

Wind Turbines Meeting

August 8, 2018

3:02 p.m.

Present: Commissioner Fund, Commissioner Jackson, Commissioner Stamper, Karen Witherspoon, John Kliem, Matt Matayoshi, Dianne Dorey, Eric Eisenberg, Lee Napier

Recorder: Rieva Lester

Lee Napier recapped the commissioners' July 16 meeting with Paul Jewell.

Dianne Dorey said state-assessed utilities are utilities between two counties, such as BPA transmission lines. She said the owner's value is divvied up between the various counties involved. Dianne said state-assessed utilities provide a nice bump at the beginning, but she stressed that they are volatile.

Dianne said wind turbines are considered personal property but that they can count as new construction. She noted that Thurston County will get a portion of the value.

She cautioned that the first-year value won't be duplicated the following year (or subsequent years) due to depreciation.

She said it appears roughly 19,300 acres will be leased for the Skookumchuck project. She said it sounds like 1,000 acres will have to be removed from the Designated Forest Land program. She said the compensating taxes will be a one-time windfall, albeit small, for the county and the various districts.

Dianne said the county and schools may negotiate mitigation during the permit process.

Eric Eisenberg and Dianne clarified that the mitigation request would be to help offset others' future tax obligations regarding levies linked to the turbines' original pre-depreciation values.

Becky Butler asked if there would need to be a separate agreement

Lee Napier discussed including verbiage in the EIS or possibly creating a developers' agreement.

Commissioner Stamper left at 3:34 p.m.

Eric discussed the use of a contract to cover the mitigation.

Dianne said RES Americas likely will set up the project then sell it to Puget Sound Energy (PSE).

Becky asked about the severance tax. Dianne said Lewis County does not have one. Lee said the county may be able to levy a special severance tax.

TO-DO LIST / RECAP

Treasurer's Office: Reach out to Kittitas County regarding severance taxes.

Eric Eisenberg: Reach out to Kittitas County PA's office regarding land use and development linked to their wind turbines.

Commissioner Stamper returned at 3:37 p.m.

Commissioner Jackson left at 3:37 p.m.

Dianne suggested speaking to the assessors in Kittitas County and Columbia County about severance taxes.

Eric said SEPA includes the study of socio-economic impacts. Eric said the SEPA allows counties to impose mitigation related to the areas they study.

Commissioner Jackson returned at 3:41 p.m.

Becky discussed the need to identify the districts that have bonds and / or M&O levies that would be affected.

Dianne said the mitigation amount can be determined using the following formula: use the project's original assessment as the top number and 20 percent of the original assessment as the bottom number then divide that total evenly over 19 years to determine the mitigation amount.

Becky left at 3:51 p.m. and returned at 3:53 p.m.

Dianne said the turbines generally have a life expectancy of 20 years.

Dianne said the county should discuss cleanup, etc. regarding decommissioning. She said decommissioning should be revisited every five years.

The group discussed fire concerns.

The group discussed reaching out to Walla Walla, Columbia, Whitman, Kittitas, Klickitat, Garfield and Whitman counties regarding their experiences with wind farms.

Lee said the county's military contact has met with representatives of the Skookumchuck project.

Dianne noted that the earliest the Skookumchuck project would affect the county would be the year 2020. Becky noted that compensating taxes and sales tax on materials may have an impact on 2019.

The commissioners said Lee can continue working with Eric, Erik and Dianne.

Meeting adjourned at 4:21 p.m.