

Cohocton lawmakers OK planning board recommendations: Local law could be adopted next month; Zigenfus contemplates stepping aside

By MICHELLE KING - Hornell, NY

COHOCTON - With clarity in mind, the town board agreed planning board recommendations regarding wind farm development were up to par at its Tuesday night meeting.

The recommendations, which were reviewed several times this year, specifically addressed the property insurance value and setback distance sections. The town board voted the height of the tallest tip of a blade - 420 feet - plus another 100 feet was an appropriate setback distance instead of the previous recommendation of one-and-a half times the tallest height of a turbine.

The setback distance ensures if a turbine falls there is enough distance allotted for safety. In addition, the property value assurance plan was eliminated because it was deemed ambiguous.

The recommendations will be part of Local Law No. 2, which will be adopted pending a public hearing sometime next month. The law, Supervisor Jack Zigenfus said, will be implemented to protect the town while regulating commercial development.

Zigenfus said the process has been physically draining.

"It really just turned into a nightmare," he said. "There's no self advantage to being a supervisor, but I do it for the good of the town."

Zigenfus said addressing frequent criticisms from Cohocton Wind Watch, a group concerned about wind farm development, has taken a toll on his everyday life.

"My family and personal health comes long before these wind mills," he said. "I only get paid \$10,000 a year. I don't have time to run other things. I'm in the middle of a budget process, and I can't spend all my time trying to appease these anti-wind people."

On top of that, Zigenfus said he may take hard measures.

"If it's not a better situation, I might step aside myself," he said. "There's only so many hours in a day."

Zigenfus would not be the first to succumb the mountain pressures of the wind farm debate.

Hartsville Supervisor Amy Emerson will resign her position effective Sept. 30, citing the wind farm debate in her community as contributing to her decision.