



Bill and Susan Morehouse

P.O. Box 122, Beechner Road
Cohocton, New York 14826

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Wayne Hunt
PO Box 206, 32 West Avenue
Atlanta, NY 14808

Dear Wayne,

My wife and I began following the wind turbine controversy in Cohocton closely after we were first notified about the proposed project two months ago. Since then we've been doing a lot of personal research into the matter and have attended three well-publicized open meetings in May and June, two sponsored by the Cohocton Wind Watch group and one hosted by the Planning Board.

I understand that many of you have been considering the prospect of establishing an industrial wind turbine plant in Cohocton for a few years and during that time have become quite convinced that it is the right thing to do. It must be very frustrating to have a plan that seems so obviously good to you being challenged vigorously by people who have just found out about it, especially by people who may appear at times to be unpleasant outsiders with uncertain motives and outlandish ideas. Please forgive us for questioning what you thought was already decided.

However, there is a mandated public review that is just starting here, guided by our Town's Zoning laws and New York's SEQR process, which was designed to insure that every citizen who may be effected, for better or worse, has an opportunity to learn about the project and have a say in the ultimate decision. We are fortunate to live in a society based on democratic principle of government which is "of the people, for the people, and by the people." In this light, I would encourage leaseholders and Town officials to embrace the public review process, as uncomfortable as it may be, as a textbook example of the very governmental system of "checks and balances" in which our personal freedom and property rights are protected.

I read your public letter in last week's "Valley News." Along with you, I suspect that some Cohocton residents are concerned about things that might not bother you or me. Unfortunately, in focusing on a few unusual concerns, you seem not to have heard some of the rest of us very well. In fact, I think social deafness is a major obstacle we need to overcome in the days ahead: we need to listen to each other more carefully so that we can genuinely hear what is being said.

Have you visited our new website at www.cohoctonfree.com yet and reviewed the information we've gathered there? One of the first things you'll see is that it wasn't set up by the Cohocton Wind Watch. Another thing you'll find is that it wasn't set up by representatives of the so-called "wind industry" either. It's an earnest plea for rational community discussion, not a sales pitch. I would deeply appreciate your thoughtful analysis of our online presentation and the opportunity to speak with you in more depth as part of the Town's public review process. Please don't try to press the Town Board into a premature decision that ignores the legitimate concerns of many of its residents and landowners.

There are several areas that are open for levelheaded discussion, in my opinion.

- 1) Noise. You dismiss the issue, while misrepresenting the concerns that have been raised. I don't think you really understand the nature of this problem. Could we talk about it at greater depth some time soon?
- 2) Visual impact. There are people who think industrial windmills are attractive and others who think they're ugly. Some folks decorate their yards with pink plastic flamingos, while others consider them to be an intrusion into the beauty of nature. It's OK to have differences of opinion about what looks nice. However, if someone wants to erect 400-foot high flamingos in his yard, it's perfectly appropriate for his neighbors to ask for zoning protection, especially if the statues each broadcast noise at 105.3 dBA from their beaks.
- 3) Property values. The Fenner study described in the "Post-Standard" is profoundly flawed. It reports: "The overall assessed value of Fenner has jumped 45 percent, from \$79.2 million to \$114.8 million. The windmills accounted for about \$19.8 million of the increase. The town's last complete residential reassessment was in the early 1990s, said Priscilla Suits, town assessor." Note that 3/5 of the supposed increase is from the value of the turbines themselves. This leaves a \$15.8 million increase in the actual *assessed* value (in other words the value arbitrarily put on the books by Fenner's tax assessors) of the property itself. But note, this increase is over a 10+ year period from "the early 1990's" until some time very recently. If Fenner's \$79.2 million in property grew by only 3% per year from 1995 to 2005, it would be worth \$106.4 million now, plus the \$19.8 million for the untaxed turbines for a total of \$126.2, not \$114.8 million. Fenner's published property value growth, if the assessed valuations can be trusted at all, is actually less than 2% per year, hardly a "jump." And this assessment is of all properties within a 5-mile radius in an entirely agricultural community, not of residential, recreational, and retirement property in the Finger Lakes that is immediately adjacent to agricultural land.

- 4) Environmental impact. You've obviously and genuinely believed the developer's story about how "green" the energy generated by windmills is and what a difference it will make to the ecology of our planet. I, too, want to help leave my planet in better shape than I found it. However, in addition to the exaggerated numbers being thrown around, there is a lot of very serious and sincere controversy about how to go about doing this.

- 5) Faith. You've said, "People of Cohocton, put your faith in your planning board, the town board and most of all put your faith in the families that have lived on the land and worked the soil for generations Do you really think they would do anything to hurt the town of Cohocton or the surrounding area?" I honestly don't think that anyone on the Planning Board, the Town Board, or in the farming families of Cohocton would ever intentionally do anything to harm our community. However, the faith of our fathers starts with "In God We Trust" and ends with faith in a democratic process that involves everyone in the community, not just one established segment. Let's take time to open our ears and hearts and let the process do its mysterious work, Wayne. You may just find that those you thought were your enemies turn out to be some of your Town's best friends.

Please contact me at your earliest convenience so that we can meet personally to talk further about this matter that is so close to both of our hearts.

God bless you!

