



## Offshore wind farm?

### Public comment sought, meetings to be scheduled

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Developers planning an offshore wind farm in Lake Michigan met with local government representatives Tuesday morning to discuss their plans.

Those plans are still very general, said Mason County Administrator Fabian Knizacky and Ludington City Manager John Shay.

The next step, both agreed, is to schedule public meetings in both Mason and Oceana counties to gain feedback about the idea from area residents.



“We really want to see what the general public from both counties feels about this,” said Shay. “We’re looking at public meetings in each county to get public input.”

He said the meetings will give company representatives chances to explain their plans and goals and give the public chances to ask questions.

“We think that’s the first thing they should do and we suggested that should happen up front and they were agreeable,” said Knizacky.

“I don’t think this is a situation where we have control, but they want us to be part of the process,” he added about the developers meeting with the government representatives to seek their support for the plan.

Eight local people — representing Ludington, Mason County, Pere Marquette Township, Summit Township, Oceana County and Pentwater — attended the Tuesday morning meeting.

Few details available

Information about the potential project released to the Ludington Daily News by Harald Dirdal, a project manager with Havgul Clean Energy, and Steve Warner, CEO of Scandia Wind, do not specify how many wind towers the project will include, how big the towers will be, where they would be located or how much electricity they would produce.

Dirdal did say, however, “we’re looking at a lot of towers.”

Warner added that the offshore wind farm would have to be big to be worth all the expense of building the towers offshore.

The developers did say they are interested in the local area because of its proximity to the electricity distribution grid — through the Ludington Pumped Storage Plant — and large electricity consumption areas in Chicago, Detroit and other cities.

“We’ve been looking at it for a while, exploring the possibilities,” Dirdal said, adding that his company is interested in developing plans for the project and then selling them to a company that will build and operate the wind farm.

Havgul has already developed plans for the Havsul I wind farm off the northwest coast of Norway, according to Reuters news service, and then sold it in June. That offshore wind farm is not expected to be built until 2011 and won’t be operational until 2012.

Dirdal said building a large offshore wind farm in this area of Michigan should also stimulate the economy by providing construction jobs as well as jobs at factories manufacturing the parts for the wind turbines.

He said the project could be a prototype for others and concentrate wind energy manufacturing jobs in Michigan because of its unique position in the Great Lakes.

Dirdal and Warner said they are seeking local support for the project and started with representatives of the local government because they are elected to represent area residents.

“We cannot do anything unless we get support from the local municipalities,” Dirdal said.

Shay and Knizacky said they want to learn what the public feels about the proposal before considering any action to support the construction of wind towers in the lake.

What’s next

Since the developers are planning to place the wind towers offshore — sinking their bases in the Lake Michigan bottomlands — they will need approval for the work from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, said Tom Graf, environmental quality analyst for the DEQ.

Graf said the DEQ and Corps have joint jurisdiction over granting permits for offshore projects, and said they have not yet developed criteria for use in reviewing applications for offshore wind energy facilities.

Dirdal said he understands there are many people who have a stake in what is constructed in Lake Michigan and he expects public hearings on the issue and also to meet with many of the stakeholders in less structured settings, such as over a cup of coffee.

Shay expects public meetings will be scheduled to give people a chance to ask questions about the plans and said those meetings should be promoted to give people a chance to attend.

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