

Ex-Wind Tower Committee  
Objectives Not Realized/Issues Not Explored

Upon termination of the Wind Tower Committee, they submitted a paper listing two objectives they didn't realize and ten issues not explored or considered. In an effort to consider all of their concerns and issues, I will record my review of these items and indicate my thoughts. I will also pass this to the other Town Board members so that they can form their own opinions.

I. Objectives not Realized.

*A. Assess the General Town Opinion: The committee felt this should have been the last thing done but because they were prematurely "terminated", they weren't allowed to do it. They felt it should still be done.*

I have thought all along that this should have been one of the first things the committee would have wanted to accomplish before any degree of biasness or propaganda could set in. Although no formal or informal survey was ever done, I believe that the majority of the Town is in favor of wind towers. The reasons for my belief:

1. The opposition group, although vocal, has not grown significantly in numbers and represents only a small minority of the Town.
2. The number of people who I have talked to – informally, socially, while carrying petitions, etc. – who have told me that they support them.
3. The election results.
4. The support noted from leaders of our ZBA and Conservation Boards.

*B. Communicate with and Visit other Municipalities with Industrial Wind Turbines: Committee didn't get a chance to visit any wind farms with turbines the size "purported" to be going into Hamlin. Feel that the Town Board needs to do this.*

I am confident that each Town Board member has visited enough wind farms to make an educated and intelligent judgment.

II. Issues not Explored or Considered.

*A. Not all questions for research asked by our citizens were answered. It is important that this be done, perhaps at an open, independent informational meeting prior to the public hearing.*

Based upon the numerous workshops, public forums, public information meetings, and public hearings, I believe the **opportunity** for all questions to be asked has been provided. I cannot guarantee that all questions have been answered – at least to the satisfaction of the person answering the questions. But this is a result of differences in opinion over what the answer should be as opposed to not attempting to provide an answer or not having had the opportunity to ask the question.

*B. Health Issues – Committee is concerned that a statement made by Mr. Spitzer at a Monroe County Supervisors' Association luncheon that "they do not believe health issues were a concern" needs more research.*

I reviewed the minutes of the May 18, 2007 Monroe County Supervisors' Association minutes, which is the meeting at which Mr. Spitzer spoke. The minutes indicate that Mr. Spitzer remarks "continued with an overview on wind towers, focusing on regulations:

h. Safety Issues: Minimal – 6 claims on 33,000 towers insured (per one carrier).

i. No basis to most ‘health issues.’”

These issues have been adequately researched. In my research, I have found no indication of injuries from blade throw or ice throw, which are the two main safety issues we have addressed by our setbacks. Aside from the death of a construction worker and the injury to two other workers during a tower collapse in August 2007 (which in no way is intended to diminish that fact), I could find no data to support the fact that turbine collapse has injured any non-construction worker, i.e., innocent bystander/neighbor and no evidence at all to support anyone being injured by blade throw or ice throw. I have read various articles cautioning people (workers or not) from standing under the hub during ice shed. Our Wind Tower Regulations have addressed safety issues and incorporated procedures to mitigate and/or protect the public.

Health issues typically addressed are related to flicker and noise (including recent reports on heart problems due to noise – not limited to wind turbine noise). The committee itself addressed these issues in their report. The issues and methods to mitigate have been addressed in the proposed Wind Tower Regulations.

I believe that this issue was adequately addressed by the Committee and incorporated into the Regulations. I see no need for additional research based on general statements made by Mr. Spitzer at a Supervisors’ luncheon.

*C. Potential lawsuits and their ramifications were not explored. (This is potentially one of the most important issues regarding industrial wind turbines and should be more heavily researched.) This is to protect the Town, the land owners, and all of Hamlin citizens.*

In my opinion I don’t consider that potential lawsuits need to be “explored.” However, I do have a concern about lawsuits, which is why we retained a well-respected attorney, experienced in writing and defending local wind tower laws.

*D. National Grid: The Town should become aware of the National Grid’s “true” attitude toward wind turbines and the problems caused by “intermittency.”*

It is not the intent of the proposed wind tower regulations to resolve or influence National Grid. Intermittency was discussed at a Wind Tower Committee meeting and reflects the opinion of one its representatives. Per a comment appearing in the British Wind Energy Association Briefing Sheet, “Wind Power and Intermittency,” the Great Britain Systems Operator, National Grid Transco, in their “Seven Year Statement, May 2005, indicates “. . .based on recent analysis of the incidence and variation of wind speed, the intermittency of wind does not appear to pose major problems for stability. . .” It appears to me that National Grid’s “true attitude” is dependent upon whom you speak or listen.

*E. Jobs: This area needs much more exploration. The Committee finds that although initial installation does “spike” employment at the local level, it is short lived. Permanent employment would be no more than two people after construction.*

I would not argue with the findings of the Committee as their numbers match the research I’ve found. However, the creation of jobs has not been an underlying premise or promise that I can determine has been made by either potential developers or Town officials.

*F. Tourism: The Committee is concerned that given our close proximity to Brockport, any tourism dollars would likely go there because of the amenities there. The Committee feels it important that the Town Board more fully explore this issue.*

Like jobs, I have never seen tourism touted as a major benefit of wind towers in the Town of Hamlin. There is no doubt that there will be increased visitors who are curious and will want to see wind towers themselves and who will patronize some of local businesses - gas stations, farm stands, restaurants and maybe the State Park. However, I personally don't see wind towers as a major tourist attraction and don't know what value would be gained by Town Board more fully exploring the issue.

*G. Land Owner Contracts: Committee stated that landowner contracts and a full proposal for the town were not available but "would have been helpful in aiding the committee's development of a overall picture of the project."*

As far as I know, landowner contracts are private lease agreements, which the Town is not privy to. Obviously, there has never been a proposal submitted, therefore we cannot review or consider what "might be." However, our proposed regulations clearly state what is required in an application (proposal) so that the Town will definitely have the opportunity to review all aspects of a proposal before approving any project.

*H. Other locations within the Town should be explored. This is very important due to bird/bat controversy which may push wind turbines well south of the present, proposed location. Another location that should not be overlooked is . . . offshore, which would mitigate most of the negative issues.*

The proposed wind tower regulations restrict wind towers to the RVL zoned districts only. So in that sense, it can be said that other locations have been explored. We've restricted wind towers to RVL to obviously limit towers to our least populated areas. The bird/bat issue will be studied before permitting any siting. Offshore would be an issue to be determined between the State (maybe also the Feds) and the developer.

*I. Other concepts in wind generating devices: Several other turbine designs are available – some of which are able to mitigate all current negative issues associated with the contemplated project.*

It is up to the developer/applicant to determine the most feasible device to use. Our proposed regulations provide for both industrial and residential wind towers. The regulations give the latitude to the applicant to make a determination as to which is most efficient but gives the Town Board the authority to determine whether they are appropriate and meet the standards.

As a final note, the insinuations made throughout these issues that there is a "project" to be considered is the Committee's. I know of no project being proposed and therefore, it would be impossible for Town Board to consider one. The proposed Wind Tower Regulations provide the Town Board the legal basis to do this when a project proposal or application is received.