

Turbines may grind to a halt

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BY ED COLLINS Special to the News-Sun



http://www.suburbanchicagonews.com/newssun/news/1692509,5_1_WA30_WINDMO_S1-090730.article

LIBERTYVILLE -- After hearing a litany of complaints about noise from angry neighbors of an industrial wind turbine, village trustees Tuesday promised to initiate a temporary moratorium at their next meeting on granting any more such permits until the noise problem is resolved.

In March, Aldrich Electric, 844 E. Rockland Road, installed a 140-foot monopole tower with a three-bladed propeller generating 50 kilowatts of energy. The turbine is a client demonstration project for their recent affiliation with Entegri Wind Systems, a leading Canadian manufacturer of commercial-grade wind turbines. The company recently opened a sales office in Evanston.

Until noise problems are resolved, Libertyville officials may slap a moratorium on future wind turbines.

Although many of the neighbors say they are supportive of the green movement, they maintain the constant noise of the nearby whirring propeller and 50-kilowatt turbine has created a public nuisance.

Tuesday night, the Village Board invited the group to voice their complaints to the trustees.

Dave Gates, who is serving as spokesman for the neighborhood group called Citizens for the Protection of Libertyville, said the turbine should not be located next to residents.

"Even the turbine manufacturer suggests the industrial equipment is not suited to nearby residential areas," he said. "Our group was lied to about the turbine's noise levels when the Plan Commission first held a public hearing on this matter last November.

"Then in February, the Village Board allowed Aldrich Electric to change the original location of the turbine. They placed it closer to residential areas without providing any public notice or even consulting with the Plan Commission," he said.

Gates said the fed-up neighbors have now pooled funds and taken the matter to Lake County Circuit Court where Judge Mitchell Hoffmann has validated their concerns by restricting the turbine to run only during the daytime.

Gates says he has also hired a sound engineer to measure decibels in the neighborhood next month and compare results with authorized village noise requirements.

Neighbor Russ Dunn also criticized the village for allowing Aldrich Electric to install such industrial equipment next to a residential subdivision.

"Why wasn't more consideration given to our neighborhood tranquility?" he asked.

Tim Barkules said his home is probably the closest to the noise source and he said the noise is a real problem.

"It sounds like a helicopter that never takes off," he said.

Sandra Cooper said she moved to the subdivision seeking peace and quiet. Instead, her ability to enjoy her home has been constantly sullied "by a most abusive sound" coming from the turbine.

Donald Connor said the turbine noise level "sounds like having a jet plane taking off in your back yard. It's an absolute nuisance and should be promptly removed."

Laurie Rentz accused the Plan Commission of not following its zoning code. She questioned the non-reflective glossy white paint applied to the 140-foot tower and blades, and lack of safety warning signs in the vicinity of the turbine electrical generating equipment, among other things.

Newly elected Mayor Terry Wepler told the group that on the advice of village counsel he could not comment on the situation because the matter is in litigation. However, he promised serious consideration of their complaints.