

Fort Kent a vote shy of wind farm moratorium

March 31, 2009

By Nick Sambides Jr. | BDN Staff

<http://www.bangordailynews.com/detail/102749.html>

FORT KENT, Maine — Townspeople came within a single vote last week of joining the small but growing number of communities statewide that want no wind power developments within their borders for 180 days, Town Manager Donald Guimond said Monday.

The article banning wind farm applications or wind farms in town for six months failed in a 45-45 vote by secret ballot during a town meeting on March 23, Guimond said Monday. The vote, which came after an hour of occasionally heated discussion, surprised Guimond.

“I have been here for 15 years and never saw a tie before,” he said.

The ban likely would not have been necessary, Guimond said.

“We as a community don’t anticipate any wind farm applications for the next two years anyway, so we will have plenty of time to make any changes to our ordinances if the changes are needed,” he said.

The towns of Dixmont, Jackson and Thorndike have passed 180-day moratoriums banning wind farm developments, saying they wanted more time to study wind farms and their impact and write regulations applying to them, a news survey done Monday revealed.

York passed an ordinance on March 23 allowing small wind turbines in all town areas except historic district or wetlands areas. The ordinance limits turbine power output to 20 kilowatts maximum, except for those on municipal lots of more than 5 acres. The noise cannot exceed 50 decibels.

Sedgwick residents voted on March 9 during their annual town meeting to turn down a moratorium on telecommunications towers, antennas and wind turbines in excess of 50 feet.

Dr. Michael A. Nissenbaum, one of the leaders of Fort Kent’s moratorium proposal, could not be reached for comment on Monday.

Seeking to deflect the efforts of Nissenbaum’s group, the Town Council voted unanimously last month to withhold its support of a moratorium on industrial wind turbines within town limits.

Proponents argue that wind farms are a safe, environmentally friendly way to generate much-needed electricity and draw industry and needed tax dollars to municipalities. Opponents say that wind farms are eyesores that damage human and animal health, lower land values and fail to generate more than a fraction of their capacity.