

Benson residents want 1.5-mile wind farm setback

Village's representative says many people think a wind farm is OK, as long as it is 1.5 miles away.

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EUREKA —

Residents of Benson say they are not opposed to having a wind farm in their community but would prefer them to be at least a mile and half outside the village limits.

At a meeting of Woodford County's Conservation, Planning and Zoning Committee on Tuesday, a Village Board representative presented a letter asking the county to insert a 1.5-mile setback radius surrounding Benson to the wind farm permit.

Navitas Energy is planning to build a 52-turbine wind farm generating 100 megawatts of energy to be built on 6,000 acres west of Interstate 39. Navitas calls the project Roanoke Wind Farm LLC, although it is closer to Benson.

The map of the proposed wind farm as it stands includes about 16 turbines around the village.

"Surrounding the village of Benson with 16 turbines, some as close as .6 miles away would be detrimental to the residents' quality of life," the letter signed by Benson's Village Board members read.

This request is similar to that of the city of El Paso. Last year, County Board members approved a stipulation to the wind farm permit requiring Navitas to remove six turbines within a 1.5-mile radius of El Paso's municipal limits.

"The wind farm people came in to our June meeting and asked to put in the wind farm and showed us maps and asked if it was OK," said Village Board President Skip Brooks, who was not present at the committee meeting.

Since the board was not well-versed on the matter, it took no action, he said. Instead the board held a special meeting Monday night and invited residents to come and speak their mind.

"We asked the people of the town what their consideration was and a lot of them said they wanted to put in the setback, so we voted with the community to present it to the County Board, Brooks said. "A lot of people are in favor of the wind farm but don't want them that close to town."

The Conservation, Planning and Zoning Committee voted to forward the request for consideration by the County Board.