

Concerns Over a Proposed Wind Farm in Rutland County

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Bianca Slota - WCAX News

Residents of Ira met with wind project developers Tuesday night. The wind farm proposal started off with a potential 60 sites in several Central Vermont towns including Ira, Tinmouth, Middletown Springs and Poultney. The latest version of the project has reduced that to 45 wind turbines.

One hundred people crammed into Ira town hall Tuesday night to meet with the developers of the Vermont Community Wind Farm.

Some in the crowd already had their mind made up, and would not support the project no matter what.

A majority of residents are relatively supportive of the concept of wind power, but have issues with the location and magnitude of the proposed project. It includes 45 potential wind turbines in Ira, Clarendon, West Rutland and Poultney. One of the concerns is that the ridgelines where the turbines might go is owned by out of state entities.

Towns like Ira do stand to gain from the project though. The developer, Per White-Hansen, has offered Ira a payout based on wattage produced by the turbines. Ira could gain anywhere from \$247,000 to \$825,000, which would be more than enough to cover the town budget and have dollars left over.

"We went around petitioning the town and there's a good percentage of people that are opposed to this," said Peter Cosgrove who opposes the proposal.

Opposition from landowners has already led to changes in the proposed project. It started with 60 potential sites for wind turbines.

But a road needed to access some of the towers would have been too expensive to build, some land owners would not give up the rights for development and concerns about a large transmission line led the developers to scrap 15 sites.

"It was a combination of things, it was engineering, it was feedback it was legal issues relative to willingness of property owners, as I said they were just potential," said Jeffrey Wenberg of the Vermont Community Wind Farm.

That means Middletown Springs and Tinmouth will no longer host any turbines. And developers say it's likely more changes will happen before the project is finalized and the end result could be a project with 32 turbines, producing 80 megawatts of power.

Not everyone in the affected towns is opposed to the wind farm. Many supporters say they are hesitant to make their position known.