

Connecticut Siting Council

Ten Franklin Square

New Britain, CT 06051

www.ct.gov/csc

March 27, 2011

RE: Petitions 983 and 984 to site commercial wind turbines in the town of Colebrook, CT

Dear Members of the Connecticut Siting Council,

I am writing to weigh in with my complete and utter opposition to the proposed BNE Wind energy projects in Colebrook. I attended both of the public comment sessions which you held last week in Winsted at the Region # 7 high school. I listened and carefully weighed all of what the good people of the town had to say both for and against the proposed 6.8 MW projects in the two locations off Rock Hall Rd and Flagg Hill Rd. Despite some positive pleas for the increase to the tax base that might be provided by installing and erecting these mammoth industrial machines in otherwise quiet, rural residential neighborhoods, I remain completely unconvinced as to the public benefit of this project and even more assured of the negative environmental consequences that will ensue if they are permitted and built.

I am a lifelong (57 yrs) resident of neighboring Norfolk, CT and a practicing forestry and environmental consultant based in Litchfield county but working throughout the state and New England region. I am a supporter in general of alternative energy and energy efficiency as many of you may recall. Along with my colleagues at Kenetech Energy Systems and Flagg energy, I tried unsuccessfully to bring a 13 MW Bio-Gen biomass base load facility to Torrington in the 1980's only to see the legislature mandate the repurchase of the power purchase agreement. More recently, I also consulted with Tamarack Energy on their proposed GEMMA-Watertown 30 MW biomass plant. I have worked as a consultant with Noble Wind Power based in Essex, CT to facilitate the appropriate siting wind farms and strings of wind turbines on remote forested ridgelines in New Hampshire and Vermont; far from populated areas and located at higher elevations so as to assure adequate wind energy. Included in these projects were extensions to transmission lines that would also be required to interconnect with the ISO New England grid. I am not opposed to wind, wood, or hydro projects where and when they make sound economic, environmental, and productive energy sense. The sites in Colebrook and elsewhere that BNE is proposing meet none of these tests.

One need only look to the wind maps produced collaboratively by the US Department of Energy (USDOE) and National Renewable Energy Lab (NREL) to know that Connecticut has little if any reliable wind even at the 80 to 100 meter hub heights proposed here. Ironically, these maps show only the extreme northwest corner along the Taconic Ridge and my very own “backyard” on the Canaan Mountain plateau as having even a fair to moderate wind resource based color coding. In the interest of full disclosure, I have considered proposals and studied potential strings of wind turbines on the Great Mountain Forest property with no less than four major wind developers (I don’t consider the gentlemen of BNE in this category), but the 2003 sale of a federally funded conservation easement on the 6,000 acre property explicitly precluded such a project to ensure that funds were used for **optimum environmental protection and preservation of biodiversity**. Most of the other potential wind sites are right along the Connecticut coast line (too thickly settled) and the best wind resource is well off shore in the middle of the Long Island Sound and out towards Nantucket. Based solely on the test of whether meaningful and economically viable wind can be harvested, this project in Colebrook fails miserably. Add to that the high cost of routine, periodic and episodic equipment maintenance, the Achilles’ heel of most commercial wind farms, and this is a failed economic prospect with no public benefit for a great deal of public disruption and environmental damage. Were it not for the handsome front end ratepayer subsidies and public tax credits, this project would never see the light of day, let alone come to waste so much of your valuable time that, dare I say, might be better spent approving more cellular phone towers.

Speaking of those cellular transmission towers, you presume to have the benefit in the case of those site permit hearings to ignore completely any mention of the negative environmental effects due to non-ionizing radiations by virtue of the outdated FCC guidelines and Federal mandates of Section 704 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. In the case of industrial scale wind turbines, you have no such overarching mandate to ignore the environmental impacts and growing body of evidence that points to the health effects of subsonic vibrations and electromagnetic energy fields that wind turbines, associated transmission lines, and ground currents will produce in and around the many residences in close proximity (i.e., less than 1 mile). You may feel that health and safety objections to cellular antennae arrays are unwarranted (though I assure you they are not), but with regard to such large, kinetic electrical power generators on super high towers, you must pay heed and listen to those poor folks whose lives and livelihoods will be so drastically affected by your permitting decision. I listened last week to the testimonies of so many from Colebrook and neighboring towns about their love of the area, the rural appeal that initially drew them or transfixed their families for generations on the land. As a third generation settler myself to northwest CT who also chose to stay raise my young family here, I can empathize with these people. I also have considered the possibilities of wind power in the area, but have always come away with the realization that it is not the first solution to turn to for our power needs. As was said at the hearings, this region does more than its share already in the form of hydropower, and we could certainly do much more with appropriate small-scale series of micro turbines and run of the river developments. Stay tuned.

The developers of BNE are merely promoters who will put the risks of this poorly conceived, albeit "renewable", energy project onto the backs of the hard working and reasonably quiet neighborhoods of Colebrook's rural residential zone. They do not fully appreciate the nature of their newly chosen field of development, nor do they likely appreciate the costs and financial risks associated with wind farms. I have worked with companies who understand fully the associated costs of turbine maintenance and upkeep, and without exception, they all maintain that unless one can be assured of substantial wind generation revenues on a sustained and reliable basis, like in west Texas, the coast of Massachusetts, or high hills and plateaus of Maine, New York and New England, then no project should be allowed to proceed let alone to be underwritten and financed. This project will be flipped to some institutional investment group like the hot potato, green Ponzi scheme that it is. Again, one has only to look at the abysmal record of failed wind machines around the world to know that 'the bigger they are the harder they fall'. These proposed GE models are fundamentally out of all reasonable scale with the surrounding environment in which they are to be sited. Whether opponents invoke the recently reestablished endangered population of bald eagles in the area or just the bucolic lifestyle to which they are accustomed, free from insults and injury to their livelihoods and property values, these industrial scale generators have no business being sited here. The BNE promoters are hastening this process in order to exploit the state's inertia in its regulatory readiness to address a poorly conceived and enacted energy policy favoring renewables like commercial scale wind.

These petitions 983 and 984 should be denied **with** prejudice by virtue of their poor appreciation of the true environmental impacts and incompatibility in the proposed area. The power they might bring to bear will be spotty at best, and the result would be far better if the same amount of clean energy public benefit funds were spent on additional energy conservation measures and weatherization. Even the Secretary of the US DOE, Dr. Stephen Chu, has been quoted as saying "not only is energy efficiency and conservation the low hanging fruit" with regard to the most cost effective means of securing our energy future and offsetting coincident carbon emissions, " moreover, it is the fruit already lying on the ground". Let us benefit the pocketbooks and household budgets of the many and first exhaust the means most readily and most cost effectively at our disposal to grab 6-7 MWs or even more of 'negated' energy demand off the grid long before we begin sacrificing the special rural landscapes of our state for the benefit of just a few, already ample, pocketbooks. Lord knows GE, with its recent disclosure of \$15 billion in profits and no taxes even due to the US Treasury will not miss out on the failure to sell 6 turbines to BNE...that is but chump change to GE if you deny these proposals, as well you should. Do it for the brave kids who had the courage and will to stand up before you and be heard, at times haltingly, but from their hearts and their heads together. Theirs is the future and the land to inherit. Don't despoil it this time around.

Sincerely yours,

Starling W. Childs, II

109 Litchfield Rd. Norfolk, CT 06058