

Company makes public outreach for wind project in Yates, Somerset



Photos by Tom Rivers

Dan Fitzgerald (second from left), project manager for Apex Clean Energy, meets with residents during a public meeting today at the Yates Town Hall. He is joined by Dahvi Wilson, Apex communications manager, at left.

By Tom Rivers, Editor Posted 9 December 2014

LYNDONVILLE – Apex Clean Energy would like to build 60 to 68 wind turbines Yates and Somerset, structures that could tower nearly 600 feet in the two rural lakeshore towns.

The projects would bring the prospect of significant revenue to the towns, school districts and Orleans and Niagara counties, while also paying landowners to have the turbines on their land.

“Both the landowners and towns stand to profit,” said Taylor Quarles, development manager for Apex.

“Lighthouse Wind” would generate 200 megawatts of power, enough to power 59,000 homes. Each turbine would generate about 3 megawatts of power, up from the 1.5 to 1.8 megawatts with turbines about a decade ago.

The company is in the early stages of the project. It has lined up leases with some landowners, but will need more to make the project a reality, Quarles said.

Dudley Chaffee is a dairy farmer with land in both towns. He has been approached to lease land for turbines. He hasn’t signed off on a 30-year lease.

“It looks like a good deal,” he said at an informational meeting today at the Yates Town Hall.

Chaffee has dairy farmer friends in Wyoming County. They told him the construction portion of the projects can be disruptive to the land. But once the turbines are up, they take up a small footprint and the farms coexist with the structures.

“One guy in Wyoming County told me he’d do it again in a minute,” Chaffee said.



More than 60 people attended to the meeting to look over information from Apex Clean Energy.

Cathi Orr lived in Orangeville, a Wyoming County town. She moved to Somerset last January to get away from the turbines, which she said are noisy.

“They go ‘thump, thump,” she said. “They make a creaky noise.”

She had 21 within a 1 ½ miles of her house. She was part of the Clear Skies Over Orangeville group that opposed the turbines. She knew Somerset had been approached before about a wind farm, but she thought that project had gone away.

Apex wasn't involved the other project. The company is eyeing a different project with taller turbines. The added height allows the turbines to reach faster moving wind.

Turbines with blades that peak about 400 to 450 feet, like many in Wyoming County, weren't quite tall enough to get the stronger, more consistent wind, Apex said.

At a higher distance, there is likely enough wind, Apex officials said. They have one meteorological tower up on Lakeshore Road in Somerset to test wind strength. Quarles said they could put up four or five more in the target area that is west of Route 63 in Yates and most of Somerset. The project eyes the northern half of the towns, where there is lots of open farmland, another plus for the project, said Dan Fitzgerald, project manager.

A major transmission line also runs through Somerset, which would allow Apex to tap in and get its power to the market. That is another attraction for siting the project in Somerset and western Yates, he said.

Fitzgerald was one of four Apex officials at a public information meeting today at Yates

Town Hall. The company had a similar meeting in Barker in October. Apex will have more informational meetings to explain the project and its benefits to the community, Fitzgerald said.

“This is in the very beginning of the project,” he said today at the Yates meeting. “We’re still a ways out.”

The company is going through a required 150-day public involvement effort. To see that 60-page public involvement plan, [click here](#).

Fitzgerald said the company will continue to meet with the public after the 150-day period, which started Oct. 31. The company will reach out to the Amish and Mennonite communities, as well as other residents and officials.

“The goal is to make sure everyone in the community knows about the project,” Quarles said.

Apex will follow the public involvement period with a preliminary scoping document that would assess environmental impacts, including potential harm to birds, wildlife and other issues. The company will need to consult with the FFA on flight pattern impacts, especially with the Niagara Falls Air Reserve Station.

The company will need to secure approvals through local, state and federal agencies. Fitzgerald said construction on the project could start in 2018 if the agencies, landowners and experts all see Yates and Somerset as a good spot for the project.

For more on Apex, [click here](#).