

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE WASHINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS PUBLIC HEARING HELD WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2021**

At 7:02 p.m. Chairperson Richard Young called to order in special session a meeting of the Washington County Board of Supervisors which took place at the Washington County Conservation Education Center, 2943 Highway 92, Ainsworth, Iowa. Items on the agenda included the following: approval of agenda; public hearing regarding proposed Washington County Ordinance 21-01 whose intended purpose is to provide for the special valuation of wind energy conversion property pursuant to Iowa Code Chapter 427B.26; adjourn. Supervisors Jack Seward, Bob Yoder, and Stan Stoops were also in attendance.

Others attending were: James Jennings, SE Iowa Union; Sam McIntosh, KCII Radio; Jacob Thorius, County Engineer; Mary Audia, WEDG; and Citizens Dave Skubal, John and Joanne Roetlin, Greg and Heather Koch, Lyle and Stephanie Sexton, Kurt Dallmeyer, Marc Knupp, Mark English, Kevin Erpelding, Austin Bayliss, Joel Huber, Dick Green, Don Bayliss, Michael Zahs, Brad Sheetz, Tim Stout, Marcus Fedler, Alan and Joy Oldfield, Keith Hora, Rob and Jean Stout, Duane Hammen, Tom Vittetoe, Mike Hammen, Larry Miller, Abe Miller, Gregory Christensen, and Brandon Freel.

All motions were passed unanimously by those Supervisors in attendance unless noted otherwise.

On motion by Yoder, seconded by Stoops, the Board voted to approve the agenda as published.

On motion by Seward, seconded by Stoops, the Board voted to go into public hearing regarding proposed Washington County Ordinance 21-01 whose intended purpose is to provide for the special valuation of wind energy conversion property pursuant to Iowa Code Chapter 427B.26. All individuals in attendance were given the opportunity to speak for no more than two minutes.

Greg Koch expressed opposition to the concept of wind energy conversion in Washington County due to tax incentives for companies involved with wind energy conversion in Washington County. He maintained that windmills tend to be divisive with regard to communities and that wind farms are a “shell game” used by big corporations to hide money.

Kurt Dallmeyer opined that Washington County is known for its corn fields, grain bins, bin legs, and farm equipment but not windmills. He also expressed his dislike of the high visibility red lights mounted on top of each windmill that dots the nighttime sky and expressed curiosity as to what will take place when windmills reach the end of their useful life. He also expressed that the power produced by windmills in Washington County would not stay in Washington County. In closing he stated windmills might be of value in the short term they are of little or no value in the long run.

Joel Huber maintained that land owners should have the right to use their land as they choose including as a source of income.

Dick Green stated his understanding that it is not feasible for power companies to solely fund wind mills and added he takes exception to taxpayers ultimately having to finance part if not all of the cost of windmills. He also warned approval of wind mill ordinances in Washington County could have negative political consequences similar to those in Iowa County where wind ordinances are in place.

Don Bayliss shared his belief that windmills would provide landowners with a new and additional source of income.

Marc Knupp expressed agreement with Don Bayliss and added that in his opinion a landowner should have the freedom to determine how his or her land is used provided that the use is legal in manner. He encouraged the Board to institute legal guidelines that are in accord with state guidelines at the least. He stated his objection to the possible involvement of the Iowa Utility Board in the wind industry in Washington County.

Alan Oldfield stated that after completing a great deal of research and holding lengthy discussions with individuals who have wind mills on their property he had reached the conclusion that wind mills are a matter of individual choice and also that they provide an additional source of income. He also stated that his research and discussions indicate that Invenergy, the company that is considering sites in Washington County for the construction of windmills, is a reputable company that follows through on its commitments.

Invenergy has various offices throughout the world and a local office in Washington.

Heather Koch stated she completed a great deal of research including speaking with representatives from other states involved with wind energy and as a result she was opposed to the production of wind energy in Washington County. She cited reasons which included the disparity in the income received by land owners compared to the income that Invenergy would receive and the uncertainty regarding what would happen to windmills at the point in the future when they are abandoned due to becoming unproductive or unprofitable.

Keith Hora cited a number of reasons for his opposition to the expansion of wind energy in Washington County which included his belief that it is not economically feasible and it will likely only help a few landowners while the rest of the county population will have to put up with wind mills and what he deemed as their negative effects.

Young reminded that ultimately it will be individual landowners who will make the decision as to the feasibility of wind energy in Washington County. He also stated he invited Invenergy to attend the hearing but Invenergy declined the invitation, providing no reason for doing so.

Marcus Fedler questioned whether Section 3 of the draft ordinance entitled 'Authority to Establish', Section 4 dealing with "Establishment", and Section 5 dealing with the "Amount of Valuation" were established by the State of Iowa to which Young replied in the affirmative. Fedler then opined that the real problem with wind energy is caused by the State of Iowa mandating what individuals can and can't do.

Mike Zahs, who owns property in Oregon Township and resides on two acres that he owns in Jackson Township, stated that while he can control what happens on the property that he owns he can't control what happens on property that he does not own even though it is nearly right outside the door to his residence.

Supervisor Bob Yoder expressed his opposition to the production of wind energy in Washington County and stated he would vote against approval of proposed Ordinance 21-01.

In response to a question regarding tax responsibility for equipment not owed by Invenergy Seward stated that he had attended two meetings sponsored by Invenergy and the 28-page draft contract distributed by Invenergy for review contained language stating that Invenergy would be responsible for any property tax increase resulting from the addition of equipment owned by Invenergy. Seward also stated it would be up to landowners to fully read and understand such a contract before signing. Alan Oldfield stated he had enlisted a review by two local attorneys in Washington and neither attorney identified issues.

Brad Sheetz offered that heavy trucks and other vehicles used in the construction of wind mills would damage rural roads and in turn questioned who would be responsible for the cost of repairs. Young replied that such a matter will be addressed in a subsequent wind ordinance. Sheetz voiced his opinion that such responsibility should be that of Invenergy.

In answer to a question regarding the potential for windmills in the absence of an ordinance, Young replied that windmills could still be constructed but there would be no tax incentives for the windmill owner.

Seward reminded that the Board would still welcome comments and questions regarding the proposed Washington County Ordinance 21-01 related to the special valuation of wind energy conversion property.

On motion by Yoder, seconded by Stoops, the Board voted to close the public hearing.

At 7:45 p.m. on motion by Seward, seconded by Stoops, the Board voted to adjourn.

ATTEST:  
February 17, 2021

RICHARD L. YOUNG  
Chairperson, Board of Supervisors

DANIEL L. WIDMER  
County Auditor

