

Neighbors say Libertyville company's wind turbine is a nuisance

By Kathryn Dill | Special to the Tribune June 19, 2009

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/chi-wind-turbine-nw-zone-19-jun19,0,7056259.story>

The huge fan blade of the 126-foot wind turbine behind a [Libertyville](#) electrical contractor stands still now, a temporary concession to neighbors who find it a nuisance despite being touted as green energy.

The turbine, taller than any building in the north suburb and visible to drivers along busy East Rockland Road, arrived with much fanfare in April, with both Aldridge Electric and village officials calling it an energy-saver. The company, which sells small wind turbines, also is using it as a marketing tool.

Shortly after the turbine was installed -- about 275 feet from one resident's backyard -- neighbors began complaining about noise, light from the turbine's reflective surface and the "flicker effect" created by the rotating fan blade.

The turbine was turned off about two weeks ago while the two sides agreed to enter mediation over the situation. But company officials said they may turn it on again as early as next week.

About 35 residents who live near Aldridge's property met with company officials Tuesday night to discuss the turbine. Neighbors expressed a range of opinions, including concerns about potential long-term health effects.

"The noise is much louder than I ever thought it would be," said Gary Newell, who says he is using portable fans and ear plugs to drown out the noise of the turbine while he sleeps. "It awakens you."

Laurie Renz, whose backyard is next to Aldridge's property at 844 E. Rockland Rd., said the noise reverberates through her house constantly, and she began suffering severe headaches, nausea and vomiting when the turbine was installed.

"There's no way to get away from it," Renz said. "The only thing I can do is leave my house."

Some neighbors, though, said the turbine is not a problem, and that even with it, Aldridge is a quieter neighbor than the factory that previously occupied the property.

"We learned to live with [the noise from the factory]," said Dave Bates, who has lived near what is now Aldridge's property for 30 years. "I like it, I think it's cool," said neighbor Rosemary Boortz. "It doesn't bother me, but I respect that it does bother some people."

Richard Porter, a Rockford attorney who has represented citizens groups opposing wind farms and has been hired to represent some of the neighbors, said he found the turbine's location and noise "quite surprising."

"It's just a few hundred feet from a residential area ... it's extremely loud," Porter said.

The Village of Libertyville approved the turbine plan but has not been involved in the mediation process, officials said.

Though company representatives said they would take neighbors' concerns into consideration and may limit the hours it rotates each day, their position on the matter remained clear.

"I am going to run this turbine, and I'm trying to understand what it is that's really interfering with people's lives," said company owner Ken Aldridge.

About five families have been pooling savings and 401(k) funds to afford the legal fees associated with the dispute, said resident Dave Gates. They live in mostly smaller brick homes in what Renz described as a middle-class neighborhood.

Renz used money she had saved to build a patio and fence in her yard. "Everybody's scrounging, and we're just about scrounged out," she said.

Gates said a meeting between company officials and neighbors was scheduled for June 30, but a representative of Aldridge Electric walked door-to-door June 12 to inform residents about Tuesday's meeting. Residents were required to sign a form stating they would attend the meeting in order to receive a copy of the announcement, which also stated that the turbine could be reactivated as soon as Tuesday, Gates said.

"I'll do whatever I can to make sure [the turbine] does not go on in a week because I can't live like that," Renz said.