

**DEKALB COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**June 25, 2009**

The DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission (RPC) met on June 25, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. in the DeKalb County Administration Building, Conference Room East, in Sycamore, Illinois. In attendance were Commission members Cookie Aldis, Frank Altmaier, Ken Andersen, Mike Becker, Bill Beverley, Rich Gentile, Dan Godhardt, Derek Hiland, Martha May, Don Pardridge, Suzanne Sedlacek, and Suzanne Fahnestock (Maple Park). Staff included Paul Miller and Rebecca Von Drasek.

1. **Roll Call** -- *Commission members Becky Morphey, Bill Nicklas, and Jerry Thompson were noted absent.*
2. **Approval of Agenda** -- *Ms. Aldis moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Mr. Andersen, and the motion carried unanimously.*
3. **Approval of Minutes** -- *Ms. Aldis moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Mr. Pardridge, and the motion carried unanimously.*
4. **FPL Wind Farm Project Presentation**

Mr. Miller made a presentation to the Commission regarding the County's recent review of the application by FPL Energy Illinois Wind LLC (FPL), a subsidiary of NextEra Energy, for a Special Use Permit to allow 119 wind turbines in unincorporated DeKalb County. Mr. Miller led the Commission through a brief background of the project and then explained the process by which the County vetted the application. He explained that a Special Use Permit generally requires a public hearing and recommendation by the Hearing Officer, a review by the Planning and Zoning Committee and recommendation, and then a vote by the County Board. The Hearing Officer heard 26 hours of testimony on the topic during three public hearing sessions. Mr. Miller emphasized that the project had many objectors and many supporters. He highlighted the evolution of the public hearings and staff's efforts to balance the need of the public to be heard and the right of the applicant to due process. Mr. Miller noted that the State's Attorney's Office referred the application back to public hearing after the applicant altered their proposal to include various conditions of approval. Mr. Miller summarized the conditions the applicant agreed to which cover various aspects of the project including the required permits, road maintenance, wildlife evaluation, and other conditions.

Mr. Andersen, who is Chairman of the County's Planning and Zoning Committee, explained that when the application went to the Committee the conditions to the agreement were further amended and then the applicant received a unanimous recommendation for approval from the Committee.

Mr. Miller concluded by noting that the approval by the County Board capped a public review and approval process that lasted over six months, and constituted perhaps the largest single zoning project undertaken in County history. The County Board approved the project on a vote of 16 "yes" and four "no".

Mr. Beverley asked what was the benefit to the County. Mr. Miller explained that the applicant stressed the benefits to the County were property taxes, jobs in construction and renewable energy, and the opportunity to be involved in a national effort to develop renewable energy sources.

Mr. Miller noted that the review and approval process was difficult due to the heightened emotions that the project evoked, especially with the objectors who believed this project would destroy their way of life.

Ms. May briefed the Commission on the Village of Lee's review and negotiations regarding the six proposed wind turbines within its jurisdiction. The Commission then discussed the need for a municipality to act in a timely manner on applications for zoning actions. Mr. Miller suggested that the Village of Lee confer with their attorney regarding that time line.

Mr. Miller also noted that the negotiations completed by the County do not effect other jurisdictions, to their benefit or detriment.

Mr. Altmaier asked how the County determined what to include in the negotiated terms. Mr. Miller responded that the conditions attached to the project were inclusive of the County terms from the 2003 application and he asserted that it may be one of the more demanding agreements ever adopted for a wind farm.

Mr. Miller concluded with the observation that wind energy is nationally embraced and locally resisted. He stressed that property owner rights were at the heart of the debate and the balance between the individual versus the collective was measured by this application. He noted that a lawsuit may still be filed within 90 days of the County Board's decision and promised to keep the Commission informed about the project as it develops.

Ms. Sedlacek asked what had been the response to the accusation that farmland was removed from production. Staff noted that was one of the concerns that had been raised and the response had been that of the 22,000 acres involved the final project should only occupy approximately 200 acres.

Mr. Becker asked about the "Temporary Suspension" being considered by the County. Mr. Miller explained that the County was considering a moratorium, or temporary suspension, of any new wind farm or wind farm expansion, as a way of allowing an assessment of the real impacts of an actual wind farm project. If approved, no new wind farms or expansions of existing wind farms would be approved by the County for a period of three years. At the end of the suspension period, a report on the actual impacts would be gathered by the County.

Ms. Aldis clarified that the suspension would only go into effect after the first turbine was up and running.

Mr. Beverley asked about the County's fee schedule and future inspections. Mr. Miller explained that the County will charge \$550 per turbine for Building Permits, and \$300 per Site

Development Permit. This is considerably less than some other jurisdictions, but reflects the County's actual cost of processing and issuing these Building Permits. The Commission briefly discussed the fee method. Staff also noted that annual inspections may be required by federal and state agencies.

Mr. Andersen reiterated that heighten emotions surrounding this application made the decision very difficult. He added that he had benefitted from site visits to operating wind farms prior to making his decision.

Ms. Fahnestock asked about the delivery routes of equipment and materials associated with wind turbine construction. Staff assured her that the townships road agreements include details on the truck traffic generated by the project. Staff also pointed out that the entrance to the County by the trucks would be made off of Interstate 39.

Mr. Andersen regretted not encouraging the purchase of the gravel from local sites to keep the sale tax local. Mr. Miller added that the company had conducted a competitive bid process in awarding the gravel and trucking contracts.

Mr. Hiland noted that there was going to be a general increase in the interest about constructing green technologies in residential areas, and observed that many municipalities may not have regulations in place to accommodate such structures. He mentioned that the City of DeKalb was considering a moratorium on such structures until the City can determine what types of regulations need to be in place.

Mr. Beverley noted that Sandwich had received its first request to construct a residential wind tower, and added that the City was considering its options.

Ms. Sedlacek noted her support for green technologies and pointed out that these mechanisms can already be found in practice in many locations throughout the state.

Ms. Aldis noted that Cortland just recently amended their ordinance to allow for solar power, rain barrels, rain gardens and similar technologies. She also noted that a property owner would be responsible for wind easements (i.e. agreements to protect their wind access from future improvements).

Mr. Gentile asked that small wind energy systems and other green technologies regulation be placed on a future agenda as a discussion topic for the Commission. He also praised the County for its exhaustive efforts to contact and listen to the general public regarding this project. He went on to encourage every community in DeKalb County to make similar efforts with projects proposed within their jurisdictions.

## **5. Municipal Development Projects / Issues**

Mr. Gentile asked the Commission members for their support of the City of Genoa's endeavors to receive Amtrak service. He mentioned that a feasibility study had been preformed and that he would be forwarding a letter to each community asking for their support.

Mr. Andersen informed the Commission that the County had received a request to expand the landfill, noting that the County had approved a Host Fee Agreement in March. He noted that the public hearings would most likely take place in February of 2010. He informed the Commission members that the landfill "torch" has been moved off of I88 and that new monitoring wells have been dug. He also noted that the methane released from the site has increased and is close to the minimum 1200 cfm (cubic feet per minute) which is needed to put in equipment to use the gas to generate electricity.

Mr. Beverly asked about the capacity of the landfill. Mr. Miller noted in the current design the landfill has approximately seven more years. With the proposed expansion, it would have approximately 40 years.

Ms. Sedlacek explained that the Kishwaukee Doctors Clinic was approved in the Village of Waterman, to be located near the intersection of Route 23 and Route 30.

Mr. Beverley relayed information for the City of Sandwich regarding the continued work at the water park and the difficulties of the local car dealerships.

Ms. Aldis noted that there were signs on Route 38 announcing upcoming road construction. She also acknowledged Cortland's steady building permit applications due to the efforts of local developers to sell lots.

Ms. Fahnestock introduced herself as a new trustee from the Village of Maple Park. She noted that Kathleen Curtis was the new Village President, and also announced to the Commission that the Village would begin a search for a new Village Attorney in the next week.

**6. Next Meeting Date -- After a brief discussion the Commission agreed that the next RPC meeting would be August 27, 2009 at 7:00 pm in the Conference Room East.**

Mr. Miller also noted that at the next meeting the Commission would discuss the Sustainable Watershed Action Team (SWAT) Seminar which is still to be scheduled for mid-September.

**7. Adjournment -- Mr. Pardridge motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mr. Tompkins, and the motion carried unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,

Rich Gentile  
Chairman, DeKalb County Regional Planning Commission