

September 29, 2014

A public hearing to receive public oral and written submissions on a proposed amendment to section 4.2 of the Municipality's Land Use By-Law was held at the Plymouth Fire Hall on Monday, September 29, 2014 at 7:00 p.m.

PRESENT

Ronald Baillie Warden

Andy Thompson, Deputy Warden

Sally Fraser

Deborah Wadden

Edward MacMaster

Robert Parker

Jim Turple

David Parker

Leonard Fraser

Larry Turner

Jamie Davidson

Chester Dewar

Randy Palmer

ABSENT

Scott Johnston

IN ATTENDANCE

Brian Cullen, Chief Administrative Officer/Municipal Clerk-Treasurer

Carolyn MacIntosh, Deputy Municipal Clerk

Jane Johnson, Recording Secretary

WIND ENERGY BY-LAW AMENDMENT

Warden Baillie welcomed approximately 55 residents of the Municipality to the meeting, advising that the meeting had been relocated to this venue in order to provide a more central location that would accommodate a larger audience and provide an amplified public address system. Warden Baillie explained Council is in attendance this evening to listen to the presentations and will have the opportunity to debate the amendment at second reading which will take place at the October 6, 2014 Council meeting. Only those Council members present this evening will be eligible to vote at the October 6th meeting. He asked that speakers come to the microphone and identify themselves for the record prior to beginning their comments. Each speaker will be given 10 minutes to convey their position on the proposed amendment and they are asked to confine their remarks to the amendment only which has been circulated to everyone in attendance. Time constraints will be closely observed and everyone is asked to respect those limitations. Four individuals have identified their wish to speak in advance of the hearing so the speaking order will begin with those individuals, following which presentations will be entertained from the floor.

MICHAEL PIERCE, BRAESHORE (7:05 P.M.)

Mr. Michael Pierce of Braeshore addressed Council as follows:

"Members of Council and fellow residents:

My name is Michael Pierce, my wife Norma and I have lived in Braeshore, Pictou County for 7 years. During my working life I served for 20 years with the Manitoba Government where I had responsibility for crown land allocation in the northern part of the

province and I developed environmental regulations to mitigate the effects of development on individuals and communities.

The move towards green energy is a position one; wind power has the potential to reduce our reliance on carbon fuels and to assist us in the battle to minimize the effects of global warming. However, industrial scale wind turbines are not benign; their scale dwarfs the rural landscape including people, farms, outbuildings, residence and the forest itself. They have a serious impact on human health caused by repetitive and intrusive noise, and strobe lighting effects. Bird populations have been decimated, and land values negatively impacted by these developments.

The Planning amendment to increase the set back from 600 m to 1,000 m will give a much needed increase in protection for Pictou County residents. The authority to grant a reduction to 600 m with the permission of owners within the parameter is not positive and has the potential to create conflict between neighbors in the area.

The process, by which the proponents of the turbines have put forward their proposals, has in many instances been less than forthright. Public meetings arranged with no advance notice and in locations removed from the venue under consideration. Land agreements privately reached with land owners. These measures leave surrounding residents vulnerable, with little protection except to try and ensure adequate zoning. In Braeshore during 2010 we were faced with exactly the problems outlined above.

Wind Prospects charged with promoting wind development under the COMFIT program proposed a 400 m turbine in the center of the area. Agreement was reached with an absentee owner to place the turbine on their land. A public meeting was arranged in New Glasgow. Subsequently through pressure this was changed to a local hall. During these meetings Wind Prospects argued that it was our moral duty to approve the turbine. During this process a petition protesting the development was circulated among the affected residents gaining signatures representing over 95% of the residents. This pressure eventually resulted in Wind Prospects withdrawing their proposal.

In an effort to reduce the environmental impact of the turbines the majority of jurisdictions both in North America and worldwide have adopted zoning regulations. These zoning measures range from no go zones where no turbines are allowed to set backs ranging from a few hundred feet to in excess of 2 km. These setback distances vary according to the size of the turbines and the nature of the land use on which the structures are to be placed.

The proposal by the Council to increase the setback from residences from 600 m to a 1,000 m is a very positive step and the Council is to be commended for bringing it forward. A 1,000 m seems like a long way but given the scale of the turbines it is a minimal distance.

Rural areas including those in Nova Scotia are under attack, a way of life and a landscape which has been relatively undisturbed is being changed dramatically. Once a major development is established it can take generations to alleviate the impact and in most instances the change is irreversible. There are many areas of the province which are relatively underdeveloped and would not present a major impact on residents. These areas do not seem to be receiving the same attention from the proponents as are developed lands, principally because the means of access is limited and the cost of development higher. It is time these areas were identified and given priority for wind turbine development.

The regional Council has a responsibility to ensure that all development represents the best interests of all its residents. The protection provided by adequate zoning should ensure that no individual or group of individuals should be alone in their struggle to protect their way of life. For most individuals their home is their major investment and it is chosen to reflect the kind of life they wish to lead. This must be protected and Council has a responsibility to ensure that all wind turbine development proposals receive a rigorous public review prior to approval.

I urge Council to adopt this minimal measure to protect your constituents, a way of live and a landscape which is admired around the world. A heritage which once lost will not be achieved again.

I thank you for your attention.”

BILLY MACDONALD, MACBETH ROAD, DIAMOND (7:10 P.M.)

Mr. Billy MacDonald of Diamond informed Council that he was strongly in favor of this amendment but did not believe that the proposed setback distance goes far enough yet. Mr. MacDonald reported that he has experience living in close proximity to the Dalhousie Wind Farm as he lives on the MacBeth Road that is 4 km. from the wind turbines. There has been a significant change in noise levels and vibrations and it is very loud on a low pressure night. Mr. MacDonald reported that he spent time at the River John turbine where he experienced a vibration from the turbine. Even at a distance of 1 km. the prevailing winds make a big difference in the noise and vibration levels. The Dalhousie Mountain site has a very heavy buzzing sound and vibrations from the wind turbines and there has been a noticeable impact on local flora and fauna and a decrease in local wildlife. Mr. MacDonald pointed out that it is very hard to take a group through the area with these distractions that takes away from nature. People are trying to remain in the rural areas and even though 1 km. is a more appropriate distance it is still not enough. Since the wind turbines were installed on Dalhousie Mountain there has even been a decrease in wildlife. Mr. MacDonald informed Council that Reuben Burge was at his home and could not believe you could hear the wind turbines at a distance of 4 km.

SCOTT AIKENS, BRAESHORE (7:20 P.M.)

Mr. Scott Aikens reported that he has been a resident of Pictou County and has lived the last 14 years in Braeshore. He commended Council for holding this public hearing and informed Council that he has worked in China and Poland for Michelin where public meetings such as this evening do not happen.

Mr. Aikens reported that he was in favor of the amendment and presented facts to Council on wind turbine development. Technical developments of any kind are great but they have to be controlled very carefully. Simple technical advances in the past were broadly used that could have been researched a bit better prior to being put into use. Mr. Aikens referred to asbestos that was used in the 1960's and 70's as insulation and even though it was a great insulator we did not understand the health impacts it created. Mr. Aikens informed Council that wind turbines create electrical energy without any CO₂ emissions and they also provide investment opportunities for any developer to make financial gains. When a wind turbine is located close to a residence the resale value of that residence will depreciate. Wind turbines also create high frequency that you can hear, creaking sounds when the tower rotates, a whooshing sound as the blades rotate and a winning sound from the generator.

There is no leadership from the Federal and Provincial levels of Government on the issue and in Canada wind tower setback legislation is the responsibility of the Municipal level of government. Mr. Aikens commended Council for considering this amendment.

Mr. Aikens reported there have been studies in Australia and Wales that have determined the health of people who live in the vicinity of a wind turbine have increased stress levels. Wind turbines is not an issue for people who do not have wind turbines in their area. Mr. Aikens asked those Councillors who do not have wind turbines in their area to support this amendment in a proactive mode and Councillors who do have turbines in their area to support this resolution in a reactive mode.

SUSAN MOLAND, BRAESHORE – 7:30 P.M.

Ms. Susan Moland informed Council that she represents 30 people who attended a meeting at the Caribou Fire Hall, many of whom are present her this evening. Those residents believe that Council is moving in the right direction, however, they do not like the opportunity for businesses who want to come closer than 1,000 metres. Ms. Moland encouraged Councillors to learn as much as they could about wind turbines, as if they were encroaching as close as 600 metres from their homes. She closed by thanking Council for this hearing and encouraging Council members to continue to listen to their residents.

MICHAEL REID, MONCTON, 7:35 P.M.

Mr. Michael Reid reported that he owns a cottage in Braeshore and informed Council that he was a retired Civil Aviation Inspector where he was responsible for approving the location of wind turbines in Atlantic Canada. He reported when wind farm development is being considered the first step is the installation of devices that continually monitor the wind turbine conditions in an area for several years. Mr. Reid reported that some of these turbines are 440 ft. high with a rotor 80 m. in diameter. There is a lot of money involved with these wind farms and when a company chooses an area they offer money to certain individuals who will agree to put these turbines on their property. Mr. Reid pointed out the lights on the

turbines flashing at night are very disturbing especially the white lights. We should consider the wind turbines will be getting larger at more excessive heights so they can capture the higher winds. A long term goal for these wind turbine companies is have the turbines running non-stop, although the winds often subside in the evenings. Mr. Reid urged Council to vote for the amendment because it is a step in the right direction. Once the turbines are built they are here to stay so they come a distraction not an attraction and, in addition to many health hazards associated with wind turbines, they do kill large birds.

WARD BRUBACHER, TOWER ROAD (7:40 P.M.)

Mr. Ward Brubacher informed Council that he lives on the Tower Road and his home is located 750 m. from 2 wind turbines and a 3rd turbine is to be installed next year. Mr. Brubacher reported that he hoped that no one has to go through what he has gone through because it has been very stressful. He informed Council that he has lived on Fitzpatrick Mountain for 40 years and it was a very pristine and quiet area until the turbines were installed. The turbines had flashing white lights that were very annoying and it took a long time to get them to change to red lights. Once the owners get the wind turbines established they usually move on and sell out to investment companies who do not know anything about turbines. Mr. Brubacher could not believe that Council wants to add a clause in the amendment that would allow turbines to be installed at a 600 m setback distance from residences. It was his opinion that this will pit neighbor against neighbor and he did not believe the residents should not be put in this situation. Mr. Brubacher suggested that the amendment should increase the wind turbine distance only to 1,000 m without the ability to reduce the setback to 600 m, thereby eliminating any potential conflict.

JOHN URE, TOWER ROAD (7:50 P.M.)

Mr. John Ure informed Council that many people favor this type of energy development as an alternative to coal-fired electricity. He acknowledged that we do need responsible economic development that takes into consideration existing homes when placing these wind turbines and did not believe that they should be placed where people living close by. Mr. Ure reported that he bought land on the Tower Road 34 years ago because of the peace and quiet but now the turbines have been installed too close to homes. His own home is only 400 m from the first turbine and he was concerned that if this amendment does not pass then more turbines will be installed on the Tower Road.

NOVA POIRIER, MACBETH ROAD, DIAMOND (7:55 P.M.)

Ms. Nova Poirier expressed her concern for people who have wind turbines in their back yards as many of these people are effected by sounds from the turbines. She confirmed that there are inaudible vibrations felt from these turbines and some people are very sensitive to these sounds which has to be very detrimental to their health. Ms. Poirier suggested that we all should take a serious look at these turbines because they are degrading a rural way of life. She does believe that Council is moving in the right direction with this amendment but suggested that there is a lot more work to do.

JEREMY LECLARE, PICTOU LANDING ROAD – 8:00 P.M.

Mr. Jeremy LeClare reported that he lives on the Pictou Landing Road and informed Council that he does not want any wind turbines near his property which would ruin his enjoyment of his property.

ROD DESBOROUGH, BRAESHORE, 8:05 P.M.

Mr. Rob Desborough reported that he has been a land owner in Braeshore since 1970 and supports the speakers that made presentations this evening as well as Council but he does not understand the out clause that would allow a reduction in the setback from 1,000 m to 600 m because it makes no sense.

CONCLUSION

Warden Baillie thanked everyone for their presentations this evening which Council will take under advisement in preparation for second reading of the amendment on October 6th. He clarified that the decision on the 6th will be “yea” or “nay” for the amendment as it is currently drafted since no substantive amendments are permitted at this point. If the motion passes, the amendment take effect immediately; if the amendment is defeated, it cannot be brought back before Council until 2 months have elapsed (except with the approval of 2/3 of the Council). If it again defeated, it cannot be brought back to Council until 12 months have elapsed.

The meeting concluded at 8:00 p.m.

Ronald Baillie
Warden

Brian Cullen
Municipal Clerk