

## Letter to the Editor

### An ill wind blows

As a resident of Eddy County, I have some concerns on the new wind farm being planned. I was told by a PRC Wind (project managers of the wind farm) representative that it has gotten larger. Are you sure you will not be surrounded with these towers? What about phase 2 or 3?

This wind farm will not only change the view of the landscape, what will happen to our property values and taxes? Will our property resale values go down? Granted, area schools and towns might benefit from some extra tax revenue; will county residents be taxed off of their property? The proposed tax dollars are coming from somewhere.

I googled the amount of concrete and steel each tower footing requires. Depending on size, big towers require around 500 cubic yards of concrete. That's 60 8-yard trucks times two for a round trip, now multiply that by the first 90 towers. Will this added volume of traffic be coming down your road? Will these new workers slow down for kids and grandkids, pets, traffic, farm animals? Will they spray to keep the dust down? Can we have the speed reduced in front of county residents that are close to the road?

I was given a paper from PRC Wind dealing with the health effects of wind farms. I was entertained to see they have a new phrase, "nocebo effect": "Studies have found that a 'nocebo effect' can take place, opposite of the well-known 'placebo' effect. The nocebo effect describes a situation in which individuals who are led to expect physical symptoms may actually experience these symptoms, whether or not the supposed cause of the symptoms is actually present. In this case, increased exposure to misinformation about wind ..." I stopped along the road on my way to Wimbledon, amazed by farmsteads surrounded by towers. I estimated the 1,400 foot zoning ordinance, the distance required to be offset from a dwelling now in effect for Eddy County and listened. I can't fathom trying to sleep with my windows open on a warm summer night. Humming that never stops was very audible. Imagine the flashing shadows from the blades on a sunny day in your living room.

I was told by a PRC representative that the noise created by a wind tower cannot be over 100 decibels at a dwelling. I hope either I misunderstood or he misspoke. According to [www.chem.purdue.edu](http://www.chem.purdue.edu), 100 decibels is like a lawn mower or jackhammer.

The planned wind farm covers over 42,000 acres in two counties. It is surprising that the public is not kept abreast of this project, especially those of us that will be having the nocebo effect hoisted upon us.

(I will not even mention several years ago when there were thousands and thousands of birds staying on the south section of 23rd and 281.)

If the county zoning offset variance is going to be changed or the approval of a wind farm, why not notify the public and have a discussion, write it up in the paper before the meeting?

This brings me to the April 29, 2024 front page of the Transcript: "County townships at odds over land use authority." I, as a rural resident, would like to see my township maintain control of township zoning. On March 24, 2017, the wind tower zoning setback was officially changed to 1400 feet, "and will further promote the wind energy opportunities for Eddy County, N.D." per the zoning ordinance. What about representing the county residents' right to enjoy their property? Money is involved but that should not be at the expense of a county resident's property and resale value. Where is the fairness? Is the zoning not to protect all county residents' well-being?

Why the refusal to have public meetings and explain to us county residents how this wind farm is fair or right for all of us? What's next, reducing the offset to the dwelling even more? County residents should be taken into consideration, not just landowners who probably live nowhere close to the wind farm. Last thing I would want or expect is a wind tower springing up in my backyard without the ability to have my voice heard over the destruction of my property value and enjoyment of life.

As of 2024 many counties in the U.S. are rejecting wind farms: "But opposed residents said the project would harm the local economy, reduce property values, affect human health," hurt wildlife and lead to the loss of "quiet nights, dark skies and the scenic nature of the region." To view the whole article: <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/investigations/2024/02/04/green-energy-nation-widebans/71841275007/>

All county residents should be demanding to know where these towers are going to be erected. Once a wind tower is in your backyard, too late. Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh says the 2 a.m. nocebo effect.

David Fite  
Sheyenne, N.D.



### Clearing the air

by Amy Wobbema

I'm writing this column as a citizen and member of the board of governors for W-E Wind, LLC, the local organization that has led the wind energy effort in Eddy County.

I was the economic development director for New Rockford when the idea of a wind farm first floated into our orbit nearly 18 years ago.

During my first few weeks on the job, I met with every NRABC (then known as NRACBC) board member about their ideas. Tracy Henningsgard, one of the board members at the time, brought up wind energy in my very first meeting with him in 2006. I recall that he talked about the mutual benefit: the potential to generate tax revenue for the county, city and school district and to provide supplemental income to landowners. We would also be producing a source of renewable energy capable of providing electricity to thousands of homes, farms and businesses, he noted.

We formed W-E Wind, LLC in 2009, after holding public meetings in 2008 and hearing a great deal of interest from residents and landowners in both Eddy and Wells counties.

Since then, community leaders, residents and landowners have all participated in this project. We've received a groundswell of support from people of all walks of life.

Since the beginning, public meetings have been held to consider varied opinions about how to balance the interest of landowners who wanted to pursue wind energy development with the wishes of those who preferred not to participate.

Throughout the past 15 years, the public has been invited to be a part of this process over and over again. I've answered many questions at kitchen tables, at community centers and in both my economic development and newspaper offices.

In regard to ordinances, Wells County took the lead, developing and enacting a wind energy-friendly zoning ordinance in 2009.

It took eight more years for Eddy County to enact its zoning ordinance, but the result was the same. In April 2017, Eddy County approved the ordinance that is currently on the books, which provides a 1,440 feet minimum setback – that means no wind turbine will ever be installed within a quarter-mile of any occupied residence, and in some cases the distance will be greater.

If there was ever any indication that the majority of landowners did not support this project, we would have stopped. The governors of W-E Wind, LLC have spent countless hours advancing this project, facing setback after setback.

Members of W-E Wind were present in 2017 when the zoning ordinance regarding wind energy development was last changed. Two public meetings were held, and the current ordinance reflects the result of those conversations. We attended the second meeting on April 24, which had more than 40 people in attendance. It was standing room only in the basement of the courthouse that day, and the discussion was robust and productive.

As for our development partner, PRC Wind, they are here because WE invited them. This is not the case of an outside company forcing a project on a community against its will. We sought them out, pitched our project to them and developed a partnership with them.

We have landowners representing over 40,000 acres of land in Eddy and Wells County who have continually expressed support. Many have signed documents of interest and participation three times over the past several years, and have recently renewed their lease agreements for this

project.

Right now work is underway to develop a site plan for the wind farm – which means PRC Wind will mark on a map where they propose to place each turbine, underground cable, power pole and road. Once that is ready, the project will enter the permitting process. This is a lengthy but important procedure to ensure that the project will be built in a way that is financially feasible for the development company, generates the appropriate amount of power for the purchaser and takes landowner and area residents' wishes into account.

The county will be asked to approve the placement of each turbine and road, and hold public hearings to receive comments from the public on the proposed project. Upon township and county approval, the project will advance to the Public Service Commission, where numerous more hearings will be held to obtain approval from state and federal agencies.

Some have asked, will it be too late to make changes once these permitting hearings begin? Absolutely not. A recent wind project before the Public Service Commission saw 77 relocations during its permitting process, again done to ensure a balance between public and private interest.

This has always been a community wind project. The goal is to provide economic development opportunities that will not only financially benefit landowners but also our local government entities through payments in lieu of property tax. The owner of the wind farm – not the landowners – will pay taxes to the county, city, townships and school district, to the tune of about \$1.25 million per year based on recent estimates.

The landowners, meanwhile, will receive an estimated \$42.5 million dollars in lease payments over the course of 20 years.

As the publisher of this newspaper, I purposely stay off of government boards so that I can maintain impartiality. My number one priority is to inform and educate readers and generate productive discussion about community issues.

Yet, when it comes to wind energy development, I have a conflict of interest. I have been up front about that since the beginning of my tenure as publisher.

I filed the paperwork to establish W-E Wind, LLC. A simple business search on the Secretary of State's website will reveal that I am named as an organizer on the business's formation documents. I am also the registered agent for W-E Wind, LLC.

Some may remember the editorial I wrote about wind energy for this newspaper some seven years ago, on May 8, 2017, right after the public hearing that established the quarter-mile setback for wind turbines.

I am fully aware that there are some who do not agree with this project. That said, I also know from experience that no project worth doing is done without controversy. That's the American way. W-E Wind, LLC is made up of local people, landowners and community leaders, all with one goal in mind: to build a project that the community can be proud of.

Yes, some people might be able to hear the whir of the blades if they are standing right underneath a turbine, and others may see flickers or shadows from the blades at certain times, again though, within the "orbit" of the turbine. That's why we have setbacks – our county's rules are in place so that a landowner can benefit from development he chooses for his own land without creating a nuisance to his neighbor.

Let's continue to engage in civil discourse. Read the ordinance. Ask the questions, and respect your neighbor's difference of opinion. If there's a way to address that concern, then PRC Wind will do it, especially if it moves the project ahead.

I expect more discussion as we move forward, and I look ahead to the day when we see the wind energy industry thrive in Eddy County. It will be a long time coming, but well worth the wait.

## Letter to the Editor

### Letter in support of Representative Jon Nelson

I recently left the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services where I proudly served as the Chief Financial Officer for four years. I had the honor and privilege to serve with some phenomenal state employees and state legislators.

One of the best of the best is Jon Nelson, a representative from the remarkable city of Rugby. Hailing from Surrey, North Dakota, I recall fondly driving through town as a child and always stopping at the café at the heart of North Dakota. Their chili, apple pie and ice cream were a delight. Having served with a few in the Army and knowing a few from Rugby, I can attest to their deep pride in their community. Jon Nelson, in particular, stands out for his unwavering dedication to serving his community.

I'm not a registered Republican, Democrat or Independent. I guess you could say I'm a registered American if there was such a thing. While serving in the military as an enlisted soldier, non-commissioned and commissioned officer, I had the opportunity to serve with many great leaders. One being General Hugh Shelton, who was the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. I could add many more to this list. One of those on my list of great leaders and one who is focused on his community and looking at how he might help others succeed is Jon Nelson.

I'm proud to say that Jon Nelson is one of the best leaders I've worked with professionally. He's a man of character, and his leadership philosophy aligns with mine, and that is to do the right thing, the right way, and at the right time. As the former Chief Financial Officer of the Department of Health and Human Services, I observed Representative Nelson making tough decisions and the right decisions to ensure the General (North Dakota dollars) and federal funds were allocated for the appropriate programs to help improve the lives of the most vulnerable. Keeping in mind that every North Dakotan is impacted by this department, over 340,000 North Dakota citizens are directly affected by the products and services this department provides to those that are the most vulnerable. A staggering fact and one that I didn't understand before taking on the CFO role. Representative Nelson does understand the size of the budget and is diligent in the administration of the budget and how it's deployed. We are fortunate to have him chair the Budget Section – Human Resources Division which oversees the Department of Health and Human Services budget.

Of all the legislators involved with our budget he knows and understands the budgeting process, allocations of funds the best. Based on his full understanding of how to contain costs and to ensure all funds demonstrate an acceptable Return on Investment (ROI) and Added Value Proposition (AVP) to the citizens of North Dakota if he were in my district I would vote for him without reservation or concern. Not once did I see him decide for personal gain. He was focused on caring for those in his district and state and said that often and his actions demonstrated this. He would tell us I must do what's right for the people he represented. If folks are saying he didn't do that, then they either don't know him or don't know the details behind the work that went into the planning and implementation of the DHHS bill and budget. I was there and observed him and worked with him for four years. If people are saying this then they're misinformed.

I rarely if ever write letters to the editor and never had written a letter about an elected official until now. In Jon Nelson's case, I know he's a man of character and high ethical standards, and he knows and understands how to lead the efforts of the committees he serves on or participates with at every level. I served my country for 20 years in the U.S. Army, worked for the state of North Dakota, which I call home, and have run many businesses after my Army career. I can say without hesitation that you'll find no better person than Representative Jon Nelson in North Dakota. This isn't a political endorsement although it may appear that way. This is one North Dakotan supporting another North Dakotan who has given countless hours for the benefit of others so they might succeed and build a better life for themselves and their family.

Arnie Strebe  
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Bisblox  
Mandan, N.D.

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