

In response to an application by Seneca Mountain Wind corporation for up to 25 500' wind turbines in our viewshed, the Brighton Selectboard and Brighton Planning Commission have taken the position espoused by the majority of Brighton voters and taxpayers—no large industrial wind towers in Brighton.

Brighton thus joins the neighboring towns of Newark, Westmore and Charleston, all three regional newspapers, most of our NEK legislators, the regional planning commission, and local conservation groups, in asking for a moratorium on the continued construction destruction on Vermont's precious environment.

Brighton has invested heavily in the tourist economy, based on advice from the state of Vermont to develop that resource. Brighton's and Vermont's scenic beauty is fundamentally incompatible with the construction of 500' tall wind turbines dominating the view. You do not see pictures of wind turbines on any mountain ridges displayed prominently on the website of Vermont's Tourism and Recreation Department website.

Brighton feels that the erection of 500' tall turbines in what journalist Paul Lefebvre calls the "Upper Kingdom" would be very visibly out of character with the surroundings of this most pristine area in Vermont. If 25 500' tall structures are not out of character with our surroundings, I'm not sure what would be. There is no such thing as mitigating the impact of 500' tall industrial towers—they will dominate everything. To pretend that they aren't there or that they are nice looking is like dressing them in the Emperor's new clothes.

The real question is whether the benefit is indeed a societal benefit, as the PSB puts it. The PSB appears to have taken the circular position that wind projects are in the public good, because they're to the good of the public. But there is a growing body of evidence that suggests that the benefit may not outweigh the cost. Much of the evidence in favor of industrial wind comes from those who stand to profit the most. We need an objective analysis of the true impact on property values, tourism, wildlife, etc. We should not be forced to give bat killing permits after the fact because it's too late to do anything about it anyway. We need to get away from the proposition that the town that hosts the turbines gets more of a say in the process than all the surrounding towns that often get a better view. At this large a scale, the impact is definitely regional. The PSB would have us believe that beyond a few miles, the turbines have little visual impact, but the fact is that one can see all the Lowell turbines easily from E. Charleston 25 miles away.

We support renewable energy, in appropriate places. We believe there is a crisis in global warming that must be addressed, but Vermont ridgelines and their wildlife deserve a better fate than being ripped up to satisfy a well-intentioned goal that is more political than it is practical.

We environmentalists have all looked at West Virginia with disdain because of the destruction of their mountaintops mining coal. While the destruction here for turbines is not as vast as that in WV, it does give you some insight into the thinking that allowed that destruction to occur. Our need for energy, hoggish though it may be, continues to trump the environment. I never thought it would be the environmentalists who paved paradise.