

Apex Opponents Counter Pro-project Comments

By Ed Smith

Citizens who are opposed to the Rocky Forge wind energy installations proposed for North Mountain in Botetourt County thanked the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors Monday, June 13, for writing a letter conveying the board's concerns about the project and took The News Gazette to task for an editorial in support of it.

The supervisors wrote a letter dated May 31 to Apex Clean Energy Inc. in which the Board expressed worries about the noise of the turbines, the blight on scenic views, the danger posed to wildlife, adverse effects on tourism and the threat to water supplies from blasting during construction. The letter was entered into the record of public comments that were forwarded by Apex to the Vir-

ginia Department of Environmental Quality.

DEQ is reviewing Apex's application for installing up to 25 550-foot-tall turbines on the southern ridge of North Mountain in northern Botetourt County. At its nearest point, the development would be about .8-of a mile from the Rockbridge County line.

In the June 8 editorial, the newspaper suggested, said Suzanne McTaggart, "that the Rocky Forge industrial wind energy project might not be perfect, but it would be a step in the right direction." She said she doubted that the editor had in mind "that energy generated from the destruction of North Mountain would end up "in Florida or some other state."

McTaggart was referring to how energy companies routinely route electricity from

one state to another and how renewable energy credits are bought and sold like any other traded commodity." So, North Mountain can be destroyed for energy sold out of state and

Virginia won't even get the renewable energy credit ... It's time for our state and federal representatives to step up and investigate what exactly is going on here."

Denise Neas said the editorial's author "bought Apex's line of goods." She defended the information she and others have brought to the supervisors previously on the harmful effects of noise from wind turbines and research that shows the flight path of Golden Eagles crossing the area where the project would go.

"I thank you [for the letter]," Steve Neas said to the supervisors. "I feel like we're

supported; we're not just a bunch of cranks and nutcases. I'm an engineer." He said the editorial "missed the boat on the tax credit issue." The project would not have to make money for the developer to benefit from the tax credits, he asserted.

Jeff Scott said he wanted to provide additional information on the sound issue to counter a statement in the editorial concerning Apex's study purporting to show that the noise of the turbines, from a distance of one mile, would be "less than ambient noise heard in the forest."

Scott contended that Apex's study was faulty. Not enough microphones were used and the mountainous terrain wasn't taken into account, he said. "... as we all know, sound carries in the mountains, and from per-

sonal experience the sound of a chainsaw, which is about the same loudness as a single turbine, let alone, 25 turbines, can be heard a long way."

Apex's study, Scott continued, didn't measure sound from the height of where the turbine noise would be coming from, nor did it analyze infrasound, which, he said, carries farther than audible sound, and can be more harmful. "Health problems that have been associated with infrasound include sleep deprivation, heart palpitations, and dizziness."

The public comment period for Apex's application with DEQ ended June 6. DEQ has 90 days from this date to decide whether or not to grant Apex a permit.