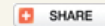


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Press Release regarding Lighthouse Wind

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Posted on: March 18, 2016 - 8:34am

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March 17, 2016

The Town of Somerset learned today that Lighthouse Wind LLC, a subsidiary of Apex Clean Energy ("Apex"), has signed a Code of Conduct with the New York State Attorney General's Office. Apex previously stated it negotiated the terms of the Code of Conduct directly with the Attorney General's office. However, the Town, or any other local municipality, was not included in any of the discussions between Apex and the Attorney General's Office regarding the provisions of the Code of Conduct. The Town has also not been provided the final version of the Code of Conduct signed by Apex.

Despite signing the Code of Conduct, the Town believes Apex may be violating New York State laws by engaging in deceptive public relations strategies, improper lobbying, and the development of false grassroots or "astroturf" support.

Such conduct can have a devastating impact on community relations, can turn neighbor against neighbor, family against family, and negatively impact the quality of life for the Town as a whole. The deceptive public relations strategies and lobbying employed by Apex may also improperly influence decision makers at both the local and state level.

Somerset believes Apex has retained the Washington D.C. firm Five Corners Strategies to influence state and local government decisions regarding the proposed wind project in the Town. On its website, Five Corners Strategies describes itself as "a corporate grassroots public affairs firm that identifies and mobilizes our clients' supporters to influence legislative decisions, land use approvals, and ballot measure campaigns."

<http://fivecornersstrategies.com/about/>. Somerset believes lobbyists from Five Corners Strategies have attended multiple Town Board meetings on behalf of Apex in an attempt to influence Somerset officials on multiple issues regarding the subject project. Somerset is currently unaware of what additional lobbying efforts have been undertaken by Five Corners Strategies on behalf of Apex. However, Somerset has confirmed that Five Corners Strategies is not a registered lobbyist in New York.

The Town is also concerned Apex is engaging in "astroturfing" by flooding the New York State Department of Public Service ("DPS") public comment website with form letters purportedly drafted by neutral third parties and showing public support for the subject project. "Astroturfing" is the practice of masking the sponsors of a message or organization to make it appear as though the message originates from and is supported by neutral third parties. In other words, astroturfing creates the false impression of a legitimate grassroots movement. Apex may have engaged in astroturfing by (1) concealing the true author of letters in support of the project; and (2) failing to disclose whether the signers of those letters have a personal financial interest in the Project.

Based on these concerns, the Town sent a letter to the New York State Attorney General's Office today requesting an investigation into Apex's conduct and also that the Code of Conduct be further revised to prohibit deceptive practices.

Town Supervisor Daniel M. Engert stated, "New York State has seen far too many high level state officials and state agencies unduly influenced by lobbyists and deceptive business practices. I call upon the Attorney General to commence and conduct a thorough investigation of all the Company's actions to ensure that a completely transparent and legal process is taking place here. The Attorney General must lift the veil of secrecy surrounding this project so Somerset residents, state agencies and all interested parties know which the way the wind is really blowing here!"

