

Law would restrict turbine noise

GETTING READY FOR FUTURE: Morristown proposes legislation to Planning Board

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MORRISTOWN — Morristown is one step closer to enacting a law that would outline a strict set of requirements for wind turbine developers, perhaps setting a new standard in the process.

The town's proposed wind energy law, which has a more stringent set of guidelines for proposed turbines than other towns in the area, was presented before the St. Lawrence Planning Board last week. The board recommended approval of the plan pending certain adjustments.

"We want to have this project go," board member Thomas L. Jenison said. "It is a big step in the right direction."

Morristown, which has no wind energy law in place, has been in the process of creating the law for nearly three years.

While town Supervisor Frank L. Putman said the town hasn't been contacted directly by companies expressing an interest in building a wind farm, recent developments in Hammond have encouraged the town to look into creating a law.

"It is a proactive measure should somebody want to build here," Mr. Putnam said. "Right now a company could come in and move forward with developments without any repercussions."

The proposed law was designed to limit noise levels of the turbines, Mr. Putnam said, and ensure they do not create a disturbance in the community. This set of extra strict guidelines would require turbines being built within 2,000 feet of a home, school or hospital not increase that building's level of noise more than six decibels above the level it currently is.

The law also demands that noise from a turbine not exceed 45 decibels, a decrease from the 50 usually required in town laws.

"They have a unique approach to the noise issue," said Jason C. Pfothauer, deputy director of the county Planning Office. "We think this level of 45 is a change for the better."

According to the Noise and Health International Journal, a chain saw usually operates around 130 decibels while a normal conversation usually takes place at 60, both higher than the limit that would be placed on the turbines.

Wind turbines' presence soon may be growing in the north country. Mr. Pfothauer said the office already has handled proposed laws from Hopkinton and it expects Parishville may be next.

"We've seen a lot of these requests in the past year and we expect more," Mr. Pfothenhauer said.

No timetable has been set for when the law will be approved. Mr. Putnam said the next step is to contact LaBella, the Rochester-based consulting firm that has been helping the town through the process. Before the law is approved, Mr. Putnam said, there will be a public meeting to discuss the options.