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COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION CHALLENGES WIND FARM LAW

In the Wyoming County town of Orangeville frustrated residents are surrounded on three sides with wind farms in neighboring towns. Unable to get their own town to look at growing research on wind turbine noise and the degree to which visual blight hurts local property values, today they filed a lawsuit against the town board.

“Noise limits and setback distances from turbines to homes were dictated by Invenergy,” the company planning a 59-turbine wind farm in Orangeville, according to Cathi Orr, president of Clear Skies Over Orangeville. “We submitted dozens of research studies and even hired our own acoustic engineer to comment on wind farm regulations, but the town board ignored it all,” said Orr.

Last fall, the Orangeville town board adopted noise limits and other standards for siting a wind farm, but “it looks like most of the five town board members had friends or family, or themselves already bound by contracts to site turbines or transmission lines on their land,” according to the group’s attorney Gary Abraham. “This is not environmentally responsible, particularly considering that no electricity would be generated for the town. Who benefits?” asked Abraham.

Clear Skies’ lawsuit claims Orangeville town board members violated state ethics laws and state environmental regulations by adopting a local law that allows wind farms too close to residential property. “They tailored the wind law to the wind industry’s wishes while disregarding growing evidence that complaints will follow,” according to Darryl Dickinson, who filed a statement with the lawsuit. Dickinson is a member of the town’s planning board. “They needed to look at the research, and the complaints of people in Sheldon and Eagle, but they didn’t,” Dickinson said.

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