



## Community forum planned for Lighthouse Wind project on Oct. 2

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YATES — A community forum on Oct. 2 will outline the proposed Lighthouse Wind project.

“We have a preliminary turbine array that we will be basing the final field studies, project design and permit application on,” said Paul Williamson, Lighthouse Wind senior development manager on Wednesday. “We are excited to release this information to all stakeholders, to seek input and answer questions. We feel an obligation to share as much information as possible with our stakeholders. The project goals are to prepare and file a final application this winter.”

The forum will take place 7 p.m. at the Lyndonville Central School District Stroyan Auditorium.

Williamson’s comments were in response to a request for comment from The Daily News after members of the POWER Coalition (Protecting {Lake} Ontario’s Waterfront, Environment, and Resources) released a statement they met with state lawmakers regarding the project.

The Lighthouse Wind Project — if approved and constructed — would build 70 wind turbines in the towns of Yates and Somerset. Each would be about 600 feet tall, with the entire project generating 201 megawatts of renewable energy, or enough to power more than 53,000 average New York homes.

The company maintains the project would generate millions of dollars for the region over the course of about 30 years, with additional indirect economic benefits greatly exceeding that number.

Apex Clean Energy originally filed its paperwork with the state for the project back in 2014, and it has generated resistance from both town governments along with many residents — about 66 percent of about 1,200 respondents, according to a survey conducted by the Town of Yates in 2015.

The Town of Yates unanimously approved amendments to its zoning law in February which prohibit wind energy conversion systems from being built within three miles of the Lake Ontario shoreline. It would also prohibit them within a half-mile or six times the total height the turbine — whichever is greater — from residences, public roads, town boundaries and the project property line; and within one mile from villages, hamlets, churches and cemeteries.

The Town of Somerset has also passed similar restrictions.

The POWER Coalition said it met with State Senator Rob Ort, R-Tonawanda, on Monday in Batavia.

“The meeting was requested by Senator Ortt who said the project is not going to be isolated,” the POWER release reads. “The green energy goals set up by Gov. Cuomo will require significant construction of industrial wind turbines to meet the current and future demand. It’s essential that local communities have input before these massive structures start popping up across Upstate and Western New York State — as is currently planned.”

POWER members said they are not opposed to renewable energy, but they are against the siting of this particular project, especially along a major bird migratory flyway.

Coalition member Brian Dugan of the New York State Ornithological Association, said concerns include siting of the industrial wind turbines along a major bird migratory route, access roads to turbines resulting in bird habitat fragmentation and the noise that will result from operation of the turbines. Discussion also centered on a recent Apex mailer to local residents, which POWER members said downplayed the number of birds that are killed by industrial wind turbines, claiming it is only a fraction of deaths compared to the number caused by other activities.

“They grossly underestimate the number of birds that are killed by wind turbines,” said Shawn Graff, Great Lakes Region vice president of the American Bird Conservancy and another POWER member in the organization’s news release. “The study deals only with song birds, not other birds such as raptors and water fowl, water birds and gamebirds. Some of the study data cited are as old as 2000 and are woefully out of date.”

The POWER coalition consists of 12 different organizations including Save Ontario Shores, the Orleans County Federation of Sportsmen’s Clubs, the Genesee Valley Audubon Society, the Niagara USA Chamber and the Hawk Migration Association of North America, among others.

“We are grateful for the support of elected officials at every level,” said Pam Atwater, president of Save Ontario Shores and POWER member, in the release. “They are very engaged with this important issue. They have provided us with invaluable guidance, advocacy and encouragement as we continue our relentless effort to stop Apex from going ahead with this ill-conceived project.”