

Defever Farms

THE DEFEVER FAMILY
HAROLD, KATHY, KATHLEEN, AND CARRIE DEFEVER

January 25, 2022

Fulton Township Planning Commission
3425 W. Cleveland Road
Perrinton, Michigan 48871

Re: Heartland Farms Wind Project / Invenergy Special Land Use Application and Site Plan Application

Dear Commissioners,

Our family home is located directly across the road from a proposed wind turbine. If the turbine is constructed, the view from our front yard and front windows will be nothing but a giant fiberglass turbine, with its ominously sharp spinning blades. For us, this is a tragedy.

We love our farm, and we love Fulton Township. Our family moved here about 40 years ago, drawn by the beautiful green fields, the noble working farms, and the peace and quiet. We soon discovered that our new neighbors and friends were lovely, honest human beings, who also live in the Township because they love the rural character and beautiful natural environment.

The past few years we've all witnessed the rapid advancement of neighboring wind turbines toward our beautiful Township. As turbine after turbine is erected, we are witnessing the steady degradation of the peaceful natural environment that drew us all to live here in the first place. Now there is a proposal to erect 12 in our own backyards.

Don't get us wrong – we support wind energy. We just don't support wind energy that will have so many negative impacts.

Wind Turbines are Not Agricultural Land Uses

At the outset, it is important to note that wind turbines are giant, 50-story electricity-production machines. These are not agricultural uses of the land, and the classification "special use" does not accurately characterize their impacts. These are privately-funded power plants which are then sold to the public utility, Consumers Power. *Turbines should be zoned as Industrial Uses.* Describing the installations of dozens of turbines as a "farm" is an insult to what a real farm is, and the residents of Fulton Township know this better than anyone else. Many of us are farmers ourselves, and we live

in a farming community. Gratiot County has incorrectly characterized the turbines as an agricultural use.¹ Fulton Township is not bound to follow that same error in logic.

Turbines Cause Significant Environmental Impacts

Wind turbines have significant negative, polluting impacts on the natural environment, just as industrial uses do. Even those that are in favor of turbines do not deny that they cause significant noise; blocking of sunlight in the form of a light/shadow flicker; visual pollution; disruption of the ground during installation and power cable undergrounding; interruption of migratory bird pathways; concerns over dangerous ice or blade throws; disruption of cell phone, radio and television signals; significant road wear and tear; and serious questions over who is responsible for decommissioning when they no longer are productive.

The long-term effects the turbines have on people, plants, and animals are poorly understood. But, courts have recently awarded significant damages to people who suffer health problems due to nearby wind turbines, and there are numerous reports of turbines causing animal death and decrease in fertility. While there are very few exhaustive, long-term studies on these negative effects in the United States, Western European countries installed wind turbines decades ago, and therefore have collected more information.

The Dutch (who incidentally, invented windmills) find turbines to be noise and visual pollution, and do not allow them anywhere near residences. Turbines are only allowed in industrial zones, or out in the open sea. The Danish have a rule that turbines must be set back from residences by a distance of *10 times the height of the turbine*. Our current Township guideline that turbines should be set back 1.5 to 2 times of the turbine height would sound absurd to them, because they are well aware of the significant, proven negative environmental and health impacts.

Long-Term Concerns

It is important to recognize that Invenergy's proposal is, of course, biased toward their point of view – it spins the project in a positive light and downplays the negative impacts. Long-term impacts are either not addressed or poorly explained. For example, there is mention of the addition of 266 (temporary) jobs during the construction of the wind turbines. However, there is no mention of whether these jobs will be solely for the people of Gratiot County or not. Then, it is explained that there are only 18 additional long-term jobs. Again, no word on whether those are for outside specialists or if those jobs are for people in Gratiot County. The odds that these jobs benefit Fulton Township are extremely low. The wind turbines are expected to have a life span of 25 years. When considering the larger picture, those 18 jobs over the course of 25 years will have a negligible impact.

There is also no explanation about maintenance and care of the turbines, and the decommissioning plan is vague. When pressed, Invenergy explains that they are not responsible for those stages of

¹ "It is further recognized that a Wind Energy Facility Overlay District is intended as an agricultural preservation measure." Gratiot County Zoning Ordinance, Chapter 16 (PP), p. 144.

the project, because the turbines are being sold to Consumers Power after they are built. The typical American experience with power companies is that they are large corporate entities that do not respond to customer concerns promptly. There are already numerous stories from neighboring townships about squeaky windmills that don't get fixed, and blinking lights that are not supposed to be on all night, but are never adjusted.

Weighing the Benefits Against the Negative Impacts

We recognize that the installation of the wind turbines brings a cash infusion to some of the landowners of the Township, and creates more tax revenue. But in Fulton Township, fewer than 11 landowners benefit, and how many other residents receive only negative impacts? *The "participating" landowners are in the small minority, while the non-participating residents are the overwhelming majority.*

It is the responsibility of our elected officials to listen to both sides, and to weigh the costs and benefits accordingly. If not enough people voice their opinions, then Township officials are responsible to hold additional hearings and personally investigate the existing turbines, the proposed construction sites, and the negative impacts themselves. *It is important to understand not just the positive impacts – in this case increased income for very few – but also the numerous negative impacts that are borne by the entire community.*

Best Regards,

The Defever Family