

## City & Region

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### Energy firm to hold open house on proposed Somerset wind farm

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Updated: October 11, 2014, 09:56 PM Published: October 10, 2014, 05:17 PM

BARKER – Apex Clean Energy is considering a wind energy project in the towns of Somerset and Yates that ultimately could provide enough energy to power up to 59,000 homes.

The company will hold an open house from 3 to 7 p.m. Monday at the Barker Fire Hall, 1660 Quaker Road, to formally introduce the idea of the Lighthouse Wind Project to the public.

Apex, a renewable energy firm based in Charlottesville, Va., is studying the feasibility of constructing a 201-megawatt wind farm in Somerset in Niagara County and Yates in Orleans County, areas that hug the Lake Ontario shoreline. The power would be delivered into the New York electrical grid.

The Somerset Planning Board awarded a permit Oct. 2 for the firm to erect a 60-meter tower on private land in roughly the middle of Apex's targeted area, to collect meteorological data. Apex hopes to have the tower installed within a month, according to Dan Fitzgerald, the company's New York project manager.

He said it is too early to say how many turbines are planned or where they would be located, but with turbines capable of producing 2.75 to 3.3 megawatts of energy apiece, he said a rough estimate would be 67 turbines.

"The company is doing its due diligence – there are no site plans yet," said Somerset Supervisor Daniel Engert.

Engert said the open house is an effort for the private company to "reach out to the town and introduce themselves to the community" and that the town is not involved in the event.

"This is just an opportunity to give an overview of the process," Engert said. "There is no specific, proposed plan yet."

Fitzgerald said Monday's open house begins the five-month period of public involvement required by the state Public Service Commission's Article 10 siting process for electrical generation "before we can go on to the next step."

"The open house is not a presentation," Fitzgerald noted. "We will be available for the public to learn about wind energy and the permitting process."

Apex representatives have been meeting with landowners and town officials for nearly a year in an effort to gauge local interest for a project they now say could create hundreds of jobs and significant local spending during construction; up to 10 full-time local jobs for operations and maintenance; and 30 years of annual revenue for county and local landowners, totaling millions of dollars.

Engert had earlier listed three reasons his town would be attractive to would-be developers. The first reason is the ample wind on the shoreline; second was the town's largely agricultural base, making it easier for a company to acquire leases from fewer property owners, who typically own large, open tracts of farmland; and third was the fact that the town already has an ordinance in place that makes it open to wind energy development.

Apex officials also noted the area's existing high-voltage power lines and history of power production.

Fitzgerald said Yates also has a local law in place making it open to wind energy development.

Landowners who host turbines on their property – each one typically requires less than a half-acre – would receive annual lease payments to continue over the projected 25-year lifespan of the wind farm.

“We are starting to have the conversation now and we need to see what the desires of the community are,” Engert said. “This is an exciting time.”

According to Apex, wind energy accounted for nearly 50 percent of all new electricity capacity installed in the U.S. in 2012. Company officials also noted that establishment of a wind farm is a lengthy process involving community input, studies and permitting, and that, typically, it takes two years or more before construction can take place.

Apex has established a website for the project, [www.lighthousewind.com](http://www.lighthousewind.com) (<http://www.lighthousewind.com>).

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