

Floyd County Board of Supervisors and Zoning Commission Joint Meeting
January 29, 2024, 6:00 p.m.

The Floyd County Board of Supervisors and Zoning Commission met at the Rockford Fossil and Prairie Center with the following in attendance: Board of Supervisors Mark Kuhn, Dennis Keifer, and Jim Jorgensen and Zoning Commissioners Dean Tjaden, Pam Erbe-Lines, Ben Rottinghaus, Guy Carpenter and Candi Brandau-Larson.

Supv Kuhn called the Board of Supervisor's meeting to order. Keifer/Jorgensen moved to amend the agenda to include Review/Action to set the next meeting date. Motion carried 3-0. Jorgensen/Keifer moved to approve the agenda as amended. Motion carried 3-0. Kuhn yielded the floor to Commissioner Tjaden, Zoning Commission Chair, who called the Zoning Commission meeting to order with roll call vote with those present including Tjaden and Commissioners Erbe-Lines, Rottinghaus, Carpenter and Brandau-Larson.

John Robbins, North Iowa Area Council of Governments Senior Planner, introduced the MidAmerican Energy and Alliant Energy representatives.

Jorgensen/Keifer moved to set two joint listening sessions with the board of supervisors and the zoning commission on February 12 at 6 p.m. at the Fossil & Prairie Center and February 21 at 6 p.m. at the Courthouse Emergency Operating Center. Motion carried 3-0.

Will Dougherty, MidAmerican Energy Project Developer, provided information on renewable wind energy projects across the state, shifts in generation capacity, the US and Iowa wind resource maps, and provided information on how a wind farm is developed, including various studies required, project inception considerations, turbine siting, landowner participation, and county ordinances and limits. Wind energy technology has improved with generators becoming more efficient and larger turbines capturing more wind.

Justin Foss, Alliant Energy Senior Project Manager, provided information on wind development projects, including setbacks, studies, environmental impact, drainage tile and collection, noise level comparisons, tower construction photos, and evolving technology. Foss emphasized having a road use plan to ensure roads are left in as good as or better shape after the completion of the project. Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) have become cost effective, affordable, and safe; a brief overview of BESS was reviewed including battery site location, components, software, systems, setbacks, approximate 4-hour duration when tapped, having a 20-30 year life, and new technology is not requiring lithium batteries.

Dougherty addressed questions on automatic aircraft detection lighting systems, a radar system that monitors air space 24/7, have proof of clearance technology that turns on synchronized warning lights when an aircraft is within a warning zone (horizontally within three miles and vertically within 1000 ft of the tallest turbine) that turns off immediately once the aircraft exists the warning zone. Some counties in Iowa have implemented this system in their ordinances to address light pollution at night.

MidAmerican Energy has a mix of sources including nuclear, coal, hydro, wind, gas and solar to provide energy expectations to its customers at an affordable price. The company continues to look at evolving concepts and options that are reliable, sustainable and affordable with a destination of net zero emissions goal. Green energy is very prevalent in states such as Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Iowa, Illinois, North and South Dakota.

Turbines are rated for ambient temperatures at 20 degrees to 35 degrees below Celsius. Cold weather packages are implemented to operate at low temperatures, such as heat for turbines, lubricants to keep oil hot, and enclosures on building to keep pipes from freezing.

Robbins responded to a question about Soo Green's transmission line project being an independent producer that would sell power from wind projects in our area that would be fed elsewhere. Foss commented on fuels from where they exist are transported to where they can be used.

In response to a question regarding how integrated resource planning fits in Alliant and MidAmerican Energy processes, Foss responded Alliant has an obligation to serve customers, has standards on a certain amount of megawatts to generate and every year sets new standards to provide a certain amount to customers plus reserve. Dougherty responded that Iowa does not require integrated resource management but Alliant does resource evaluation studies and modeling to determine which energy source to use in looking at reliability, affordability, and sustainability. Wind Prime is an intervener that runs their own modeling with information provided by MidAmerican Energy.

Kuhn questioned who would be responsible for liability if a contracted tiler gets into a transmission line on property where the landowner signed an easement. Foss responded that whomever is doing the digging should call for locate services before doing any work. If a contractor hits a line, the person doing the digging is responsible, not the landowner.

Brandau-Larson questioned if other types of wind energy, other than turbines, are being considered. Dougherty said there is nothing that has reached a point of maturity that is affordable, cost effective and reliable. There are vertical access turbines and other novel designs that are for more personal use versus utility-scale use.

Brandau-Larson questioned if MidAmerican Energy intends to buy the Invenergy project. Dougherty responded that there have not been any discussions with Invenergy on the Floyd County project but they have purchased Invenergy and others projects across the U.S. and are always looking to build their generation access.

Brandau-Larson questioned battery storage capacity. Foss responded that when a battery is tapped, they measure how many megawatts it will provide and how long will it last. The battery could last for days, would be dispatched when it was needed and could be used to shave peak needs. Utility companies need lots of energy sources with each having pros and cons. Various resources are managed to generate the right type of power when it is needed to create less emissions, burn less fuel, and incur less costs. Dougherty responded that the tightest of scenarios are used based on demand versus intermittent sources to meet load requirements on the grid capacity.

Foss commented that the county needs to have a decommissioning policy to set expectations on what to do when the project is done. As a regulated utility by the utilities board, there are higher requirements to fulfill. The county needs to make sure there is a way to have money available whether it be by guarantee or surety bond that has the value for the county to access. Swati Dandekar, Bright Future for Iowa representative, recommended the surety bond is the correct amount and reviewed every five years.

Concerns of non-participating landowners versus participating landowners, who see a financial benefit of turbines, can be mitigated by having appropriate and reasonable setbacks that allow the product to be built, but not something that makes it onerous to build. For example, site, sound or shadowing nuisances can be mitigated somewhat with siting of towers and setbacks, as well as a developer who is developing a project responsibly.

A half to three-quarters of an acre is used for an access road to a turbine. Isaac laampa, Invenergy project manager, mentioned the Chickasaw County wind farm project had an average of 0.6 acres of disturbance to land due to the turbine and access road.

The county could consider stipulations in the ordinance that would require the turbine to be removed if a turbine is not being used over a certain time period or where there is obviously no repair work being conducted.

Tom Treharne, Nextera representative, and Robbins mentioned decommission of one or two turbines in Iowa and a redevelopment project where 55 small turbines on a wind farm south of Clear Lake were decommissioned successfully.

With no further questions, Commissioner Tjaden declared the Zoning Commission meeting adjourned.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Gloria Carr, Floyd County Auditor