

# 'Co. Commission cannot remain neutral on wind turbines'

Dear Editor:

I was pleased to read John Manchester's recent Guest Commentary urging protection of 143,000 acres of land within the Monongahela National Forest. I was pleased to see that Lewisburg City Council and the Greenbrier County Convention and Visitors Bureau also take this point of view.

It surprised me then, to read that the County Commission "does not have a role in this debate" over the proposed wind farms in Greenbrier County. I recognize that City Council and the County Commission are not at all the same. However, if the city has a stake in a parcel of land far outside of its city limits, it seems to me that the County and its commissioners should see itself as a stakeholder in what happens within its geographical limits.

It further surprised me to read that one commissioner thinks that, while the public cannot tell a private landowner what to do with its property, a corporation from outside the state can. Having attended well-run, well-researched and well-attended meetings bringing together both parties involved (community members and representatives of Invenergy) I can unequivocally say that citizens are not trying to dictate to a private land owner, but to express their concerns and perhaps have some impact on public policy (as it has to do with this issue.)

If I am not mistaken, this is one of the founding principles of our country. Private citizens are not trying to dictate; they are trying to speak for preservation of some of the greatest resources this state has: its beauty, wildlife and serenity. Those are resources which can never be replaced and that translate into thousands if not millions of revenue dollars.

Having attended these meetings, I can say that the information Invenergy has presented is suspect as to what it will return to Greenbrier

County as far as taxes and construction jobs go. The vast majority of construction workers who have been used in other locations have come from overseas. As to taxes returned, I am not a financial analyst. Those from the public who have looked into the matter present a picture not nearly as rosy as that presented by Invenergy.

Invenergy says it is still in the process of researching environmental impact. Solid (non-biased) research into habitat takes a great deal more time than Invenergy will be investing. Once an area has been (negatively) impacted, there is no going back. All you have to do is look at farms covered in multiflora rose to see that. As to comparing the impact of the proposed 120 wind turbines 20 stories tall to 17 in Tennessee, I don't see how the comparison can be made.

Lastly, David Groberg of Invenergy is quoted as saying, "the project is subject to regulation by the PSC." It is not subject to close regulation at all. If you read their "Notice of Filing," the number of exceptions they ask for to being regulated by the PSC, along with the number and type of waivers requested is troubling. While Greenbrier County and its Commissioners seem to be heading in the direction of closer regulation and planned growth, Invenergy is asking for little regulation at all and growth which will profit this community little in the long run. Many countries that have tried wind energy have abandoned it as a reliable source of electricity. The towers remain, 20 stories tall, abandoned.

Planned growth involves a commitment to our future generations, the reason the National Parks were set aside, the reason Mayor Manchester et al have spoken out in favor of protecting 143,000 acres of forestland. I urge the County Commission to take another look at its "neutrality." I urge the County Commission to con-

sider itself a major stakeholder as to what happens to this 500 acres of land and the voting citizens who live within eyesight and earshot of the proposed wind farm.

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NOV. 26, 2005  
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