

12/13/13

Friends:

The Carteret County Commissioners meeting today regarding the Mill Pond project, was an eclectic affair. This is the best of my recollection as to a summary of what transpired.

To begin with, the intended point for the meeting was to address the serious deficiencies identified in the county's Tall Structure Ordinance — including those created by the revision approved two weeks ago.

The possibility that the developer could submit an application at any time, and then be bound by that much-less-than-optimum law, was the urgency for calling this special meeting right away.

The plan was to also vote on adopting a wind energy Moratorium, to give the County 60 days to write the words necessary to make those changes properly.

To bring this meeting about, either the Commissioner Chairman, or four Commissioners, are needed to call it. This came about due to the later.

It was up to the Commissioners as to whether public comments would be allowed, and the expectation was that the Commissioners *would* be interested in hearing what local citizens had to say at this dedicated, one-topic meeting.

This was the setting at 10 AM in a packed, overflowing-into-the-halls gathering on Friday the 13th. (This photo is well before the meeting started.)

The size and enthusiasm of the crowd seemed to have the Chairman on edge, as he decided a few minutes before the start of the meeting, not to allow any public comments. This was not well-received by citizens who had taken time out of their busy schedules to be heard on this matter.

Then the Chairman started by saying that nothing would be decided today, and declared that this was going to be an "educational" session for the public, as to the "process" (where he primarily focused on the new state law, H484).

This maneuver was puzzling for several reasons:

- 1 - This was not what the Commissioners who setup the meeting had asked for,
- 2 - There already was a website available to the public that explained MUCH more,
- 3 - There already had been two public forums explaining what was going on,
- 4 - As one Commissioner asked: if the Chairman was interested in educating the public why didn't he do this two months ago?

Commissioner Robinson immediately took serious issue with the "nothing would be decided today" part, saying that he had been one of the first who officially had asked for this meeting. When he made that call he informed the County Manager that he would be introducing a Wind Moratorium. He said that the CM said nothing about that not being able to be approved today. Commissioner Robinson then passionately elaborated about the importance of fixing this situation.

The Chairman and CM said it was a misunderstanding, and that all that could be done today about the Moratorium was to schedule it for a hearing in 2+ weeks. Later in the meeting a Moratorium resolution was unanimously passed. The scheduled date for the moratorium public hearing is January 2nd, 6 PM, location to be determined.

The Chairman proceeded with his education plan, which consisted of some slides. There were quirks here too:

- 1 - He didn't go through several of the slides that were prepared,
- 2 - The 484 "process" slide (what he said was most important) was almost indecipherable,
- 3 - Some misunderstandings were conveyed as fact (e.g. that there is a federal green energy mandate),
- 4 - The message seemed to be "don't blame me for everything as a lot is out of my control".

This is a misunderstanding as our best line of defense is at the local level.

These are some of the points I noted in the Chairman's talk (which had several good parts):

- 1 - The NCUC application was pending, which will entail a public hearing.
- 2 - The developer won't submit an application to the County until after the NCUC part is done.
- 3 - The developer won't submit an application to the County until after the "6 month 484 process" is done (*I question this*).
- 4 - There was an 11/5/13 DENR sponsored "Scoping meeting" attended by Mr. Overman and Mr. Jennings.

This is a misunderstanding as that was not a "scoping meeting" as defined in 484. The first scheduled 484 meeting is a "Pre-Application meeting" — and the head DENR person stated that the meeting was not even that. It was an unscheduled pre-pre-application meeting.

- 5 - In a meeting with Duke, they acknowledged that they had not done a Mill Pond community economic assessment.
- 6 - Weyerhaeuser stated that they wouldn't do anything to harm the military.
Hmmm.
- 7 - That NC is the only state with a wind energy permitting process. (*That is a misunderstanding — e.g. here is [one](#) from 2010*).

8 - ACT has officially taken a position against Mill Pond (*good*).

9 - He showed a spreadsheet of what other NC counties have for ordinances.
(*I've asked for a copy of this.*)

10-In defense of the County removing the Decommissioning surety requirement, he said that 484 covered this.

To believe that these are equivalent is a misunderstanding, as what was in the prior county ordinance (\$200k per turbine) was a far cry from what is in 484: "The applicant ... shall establish financial assurance that will ensure that sufficient funds are available for decommissioning".

In my opinion, the best part of the presentation was when he read a report about the severe consequences Mill Pond causes Cherry Point runway 32L. There was an excellent amount of detail and several grisly scenarios were identified (like mid-air collisions). (*I've asked for a copy of this.*)

After the Moratorium part, Commissioner Comer objected to the agenda for the meeting, saying he had specifically asked that the issues with the County's Ordinance be discussed. With the Chairman's blessing he then explained why he felt that dozens of 500± foot tall industrial machines would be a detriment to Carteret tourism, property values, and the health & safety of its citizens.

He then gave his reasons why an economic study, and aviation study, and restricted turbine height limits were advisable. He also complained about the fact that he had been asking for a meeting with the Planners about this Ordinance for well over a month, and it had yet to happen.

Commissioner Crittenton said that (since she is a health professional, who lives near where turbines will be) she has been researching the health aspects. What she has found, especially with regards to infrasound, has been very disturbing. She explained how infrasound could be severely debilitating. She also was concerned about safety, especially turbine fires. She said such fires in their wooded area could be very problematic.

Representative McElraft was asked if she had any comments, and she expressed optimism that the community would come up with a good law.

The Chairman said that citizens could make their comments at the upcoming regular Commissioner meeting, on Monday December 16th. Our advice is this: if you just want to say "I support the Bullet Points" save that until the important January 2nd meeting. If you have more detailed comments about the process, etc, feel free to make them on Monday evening.

The meeting was adjourned after about two hours...
john droz, jr.