ruin most valuable assets that Highland County's got to sell, and that is its beauty and serenity? And for what? 400-foot wind towers that no one can say for sure what the long benefits to the county are? No one can say for sure one benefit, for sure. And you're even considering this?

Please, vote no.

John Walters

Good morning.

I also want to voice my opposition to the permit. I believe that the McBrides have heard the voice of the people and the voice of the people, both through residents, the voice of the people through adjoining landowners, and this group that's come together tonight that's spoken so clearly about what the value of Highland County is and their opposition to this.

I think that the people have spoken — that a voice has arisen from the people of Highland County — and I hope you'll consider that voice, and this upswelling of opposition to this, and that you will just say no. Thank you.

Mike Armstrong

I'm Mike Armstrong. I live in the Doe Hill area.

We've heard all kinds of things tonight about the do's and the don't's of turbines. I want to talk about something a little different. It's not really different — it's about jobs for our young people here in the county.

Jerry, Lee, Robin, I think all you grew up here in the county, myself, and we all — I know I left a little bit, like all you guys have a little bit, too — we all ended up back here, and we all seem to be making a living here, which, really the only way you make a living in Highland County is if you know how to work, and willing to work, and I think we all are. Now most of the kids in the county today you couldn't get to help you if you paid them 20 bucks an hour. Now, if they want to live here, they'll have to go somewhere else and grow up and decide that if they really want to live here, they're going to have to figure out how to do something — which I'm sure we all did. I know I did. My dad give me everything in the world to try and get me to stay, but no, you wasn't going to get me to stay here. But I'm back here now.

And the other thing I want to talk about a little bit is the industrial side of this deal. It don't matter what kind of industry we have here, when you're growing up as a kid, you don't want to go out and work for this factory or that, or whatever deal has got set up there. You want to go out and check the rest of the world out and decide it wasn't so bad where you come from after all.

Now, we're only talking about one wind project here right now. It's, from what I heard, a 40 to a 60 million dollar deal. But I know for a fact that there's at least one more, and maybe two. One's in the process, or being processed right now, on Jack Mountain, on the Virginia side and West Virginia side. So that's another 40 or 60 million dollar deal. Now, you can't put in a couple of 60 million dollar deals and still have Highland County left. It's kind of like once you do that, everything's going to change.

You guys are just going to have to make a decision. Do you want Highland County left? It's kind of like having the cake, or eating it. I think I'd just as soon have it. And I hope you guys make a good decision. Thank you.

Summer Cohen

I'm Summer Cohen. I live in Monterey. I'm currently serving as an AmeriCorps Vista at the Highland Center in the area of economic development.

Last Sunday night, a banquet was held at The Highland Center to celebrate Business Appreciation Week, and to recognize small businesses in Highland and Bath counties. Mr. Sullenberger, Mr. and Mrs. McBride, and many other people who were here throughout the night were guests at the banquet. And at a time when the county is so divided, it was nice to see everyone there for one reason — and that was to celebrate the small businesses and to honor them, the businesses that make our counties and surrounding counties run.

How many of these small businesses will continue to exist if this project is approved? Please consider the negative consequences that will stem from the approval of this project and vote no.

Thank you.

Jim Brodsky

My name is Jim Brodsky. For the past eight years my family has owned a home in Highland County on Jack Mountain, where we conduct a small cow and calf operation.

We are strongly opposed to the application before the board because this project is absolutely wrong for Highland County. It will destroy everything that makes this county precious and unique, and will provide the county with no benefits in return. Only the applicant and the wind industry will benefit. We think it would be an outrage, and a gross abdication of the public trust, to grant the application.

On its face, the application makes no showing whatsoever that the project is in the public interest. What is the point in having a zoning ordinance at all if the desires and life-styles of the overwhelming majority of county residents can be put aside for the greed and self-interest of one, based on flimsy, self-serving, and groundless claims? Moreover, the application provides so little information about the project that we do not see how anyone could, exercising any reasonable prudence, conclude that it was in the public interest.

With the purported economic benefit of wind energy being a matter of speculation, not science, and the public interest clearly not served, that leaves only the issue of money as an argument for approval. We understand the desire to bring revenue to the county, but destroying its unique nature is fundamentally the wrong way to go.

Now is the time for responsible and enlightened leadership, not for a sell-out of this county's heritage. But setting aside our personal feelings, I want to speak from my experience as an attorney and financial advisor for the past 30 years, having been responsible for the investment of over a billion dollars of other people's money.

I can tell you that this project does not pass the prudent investor rule. That rule requires that those making decisions — investment decisions on behalf of others — are required to do what a prudent investor would do under the circumstances. This is exactly the decision this county is facing. Should you mortgage our future by changing forever the nature of the county for the prospect of some immediate, short-term financial reward? In other words, is it prudent for Highland County to put at risk its tax base by betting on the potential revenue from this project? Because if you're wrong, it is the taxpayers that will ultimately pay for your error.

From my own experience, and from the collective wisdom of many financial experts in the investment community with whom I have spoken, this project does not pass that prudent investor test. No one that I spoke with would invest in the revenue from this project. Investors call a proposal such as this a junk bond. Why? Because prudent and intelligent investors seek predictability, a high degree of credit worthiness, and knowledgeable developers before they are willing to invest on behalf of others. All those elements are missing here. The potential cash flows, in the words of one distinguished purchaser of bonds I talked to, are far too speculative and he saw no benefit in owning such an obligation. Another, an underwriter of municipal bonds, felt the unknowns about the project clearly did equate it to junk bond status. Others I spoke with were concerned about the considerable risks associated with the project, while noting its lack of reward, and the degree of risk the county would be assuming.

Based on these unequivocal judgments, I personally would not breach my fiduciary duty to my client by making such an investment. The county must, in this regard, seriously consider its obligation and its duty to citizens. Taxpayers, both present and future, and the financial markets as well, do not look favorably upon communities in making imprudent investments. We urge you to deny this application. Thank you.

Trish Pray

Hello, my name is Trish Pray. My husband and I came here four

years ago and bought a home — plan to spend the rest of our lives here. We brought with us a tiny little business, Earthwise Gourds. We're now known around the county as the gourd people.

We're against the turbines for all the reasons that have been so eloquently spoken tonight. We're also against the turbines for our own personal reason and that is our business. Local people buy our gourds, but there are, what, 2,500 people in the county? We'd saturate that market quickly.

We need the tourists to keep that business going. Now that business only supports the two of us, and a youth employment kid in the summer. It's not a big business, but it helps. It's connected to three other businesses in this county and brings in some sales tax. So we are adamantly against the wind turbines. Thank you.

Dwight File

I wasn't going to speak tonight, but I'm Dwight File. I live in Blue Grass.

We moved up here about seven, eight years ago and I think one thing maybe the board of supervisors is overlooking is, we moved here because of the serenity of the county, as people have said. But because we've moved here, we've provided the Sullenberger firm with a real estate commission, Roy Gutshall, Bill Bratton, Shamrock and Stephenson — they get a lot of real estate commissions from people moving here. Come-here's we're called, I think. Jim Skinner did our road. It provided employment for him. Bobby McCray and Mike McCray spent 10 days landscaping up at the farm — that's a lot of landscaping, and a lot of money. We have a property in McDowell that Steve Shumate put vinyl siding on.

The come-here's are providing employment for the tradespeople in the area. The thing is, you put the turbines up, the come-here's won't come here. They'll go somewhere else. These people that are making money off of the come-here's will not have that type of income any longer. And I think for that reason, you ought to give consideration to denying the application from Mr. McBride.

Thank you.

David Glendinning

Dave Glendinning. I live up in Halterman Hollow. I came here 30 years ago.

I'm going to speak right now also for my wife, Susan, and my daughter. I would sort of like to leave my farm to my daughter one day. It's a real important thing. We've worked real hard for 30 years.

I promised I wasn't going to get up here and say a lot of 'me' and 'I' stuff. There's a lot of that crap gone down tonight, pardon my language. It's not about 'me' and 'I,' it's about 'we.'

I voted for you three guys. I don't usually let people know who the hell I vote for. Robin and Jerry I knew, and I knew your civic interests. I knew that you always put your hearts in this community. Jerry, you're incredible, man. The ball park, the diamond, the lights. You needed lights changed? Jerry was there. You needed sidewalks plowed? Jerry was there. You make good decisions for this place, you always have. Lee, I didn't know you. I voted for you because you're a farmer. And farmers have to make good decisions, there's no choice in the matter. You don't make good decisions, you're gone.

I don't want these things. These things are a travesty. It's the old hippie in me. Let me bring out a little thing — no one's said anything about these mountains. These mountains, these mountains are the oldest mountains in the world. They're old and they've fallen over and their soft, but these people talk about soul — these mountains have incredible soul.

I spend 80 days of the year in these woods hunting — one of the joys of my life. I work most days, but when hunting season comes I spend part of every day in these woods and I hunt. And I know them. And I know what I'm doing and it's an incredible joy. I live here to hunt. If I couldn't hunt I wouldn't live here. I'd be gone. This has nothing to do with wind generators, I'm just saying, this place has an incredible spirit.

These things don't belong here. I'm not begging you, I'm just saying vote in the best interest of the majority of these people. Let us believe again that there's this one man, one vote thing. What everyone has said — and I hate to repeat things — but don't let the money and the power interest rule. I just don't think for \$175,000 a year that's not — you know, I was listening on the radio. I was listening until about 8 o'clock. I was listening on the radio at work, and somebody in this crew used the word 'desperate.' We are not a desperate county. Sorry folks, we're not a desperate county. And if you think we are, you've got something coming.

I want to thank you. I want to thank you for doing the job you do. I can't believe that you guys have put up with this, the hours you've put in, I couldn't do it. and I wouldn't do it. And for that, I have tremendous respect for all of you. Thank you.