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J-S LETTER: County considers you an enemy

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Ah, April 30, 2007! Yet another "red letter" day!

How comforting to learn that your County Board considers you an enemy. To learn it feels that it must protect itself from you. To learn that when it extends its arms it is to embrace outsiders whose only interest is to make a profit from your misery. To learn that "home seller" protection and "non-participating landowners" protection really means "County Board" protection.

I attended the Planning and Development committee meeting the night of April 30, and stayed until the end, as I always do, to speak to the Committee. When I asked why they were recommending to remove the protection plan, I was told plainly and simply that the "protection" plan was to "protect" the County Board from litigation. Now that the Board was being sued, the "protection" plan was no longer necessary.

Read the County Board's Nov. 30, 2006 meeting minutes on the Stephenson County Board Web site and try to find where condition number 3 declares the "non-participating landowners" protection plan to be a guarantee against the County Board being sued.

Read the "Home Seller Protection Agreement" at www.lancastervoices.com by clicking on Lancaster Wind Farm.

Read where this plan has a life of only 3 years when these turbines will stand for at least 20 years, and the "participating" landowners will collect \$5000.00 per year for every turbine they agree to place on their property (many will have more than one of them), and the developer will collect some \$35 million in direct federal tax credits for building the 35 turbines planned for the project.

Read where the wind "farm" developer is guaranteed "Right of First Refusal", so that it can force the homeowner to sell their home to them, the very party that created the living conditions that the homeowner could not tolerate.

Read where this "Home Seller Protection" plan "protects" the developer from compensating the homeowner from further loss of property value caused by "outside sources". Meaning that if another developer wants to build a wind "farm" on the other side of your house and that "farm" further decreases the value of your property, you have to eat that additional loss. There is an important fact to know here. The Stephenson County Board passed an ordinance in 2003 allowing a 400-foot wind turbine to be built within 500' of your house. So be assured, there will be more developers interested in building more wind "farms" in your neighborhood, and your property value will decrease further as a result.

Read where the developer is required only to compensate the homeowner for any difference between the "Market Value" and the buyer's offering price (not 110 percent of market value as has been previously reported many times). And "Market Value" is defined as the 2006 assessed value with no allowances for inflation or market trends. Let "market value" be determined by the housing market. I, for one, and it is a lonely position to take considering the vast amounts of money to be made by some county residents, am not out to make a profit from these things. I only want to be compensated for any loss in property value caused by them.

Read in Item 10 of the plan that the developer cannot be sued for any "claim of nuisance". So, if the noise (I've been to 5 existing wind turbine sites and heard the noise at each of them) and the shadows flashing across your yard and in to your living room "bother" you, and no one wants to buy your home because of those things, you cannot seek remedy through the courts.

So, I ask you - who is protected in this plan? Not me and not the dozens of others who will live in these wind power plants. The plan has been a ruse because it has all along meant to protect the County Board, by their own admission, against their own constituents. The plan is a sham because it offers no real protection for anyone but the very party it is supposed to protect against, the developer.

The members of the Planning and Development committee were correct that night. The "protection" plan failed them. When presented this document as the only "protection" against the very real prospect of property value loss, who wouldn't sue!

Mike King

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