

At the 6/30/2020 Winnebago County board of supervisors meeting, a resident went before their board of supervisors to ask for a moratorium on wind turbines. As part of that discussion one of the board members stated that they were not aware of any projects in the area. Someone off camera announced that there were 23 Invenergy leases already recorded. Later the board member said “we better educate ourselves big time!”

At the 8/31/2020 meeting of this board, Leslie Wurster reported that they had been approached by Alliant to lease ground for a solar array. On 9/21/2020 Alliant stated that they had already signed close to all the leases they needed.

We have a credible report that another solar array project is signing leases southwest of Creston.

Leases for industrial energy projects are being signed in relative obscurity. Meaning that the land owners are only hearing from the projects and are not being offered contrary information because those that would like to help educate the owners, are not aware of where they are needed.

Neighbors should talk to each other. Especially on matters that could affect each other. As my dear old pappy used to tell: Farmers would meet at the dividing fence while cultivating, crawl off their tractors and spend a couple of hours talking. However, today’s reality doesn’t seem to allow that luxury any more. Although the county cannot get involved in contract terms, they can facilitate the education of its land owners. There are numerous reports of participants that truly regret their decision to sign a lease or easement. How many could have avoided that mistake if only they had heard the rest of the story.

We are asking the board to enact an ordinance that would require any industrial energy company or their agents to give a “Notice of Intent” **before** they begin signing leases or easements. This notice can be a simple document sent to the board of supervisors, to be read at the following board meeting. The reading would be on the agenda to help the public become informed, through the expected reporting by the media. The board would not have to accept the report or act other than reading and making the notice available on the county’s web site. Preferably within a couple of days instead of waiting till the minutes are posted.

The notice must clearly identify the business parties (Owner, operator, developer, representatives...) involved, their contact information, their purpose and the boundaries of the area they are seeking leases or easements. They must indicate their goal number of acres to sign up. This notice would also include the details of the expected project, such as number and size of wind turbines or solar panels.

This ordinance would give the opponents an equal footing as the Industrial energy developers and helps the board avoid being surprised by the unexpected submission of an application for a project. With this notice, opponents can respectfully educate the landowners in the defined area as to their concerns and opinions. And do so before the project becomes committed and created in relative obscurity.

One of the most often reported false recruiting statements is “All your neighbors have already signed up.” To bring some respectability and better transparency to the recruiting process, we also ask that after the initial notice, the project managers be required to send the board a progress report the first board meeting of each month. This progress report would **DETAIL** the leases and easements signed during the prior month. Details would include landowners, township, number of acres and type (lease, easement, neighbor easement...). It would also include a summary of to-date total landowners, acres by

township and a repeat of the totals being sought. These reports would be publicly accessible at the county and preferably on the county website within the same week.

If at any time the project managers wish to suspend their activity, they would indicate such on their monthly report to the board and would not need to file further progress reports as long as there is no activity of any kind. Should they resume any activity, they must start over with a Notification of Intent, before any leases or easements are added.

As an incentive to the project managers, a \$25 filing fee could be assigned to each report and notice. The fee would be waived if the industrial energy developer provided the report or notice in a text based electronic format such that it could easily be searchable. The most common, and preferred, format is a text-based PDF file. This would also help the county staff in posting them to the website.

Failure to file the required notice and reports need to be taken as a serious negative impact to the public's basic interest. There needs to be a matching serious consequence for failure to file these items and for failing to file them on time.

Both energy companies that have talked at a board meeting have stated that they like regulations and that regulations brings transparency. This ordinance would help to make sure that transparency is there from the beginning.

Thank You.

Protect Our Land's Future. Union County, Iowa