

# Wind power opponents approach GVEDC

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With a wind power project proposed for northern Greenbrier County, members of Mountain Communities for Responsible Energy asked the Greenbrier Valley Economic Development Corporation to join in opposition to the project last Thursday.

The first phase of the Beech Ridge Wind Farm, which has gained the attention of Greenbrier County residents and some in southern Pocahontas County, would place more than 130 wind turbines on 500 acres of ridgetop land owned by MeadWestvaco to the north of Williamsburg.

GVEDC Executive Director Dick Nevi was quick to say at Thursday's meeting the development agency "has not taken a position" on the project.

At the meeting in Frost, Greenbrier County residents Aaron DeHaven and Jeff Eisenbeiss attempted to discredit previous presentations made by wind energy firm Invenergy to

Greenbrier County residents regarding the project.

At the Greenbrier County meetings, representatives from the Chicago-based wind energy firm Invenergy, LLC, have promoted the project as one that will increase the local tax base, create jobs and provide clean energy.

DeHaven and Eisenbeiss contended Thursday that the project would actually cost local taxpayers through government subsidies and that many of the jobs would be temporary and be filled by outside laborers.

The West Virginia State Building and Construction Trades Council of the AFL-CIO filed November 15 to intervene in the project's application with the Public Service Commission.

The 200-megawatt facility would also have a minimal impact on the demand for electricity derived from coal, DeHaven said, producing only one half of one percent of all electricity consumed in the West Virginia.

In addition to being visible

in the Greenbrier Valley, the project will be visible from parts of southern Pocahontas County and the Highland Scenic Highway, added DeHaven.

"Tourists come to Greenbrier County for its natural, scenic beauty," he said. "They do not come to see an industrial complex set on top the ridgeline they're taking pictures of."

Jim Echols, a retired Greenbrier County dentist who accompanied DeHaven and Eisenbeiss to the meeting, likened the project's 450-foot wind turbines to having scores of Washington Monument-sized structures along the horizon.

"Every landowner here will be affected," Echols said.

Eisenbeiss, himself a real estate appraiser, projected that homeowners in the area in view of the project could see their property values fall.

The height of the towers and their location on one of the highest ridges in western Greenbrier County could make them visible as far away as White Sulphur Springs, Eisenbeiss

said.

"Will the property taxes paid by the project be offset by the hundreds of homeowners who will ask for reappraisals?" he asked the board.

As Eisenbeiss concluded, he asked the GVEDC to reconsider its position on the project. Nevi reiterated that the board had not taken a position.

The Beech Ridge project is one of three wind energy projects proposed in neighboring counties. A project is under consideration in Pendleton County, while Virginia state regulators are reviewing a project proposal for Highland County. Reports from The Recorder indicate the Highland County project will be visible from a historic Civil War site in Pocahontas County, the Confederate Camp Allegheny, near Bartow.

The PSC is currently reviewing Invenergy's application for the Beech Ridge Energy project. As of Monday, the PSC's online records showed that the application had elicited more than 500 letters of protest.