

# *RFW Not Responsible Use Of Taxpayer Funds*

June 6, 2016

Editor, The News-Gazette:

I would like to respond to a couple of the points made by Eli Fishpaw in his letter to the editor.

Fishpaw states that the position that many local citizens have taken with respect to tax incentives/credits is incorrect. Everybody knows that the tax code is very complicated, so it is easy to understand that confusion can occur. But, there are two types of tax credits, the Investment Tax Credit (ITC) and the Production Tax Credit (PTC). Most wind projects opt for the ITC, which means that even if no power is ever produced, investors get a dollar for dollar tax credit. Credits, unlike income offsets, are gold and in effect the investment is made using "free" money (i.e., our taxpayer money). In addition to the ITC, there is the Modified Accelerated Cost Recovery System (MACRS) that permits accelerated depreciation. This is a guaranteed subsidy not based on any production of electricity.

Thus, when Fishpaw states that "Apex wind studies have determined electricity produced will be profitable. If not, they will lose their investment" he is incorrect.

And speaking of wind studies, Apex has claimed all along that the Rocky Forge turbines will produce enough power for up to 20,000 homes. But, at the public meeting on May 25, an Apex representative admitted that that figure was not based on any wind study at all. And while Apex has refused to make their wind studies publicly available, Virginians for Responsible Energy obtained wind

data from a nearby location. An independent review of this data by a licensed engineer and a representative of Virginia Military Institute determined that under optimal conditions approximately 5,000 to 7,000 homes would be powered.

The other point I would like to address is Fishpaw's minimization of the fire hazard posed by the wind turbines. He states that "Globally, 1 in 7000 catch fire" and "The clear cut immediately around towers create a fire break." But, researchers from several European universities did a global assessment of the world's 200,000 wind turbines. Comparing the only data available, they estimated that 10 times more fires are happening than are being reported. Instead of the reported average of 11.7 fires each year, the researchers estimated that more than 117 separate fires are breaking out in turbines annually. This means that 1 in 1,700 catch fire. And, if you have ever seen pictures of burning turbines, you can see that burning material is being blown a significant distance. Given the terrain of North Mountain, and the time it will take first responders to get to the top of the mountain, this is a significant risk that cannot be minimized.

I agree with Fishpaw that we need to encourage the development of renewable energy, but it needs to be done responsibly. And the Rocky Forge Wind project is not a responsible use of our taxpayer money, nor is it in an environmentally responsible location.

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