Observations, Concerns, and Conclusions About the Wind Farm Controversy in Hammond, NY
--A Briefing Paper\(^1\) by DW Szetela of Chippewa Point--

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\(^1\) Unlike a “White Paper” this “Briefing Paper” lacks the detailed research (and footnoting) of all aspects of its subject. Instead, it explores views regarding an issue in a more general manner and from the author's personal perspective—albeit based on serious research. While limited in scope, a paper such as this must still be as truthful, accurate, and defensible as the author can produce. I have tried to avoid absolute statements when I know my information is limited. For example, I may state: "I could find no evidence" as opposed to "There is no evidence." Despite this caution, some readers will find reason to take me to task. I am open to correction or civil discussion.
I. **FOREWORD**

This paper tracks the author's personal experiences, research, and thoughts about the Wind Farm/Energy controversy now underway in Hammond, NY. An undercurrent of citizen concerns became a "cause célèbre" when the Town Board enacted a law that would govern the placement and regulation of wind turbines within our community. (Collectively, such turbines are known as a "Wind Farm.")

It is emphasized that this is one person's assessment. While it is based on both personal experiences and considerable research, it is NOT a comprehensive history—either of Wind Energy in general or the Hammond Wind Law in particular. Nonetheless, it does promise to hew faithfully to the principles of intellectual honesty and public service that were at the core of my 27 year career in Albany (1969-1996) under the unique governance structure of The State Board of Regents and their administrative arm—The New York State Education Department.

Some readers may want more information about the author's perspective and qualifications. To supply that sort of information, I have included a brief Appendix. The information it contains will also help illuminate the purposes of this report as well as some of the factors that both guided its development and limited its breadth and depth.

None of the protagonists in the current conflict directed my research or the writing of this document. This Paper is mine and mine alone. I proclaim it to be in the public domain—without any restriction regarding its reproduction, citation, or use. That said, I do hope that somehow this Paper might advance the cause of reason in the face of a growing and emotional battleground. It is hard to build a public consensus in such a charged atmosphere; but we must try. Essential to success is a willingness to let go of dogma and blind advocacy while embracing the techniques of academic research, respectful discussion, and constructive debate.

In our "politically correct" world, there is a tendency to find negative connotations in even the simplest of truths. Critical thought and analysis often get obscured by this. So I want to urge my readers to recognize facts as facts—and not as judgments. Here is an example: Six months ago I might have been described as "ignorant" of even the simplest things about Wind Energy. That would have been a fact—not a personal condemnation.

So, when I cite negative aspects of Wind Energy or Wind Farms, please resist the temptation to see these observations as negative conclusions about the subject as a whole. No worthwhile endeavor is free of limitations and drawbacks. And we cannot make informed choices about public policy issues without considering and weighing all the information we can gather.

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2 Unlike most agencies in Albany, The State Education Department is not under the direct control of the State Governor—but rather a group of 16 distinguished citizens known as “The State Board of Regents.” The Regents are appointed for seven year terms by joint session of the Legislature. They then appoint the Commissioner of Education and, at his recommendation, the Five Deputy Commissioners who direct each of the five distinct Offices under the Regents purview. This provides a unique and relatively “non-political” environment. Idealism, intellectual honesty, and a view of the long term needs of the public are paramount. The Board of Regents has been in continuous operation since 1784—three years BEFORE the adoption of the United States Constitution.
Recent personal experiences and some serious research have led me away from an almost automatic acceptance of Wind Energy to a better understanding of its place in the smorgasbord of energy production. Making, transporting, and consuming energy is pure science. But some advocating for or against “Wind” sound more like theologians than critical thinkers. Even apparently “simple” terms have distinct meaning to the experts. For example, I have learned that it is technically incorrect to refer to “Wind” as an ALTERNATE source of energy. The correct term is a SUPPLEMENTAL source. Any attempt to evaluate new models for meeting America’s energy needs to be approached with this sort of distinction in mind.

Like any technology, there are benefits and downsides to Wind Energy that call for caution and balance in efforts to implement it and to place it in a measured context. In the rush to find some way to reduce our dependence on “foreign oil” we must spend our precious dollars where they will do the most good—not on promises or speculation about results that may never materialize. A dollar spent today on some existing (and even old) technology is a dollar we will not have available to spend tomorrow when some promising/breakthrough technology needs funding.

II. INTRODUCTION

Last fall a friend invited me to attend a meeting of “concerned citizens.” At the time, I was not aware that a Wind Law had been passed by our Town Board. Further, I had no personal opinions about Wind Energy other than that which had been embraced by society as “conventional wisdom”—to wit: Wind Energy is good, clean, cheap, renewable, and home grown. I had much to learn about energy. For example, of the top 8 nations that provide us with crude oil ONLY ONE is in the Persian Gulf; and that’s Saudi Arabia—a longtime ally. Kuwait, another Persian Gulf ally, sends only 12% of its crude output to the United States. And we import more oil from countries such as Nigeria and the United Kingdom than we do from Iraq! (Iraq has been DECLINING as a source for several years.)

During the past several months I have conducted extensive research on energy in general and Wind Energy in particular. I brought to the investigation a lifelong career of experience in both public policy development and the conduct of governmental functions. From this perspective, I cannot give passing grades to our Town officials with respect to their handling of “Wind.” They seem to joyously embrace Wind Farms/Energy as “the future of Hammond” and as something approaching a patriotic duty. They do this despite the utter lack of empirical facts to justify their position. They seem to accept wind without necessarily understanding it. I find that troubling; and perhaps a trifle suspicious.

During my period of study, I have attended some sixteen meetings (of various groups in a variety of venues) and made nearly forty new acquaintances. I have also spent more than 600 hours researching the topic. Up to this point, I have been struck by two, VERY TELLING, things. And these two things ALONE indicate to me that Hammond is not properly prepared to make the decision (virtually irreversible) to build a Wind Farm.
First: I have never heard any of our Town’s elected officials say ANYTHING about the limitations, drawbacks, or problems with Wind Farms/Energy. Nothing negative—EVER. When it comes to this topic, they all seem to be reading from the same gospel. That should be very troubling to Hammond Residents. Their Town Board wants to let a big corporation set up operations to “MINE OUR AIR” and to do it with no guarantee that we will receive a fair share of the profits. So I am compelled to ask: “WHY?”

Second: I have spoken to dozens of average citizens who, like myself, came to this topic as “Wind Farm friendly” and then conducted some independent research on the topic. NONE of these people say that their views about Wind Farms/Energy have become more favorable as a result of their investigation. To independent thinkers—even people predisposed to favor “Wind”—the FACTS seem always to TEMPER enthusiasm. Could these people know something the Town Board doesn’t?

It is a fundamental truth that local officials in small towns like ours lack the staff, experience, and other resources needed to consider multifaceted issues in a thorough manner. Many aspects of Wind Energy call for broader statewide and even national studies and policies. It would be unfair to expect our local officials to know and do all the things their counterparts know and do at the State and National level.

That said, there are things we CAN expect of our officials. For example, we CAN expect them to know their own limitations. And we CAN expect them to proceed cautiously (even skeptically) when dealing with powerful forces. And we CAN expect them to lead by example. And we CAN expect them to try to unite the community, not divide it. And we CAN expect them to act without prejudice toward any of the groups comprising our Town. And we CAN expect them to be forthright. And we CAN expect them to involve us in meaningful ways when a decision will affect every one of us, every day, for years to come. And we CAN expect them to not mortgage our future by embracing rosy, short term conjecture in lieu of balanced, long term vision.

Our Board’s performance, measured against these expectations, has been very disappointing. Further, while a small number of property owners will gain many thousands of dollars for allowing wind turbines on their property, the vast number of town residents may gain little to nothing. The same has been reported to be true in some of the other towns where Wind Farms have already been built. If Wind Turbines are ever built in Hammond, they should only be allowed if there is a direct and guaranteed benefit for every resident who has to pay an electrical bill.

III. FINDINGS/OBSERVATIONS ABOUT THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

Late last year the Hammond Town Board passed a new law that would govern the construction and operation of Wind Farms in our community. I expect that elected officials are satisfied with the process they followed to get “public input.” I view their efforts differently. It is of little use to invite the public to speak at a hearing when the issues are so complex and the body of knowledge in the community so limited. The public cannot participate in a meaningful way on matters such as this without some preliminary program of “public education.”
People aren’t stupid. They know the difference between being invited to speak so that the Board can say: “you had your chance” and being invited because the Board is interested in an exchange of views preliminary to decision making. I personally witnessed the Board conduct a “hearing” on another matter several weeks ago. Many people in attendance couldn’t even be sure what was under consideration or why.

While possessing limited resources, much more could have been done if the Board really wanted a balanced picture. Here is one simple example: I have found no evidence that our Town Board made a systematic effort to seek, receive, and debate formal testimony from either elected officials or residents of other towns where Wind Farms have already been built. Surely there is something to be learned from the experience of others. Was the Board disinterested? Were they afraid of what they would hear?

There is another facet of the process that troubles me. There is virtually no written or recorded record detailing the information the Board used in making its decisions. Similarly, there was little if any public deliberation by the Board of the many complex (and sometimes controversial) topics that needed to be weighed and decided upon. It would be naïve in the extreme to think that, despite the lack of any meaningful debate or dialogue, the process was thorough and balanced. To the contrary, I have heard over and over that this was a “done deal” right from the start.”

There are hundreds of millions of dollars being invested in New York by huge (often foreign controlled) Wind Energy Companies. The reason is simple: They expect to make hundreds of millions of dollars in profits. To be sure, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with that. But it does suggest that this is a high stakes game needing extreme impartiality by public officers. Further, there is no indication that the Town Board has ever sought information on such fundamental questions as: “What is the total cost of building a Wind Farm in Hammond?” “What is the source of funding for this construction?” “Who profits? and “By how much?” To many of the folks I’ve talked to about this subject, “wind power” seems as much about political power and financial power as it is Megawatts generated. Those concerns are legitimate and they need to be explored and addressed.

Several town residents tell me that they tried to confirm rumors that the Board was getting ready to vote on a ”Wind Law.” They say that their inquiries were met with obfuscation by their public officials. Then, one day, residents woke up and read in the newspaper that action had been taken and that any chance to engage their elected officials in meaningful discussion had been an illusion. That’s when a number of folks began to realize that, in their terms, they had “been had.” Townspeople’s lives were about to be irrevocably changed and done so without meaningful discussion of the concerns or questions that an ever growing number of residents had about the matter. To use an analogy, the Town Board, acting as umpire, had called “Strike Three” on these “dissenters” without even giving them a legitimate time at bat. No doubt, those in power saw the whole matter in a much different way. And their views also have a rightful place on the stage of public opinion. Unfortunately, when it comes to “Wind” there is little to indicate that our Town Board really is concerned with public opinion.
While I had no initial opinion about Wind Farms/Energy, I did have strong feelings about “good government.” I did some independent research and began attending Town Board meetings, and meetings of concerned citizens, to learn more. The more I learned about the process, the less I liked it. And if you cannot trust the process, you cannot have faith in the decisions it produces—regardless of the subject matter.

As far as I can determine, the Law that passed was essentially the “model law” that was to be “studied” when first introduced a couple of years ago. As I attended meetings and conducted some independent research, I became troubled that so many folks felt that the Town Board acted without any meaningful opportunity for individual citizens to have questions answered or concerns addressed. Nor was there any means by which individual citizens could help shape specific constraints on the placement of (up to 500 foot tall) turbines—such as set-backs from residences, riverfront, and so on.

Perhaps most egregiously, the Board made no concerted effort to retain the services of independent, top flight experts in fields such as: law, engineering, finance, health, and so forth. The need for such expertise should be self evident in matters such as this. Officials in small towns like ours lack the knowledge and sophistication to act alone on what may be the most important action ever to be taken in their town’s history. Ultimately, I can only conclude that the law our Board enacted more closely reflects the views of Wind Energy Companies than those of independent experts and the citizens of our Town. And so again I ask: “Why?”

In the days that followed the passage of the Wind Law, I could find no evidence that the Board had engaged in any serious public deliberation regarding this matter. Nor is there anything approaching a written record of the concerns, pros & cons, implications and so forth that had led to action. I asked myself: (and I ask my readers) “How can you evaluate the Board’s action if there is no public record to review?” At this point I still had no firm opinion regarding the law itself. But I had learned enough to be counted as one more of those “concerned residents.” As time went by my concern broadened from focus on the decision making process to focus on BOTH the decision making process AND its results.

Two of the Board’s five members recused themselves from voting on the Wind Law because they stand to gain, financially, from the construction of a Wind Farm. (Property owners who allow one or more turbines to be placed on their property are paid handsomely for this.) I am concerned about the timing of these recusals. As mentioned previously, the Board’s written record is quite sparse. It is possible that the two Members who recused themselves from the vote might have played an important role in the Board’s deliberation as this law moved forward to passage.

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3 This ad hoc group eventually became the “Concerned Residents of Hammond” (CROH). Shortly after forming, they became formal adversaries to the Town Board by suing the Board over the new law. The suit alleged that the Board had failed to meet some requirement regarding the environmental impact of the Law. The Town opposed the suit, but soon rescinded the Law—presumably to meet whatever requirement it had overlooked. CROH then withdrew its suit. The group wants the Board to establish a moratorium on future action until a more meaningful process can be designed and carried out. But, so far, the Board has been silent on this subject. CROH hopes for some dialogue, but fully expects the Board to re-pass the “Wind Law” as soon as the overlooked requirement can be met.
This is always a fair question to raise about one’s elected officials. But it is particularly relevant in a town as small as ours. It is almost inevitable that some elected official will have a connection to another by way of family or lifelong friendships. It is possible that one or more of the three Board Members who voted for the law has a personal, if not financial, interest in the disposition of the Wind Law. CROH members wonder just who is representing them and how open minded they have been. When officials pay insufficient attention to the need for objective expertise and to written documentation of deliberations they tend to invite such speculation.

But how could we ever know?? In my recent and personal experience, the Board does not have a published (or public) agenda. Citizens who wish to observe have no idea what is going to be addressed or in what order. It may well be that four of the five Board Members do not know either. The Town Supervisor (who is one of the five Board Members) leads the group through the evening’s activities. She seems to be well prepared/organized and following something like a script or agenda—but it’s difficult to tell.

Since I began attending Board meetings I have yet to hear the Board actually deliberate/debate ANYTHING of real substance (except for the remaining supply of winter road sand.) There are motions, seconds, and votes (usually unanimous) without a formal presentation or explanation of the item being voted on. Nor are there any documents available to give meaning to what has just happened. The “minutes,” such as they are, are of no help in this regard. The President of CROH filed a Freedom of Information Request (FOIL) to obtain minutes for all Board meetings held in the past few years. She waited several weeks before finally receiving a response.

Most of the public visitors who come to watch the Board in a (supposedly) “open” meeting are members of CROH. That makes them the enemy. There are never anywhere near enough chairs to accommodate visitors. Just as bad, about half of the chairs provided are for little school children. When the chairs run out, the public is forced to stand. Due to a lack of room, some of them have to stand in the outer hall. (They hear nothing.)

The Board meets at a small table in the corner of the room. The table is set lengthwise so the only face that can be seen by everyone is the Supervisor’s. Even those of us with chairs have a hard time hearing what is being said. Taken together, these conditions serve as an unmistakable statement of who has the “power” and who does not. Many of those in attendance view the nature of these “accommodations” as a form of harassment.

Once the Town Board rescinded its new Wind Law, Nancy Parrish, CROH President, wrote a letter to the Town Board (copy attached). In that letter she asked that the Board place “a moratorium on the matter of wind turbines until we can establish and carry out a formal, public, and thorough process for addressing the two key questions:”
1. “Should wind turbines be permitted in our town?” And, if so,
2. “Under what conditions and constraints?”

Mrs. Parrish promised that in a future letter she would make specific recommendations regarding such a process. There has been no direct response by anyone on the Board regarding her letter. There are, however, two indicators of how our elected officials view the concerned residents who comprise CROH.

A few weeks ago a large sign was posted on the Town Supervisor’s property. It proclaims: “CROH-Lies-Distorts-Facts” (photo attached). Shortly thereafter a second sign was posted stating: “CROH is Fear Mongering” (photo attached). The only other response has come from a Board Member answering a question from a local newspaper reporter. Asked about the overflow of interested citizens at meetings he said: “I am a lifelong resident of Hammond. And looking around the room tonight baffles me. I don’t know half of these people.” He also stated: “Where were these naysayers when the wheels first started turning?”

Actions such as those cited above are divisive, inflammatory, and unethical. They also have a chilling effect on the 40 or more good and decent folks who simply tried to exercise their constitutional right to have an opinion and to petition their government. Needless to say, the follow-up letter promised in CROH’s initial communication to the Board is on “hold.”

The phrase “I don’t know half of these people” is a coded message in our community. Its translation is: “These are probably seasonal residents; and we Real Residents know that they don’t count.” It is a classic ploy to set the “Have-Not”s against the “Haves.” Seasonal/riverfront property owners pay the highest property taxes in Hammond. But town leaders have long treated them as outsiders with no right to opine on town matters. The subtle message sent to the traditional, full time residents is: “These are the rich and spoiled people who have it easy while the rest of us really have to work hard just to get by. They should be ignored.” By nourishing this divisive split, an elected official can count on a solid base in the electorate that helps them to remain in office, unchallenged by anyone with a more inclusive view of the community and local government.

At about this same time, anonymous flyers were printed, and posted around town and on windshields, claiming that CROH was essentially a tiny group of outsiders meddling in Town affairs. This strikes a positive chord among full time residents who don’t know that this is a lie. So the battle of the Haves and the Have-Not’s is encouraged all the more. But despite the attempt to suggest otherwise, about 95% of the people involved in CROH are full time residents. The same is true of the crowd of 40+ residents whose identity was so “baffling” to a Board Member. But even if these people were ALL seasonal residents, why should such folks (and taxpayers) not have a voice? It is discouraging to realize that 233 years after the Declaration of Independence, we still can be governed by one vested interest denying the rights of others not like themselves.
The Board Member’s statement: “Where were these naysayers when the wheels first started turning?” also requires some translation. Due to CROH’s lawsuit, the Wind Law had been rescinded. At the next Board Meeting, about forty citizens showed up—hoping to express their concerns and ask for a moratorium on any Wind Law. To this group, the Board Member’s statement meant: “We acted when you weren’t expecting it. Now it is too late to have an opinion. Tough Luck!!”

My personal answer to the question “Where were these naysayers” is simple. I was living my daily life completely unaware of what was happening. Had I been aware, I would have acted sooner. But is the worth of my point of view dependent on when I arrive at it? Since the Law was rescinded anyway, WHY NOT take the time to reopen the issue to everyone and to do so in a meaningful way? And WHY NOT take the time to engage objective experts to help inform the discussion and shape a viable economic vision?

The process to solicit public opinion on the “model” Wind Law is something the Board is proud of. One member talked about all the steps that were followed and concluded that it was done “for the good of the community.” I have no doubt that these feelings are 100% sincere. But the law that passed was essentially the "model law" as originally proposed. I could find no trace of scientific research, analysis, and “give and take” by our Town Board. Their treatment of the whole business of Wind Power and Wind Farms has been terribly superficial. With a process so flawed, it is impossible to trust in any decisions that have been made.

In my experience, I have never seen a process of public review of such a complex matter result in so little change. Most folks I’ve spoken with who participated in the review process call it “meaningless.” They also say that anyone who spoke had to identify themselves as a part-time or full-time resident. (This speaks to the point made above about town leaders cultivating a class division in our town.)

It would take many pages to explain why I agree with those who say the process was “meaningless.” But I stand ready to discuss and debate what constitutes “meaningful input and consideration” and “informed decision making” with anyone, anytime, and anywhere. Had the process been as good as town leaders think it was, the 40+ of us now attending every Board Meeting would be home doing something else. Instead we are wondering: “What is behind this rush to act—this unwillingness to talk?” and: “Who is driving this issue?” and “What do they stand to gain?”

Many of the people who have reservations and concerns about the Wind Law feel that their elected officials “had blinders on” and that the Law was “a foregone conclusion right from the start.” Whether this perception of the Board is “fair” or not is irrelevant. Good and decent people are increasingly suspicious about the Board’s intentions and actions. That can only continue to fester in the current environment. The Board has an opportunity here to go back to the start and approach things anew. It is possible to design and execute a decision making process that relies on science, reason, and accommodation of legitimate concerns. It is possible to inform the review process by involving objective, reputable experts. And it is possible to develop an economic vision that guarantees benefits for EVERY household in our town.
IV. FINDINGS/OBSERVATIONS ABOUT WIND ENERGY, THE WIND LAW, AND THE NEED FOR ECONOMICVISION:

The law that the Town Board passed would allow wind turbines along the high ridge that parallels the American shore of the St. Lawrence River. The south rim of the Grand Canyon may be a good place to put wind turbines but it will never happen for obvious reasons. Well, the ridge that runs along the St. Lawrence here in our Town is our version of the south rim of the Grand Canyon. Once it is despoiled by the erection of wind turbines it will lose a measure of its intrinsic value as a community and State asset. This may very well drive away some people who come here to experience “unspoiled beauty.” And if they don’t come, their dollars spent doing business with local merchants won’t come either.

Our town has no significant manufacturing capability, no center of transportation, no major commercial enterprises. Our greatest assets are the natural beauty around us and the good, decent people who live here. Many who make a living here depend upon business from folks who own riverfront property and from visitors who come to enjoy the natural wonder of THE THOUSAND ISLANDS. It is like a balanced equation where everyone wins. What affect will 500 foot tall wind turbines have on that equation? A small handful of “lucky” property owners will benefit richly from a Wind Farm—but at what expense to everyone else? That is a question that needs to be carefully studied.

While “Wind” may be a supplemental source of power, it has characteristics that are at odds with some basic facts. With almost no exception, electricity must be generated at the exact same time, and in the exact same amount, as it is being drawn by consumers connected to the power grid. This means that constant adjustments are being made in the output of major power plants—whether they are coal, gas, oil, hydro, or nuclear. These adjustments may be viewed like a “throttle.”

No such “throttling” up and down is possible from a Wind Farm. Its output is constantly variable and always unpredictable. Therefore, whatever energy “Wind” can transmit has to be accepted and passed through to the power grid as it is received. This often means that traditional power generators have to be constantly “throttled up or down” to accommodate what is being received from Wind Farms. Because of its nature, wind power is “first in and first used.” This is true even if it costs far more per MWH to produce than the oil, coal, gas, or hydro plants being forced to cut back in accommodation to “Wind.”

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5 In this section of my report, I intend to point out some of the problems and drawbacks of Wind Energy. I will not herald any of its virtues. I take this approach because the Town Board seems to have done the exact opposite. They had virtually NOTHING bad to say about Wind. I would be more trusting of the Board’s decisions if they had flowed from a more thorough and professional analysis; and one that offered concrete benefits to every town resident.
Some research in Oregon has found that “throttling back” a traditional generator can produce far more CO$_2$ than if it were running at full capacity. Therefore, the potential exists for Wind Farms (at times) to increase rather than decrease greenhouse emissions. The same research also looked at the demand for steel, copper, and other raw materials needed to manufacture wind turbines. It suggests that this can produce more greenhouse gases than the materials and construction of a traditional coal/gas/oil plant. So, under certain conditions, “Wind” may actually be a little less friendly to the environment than fossil fuels.

Advocates of other sources of power also point out “Wind’s” disadvantages. For example, people who favor “Solar” point out that: solar panels have no moving parts, don’t wear out, pose no hazards, make no noise, cause no flicker shadows, and do not loom over people as do 400-500 foot tall Turbines. Further, while solar’s night output is low, that is the time that demand is low. And when demand is highest, solar output is at its peak. That is far from true for “Wind.”

“Popular Science” magazine, recently reported on a promising new design for home and neighborhood based wind turbines. It replaces the classic bladed fan, rotating parallel to the ground, with a louvered drum rotating perpendicular to the ground. The drum design is similar to the blower motor in a forced air home heating system. The new design is visually less imposing, much quieter, less costly to build, and easier to erect and maintain. It is useful and non invasive. It has a bright future. And it will neither rape the land nor loom over it like an alien monster.

These downsides of “Wind” do NOT lead me to conclude that “Wind” has no place in the “mix” of power generating techniques. Based on what I know right now, I would say that it certainly does. And as technology advances some of the drawbacks of “Wind” will surely be mitigated.

There is another concern about the “version” of wind power that seems to be coming to Hammond. The company that wants to develop a Wind Farm here is called Atlantic Wind LLC. I am told that Atlantic Wind is a “subsidiary” (some use the term “front”) of PPM Energy in Portland Oregon; and that PPM, in turn, is a “subsidiary” of Iberdrola—a company in Spain. Advocates of “Wind” promise that it will help staunch the flow of US Dollars to other countries providing us with crude oil. That is a noble thought. But it lacks ANY validity. First, only 1.6% of ALL the electricity in the US is produced by oil. So Wind Energy will have negligible impact on oil imports. Secondly, how would the flow of US Dollars to Spain be any better than the flow to Saudi Arabia??

Companies like this only spend hundreds of millions of dollars to build a Wind Farm if there are many more millions of dollars to be made in profits. These entities want to “MINE OUR AIR”—and to do it with no guarantee that we will receive a fair share of the profits. Such firms do this at little risk and cost beyond the original purchase and

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6 Wind Power: The “Green Myth” by Todd Wynn; Cascade Policy Institute; November 19, 2008
erection of turbines.\(^7\) (Presently, many of these turbines are also built abroad; the profits going to those foreign firms—not one that would keep and spend its income in America.)

Most of these Wind Farms are exempted from certain local taxes and fees in order to “attract” their business. Further, a Wind Farm does not employ local people in any meaningful number or capacity. And they generally spend little money in the towns where they are located. Worst of all, Wind Farms are sometimes permitted even when they offer no substantial, guaranteed benefits to the town’s residents. Times may be tough and sacrifices necessary. But if \textit{WE} don’t place the needs of our Town first, \textit{WHO ELSE WILL?}

Speaking only for myself and my wife, we don’t believe an Industrial Wind Turbine should be permitted within \textbf{10 miles} of the Saint Lawrence River. What we have here, in and around Chippewa Bay, is unique \textit{IN ALL THE WORLD}. It is precious and priceless. We are not the “owners” of this land. We are its “caretakers.” The land is defenseless. It falls to all of us here to be its guardian.

If Turbines ever do come to our Town, then millions of dollars in profits will be made by the companies who own and run them. A fair share of those millions should \textit{stay in Hammond}. I have a simple proposal that would \textit{GUARANTEE} cash to virtually every household in our community. It would have a major, positive impact on our local economy. And it is something \textit{EVERYONE} could agree on. If Turbines do come to Hammond, I will share this proposal.

In the right circumstances, a Wind Farm \textit{can} pay big dividends to a united community. There is a rural town in Western NY about the same size as Hammond. Like Hammond, this town has no significant manufacturing capability, no center of transportation, and no major commercial enterprises. Since it lacks anything to rival Hammond’s “jewel,” (i.e. \textit{THE THOUSAND ISLANDS}), the community had relatively few concerns about the esthetic and environmental impact of Turbines. This allowed residents to reach a consensus that a Wind Farm was an option they wanted to consider. When all was said and done, the town’s Supervisor negotiated a package of benefits that united everyone. This arrangement could provide a “benchmark” for other towns who have agreed to allow a Wind Farm.

Due to Wind Farm revenues, the town’s property tax rate for the past three years has been \textbf{ZERO}. (Yes, \textbf{ZERO}--as in no town property tax whatsoever.) This town required the Wind Company to provide a \textbf{2 million dollar bond} to remove the Turbines if the Wind Company fails to do so once the Farm is obsolete. The townspeople also enjoy free garbage collection. Almost one million dollars worth of important highway improvements have been made—and paid for by the Wind Energy Company. In Hammond, this could mean that the Town could take over, pave, and maintain the most frequently

\footnote{7} Government “incentives” are available to these companies to help offset some of their costs. Thus these Wind Farms—even if foreign controlled—are paid for, in part, with \textit{our own money}. This makes it possible for such firms to build a Wind Farm even in an area (like Saint Lawrence County) that is \textit{NOT} identified on survey maps as a “prime” wind location. The rush to do something about reliance on foreign oil threatens to become a stampede to do \textit{ANYTHING} even if the long term benefit is questionable.
used private/unimproved roads (Like Chippewa Point Road). A tax relief fund of $150,000 per year is being built to help continue the zero town property tax rate as long as possible when things change and as time goes by.

In this western New York town, NONE of the Town Board Members or their families, relatives, etc. has received a nickel for allowing Turbines on their property. Both the letter and the spirit of Laws such as The Public Officer's Law and The Open Meetings law have been meticulously met. Townspeople were brought together to work through issues of concern. Outside, prestigious firms in engineering, law, finance, and environment were hired to guide the town's review and action. (The town required that ALL of these expenses be paid for by the company wanting to build the Wind Farm.)

Hammond Town Board Members have said that the Board has never been “approached” about building a Wind Farm in Hammond. They say they passed the “Wind Law” only to regulate any potential Wind Farms. WHY, then, have two Board Members signed contracts to allow the construction of wind turbines on their property? The Board’s claim about not having been “approached” is, at best, disingenuous and, at worst, misleading/deceptive. Public records prove it.

The New York Independent System Operator (NYISO)\(^8\) is the agency charged with managing the collection and transmission of electrical power in our State. They already have a proposal in hand for the Hammond Wind Farm. It is called “Stone Church Wind.” Further, this website reveals that operation is expected to begin on or about 2011. Output will be 150MW from (about) 75 turbines. WHY can't our elected officials be more forthcoming about this?

On NYISO’s web-site one can find a whitepaper on the problems of trying to integrate wind power into the power grid. Interconnectivity to the power grid will be a particular problem for a Hammond Wind Farm because of its remote location. When there are no nearby substations, power has to travel a long way to get “into” the grid. And the longer the transit, the more that energy bleeds away (as a result of line resistance).

One chart in NYISO’s white paper shows the average demand for electricity in New York over a 24 hour period. That graph is then overlain with one showing average Wind Energy output over a similar 24 hour period. I have attached a copy of this graph. It shows that at certain times of the day, there is nearly an inverse relationship between the production of Wind Energy and the consumption of all energy from the grid. Sometimes when need is the highest, Wind Energy output is at its lowest. And at some points Wind Energy output is at its peak when demand is low.

There is also credible evidence that wind turbines can have a negative effect on health, quality of life, property values, wildlife, and the “draw” of recreational areas. Because of this, any wind turbines built in Hammond need to be carefully constrained. Here are just two (of many) problem areas.

\(^8\) http://www.nyiso.com/
Any house that is in the lee of a wind turbine, with respect to the sun, is subject to an effect called "shadow flicker." This means that when a blade of the turbine turns across the sun it casts a shadow on its leeward side. I have seen video of the effect this can have from within a person's residence. Until the sun moves, the flicker effect provides a strobe like flashing of natural light in the household. The flicker is not unlike that caused by a faulty fluorescent light that is constantly pulsing bright and dim. It can affect people physically and psychologically. Turbines ought not to be allowed if they have this effect on a nearby residence or on the Thousand Island area of the Saint Lawrence River.

Further, depending on wind speed and direction, turbines can be very noisy. This too would impact people living in the lee of the wind and people recreating on our river. There are also legitimate environmental and property value issues that need to be considered before a single wind turbine is built. Taken together, these concerns are NOT "deal busters" with respect to "Wind." But they are LEGITIMATE and need to be taken into consideration when determining the location of turbines.

Here is an important closing thought. I have lived in several residential communities in our State. I've lived in developments in Rochester, Albany, and Buffalo. Even though the wind blows well in some of those neighborhoods there are NO Wind Farms being built. I ask the reader "Why do you think this is so?" If you answered that folks in these communities wouldn't put up with it you've answered the question correctly. Wind Farms want to come here not because we have more wind, but because they think we can't stop them. While that alone does not mean we should ban Wind Farms, it is a fact that really bothers me. And it should bother everyone else with a stake in Hammond's future as well.

V. APPENDIX

RIVER RAT QUALIFICATIONS

In 1954, at age 8, I made my first visit to Chippewa Bay. It was a magical experience and I knew that this is where I belonged. From that first visit through high school graduation, Chippewa Bay was where I spent much of my summer vacations. In 1963 I brought my high school sweetheart here and she was captured by the THE THOUSAND ISLANDS as well. We talked about how wonderful it would be if we could live here someday.

As soon as my son was old enough to fish I brought him to Chippewa Bay. Like me, Chippewa Bay was where he spent much of his summer vacations. In 1985 we began searching for a cottage or piece of property we could build on here. In 1986, we bought our lot on the river side of Chippewa Point. Construction began in the fall and by Easter Sunday, 1987 our cottage was finally complete and we "officially" christened it as Legacy Cove (LC).

Although we lived in Albany, and I was very involved in Public Administration, we traveled up to Legacy Cove as often as we could. We kept a log, and from 1987-1995 we averaged 16 visits a year to LC. (That is 6,400 miles per year.)

When I retired in 1996, LC became my principle residence. In 2002, we added on to our cottage and moved in full time. The dream my sweetheart and I talked about in 1963 had become a reality. I have lived here at LC longer than anywhere else. This is home—heart and soul. If taxes and utility costs don't force us out, LC is where we hope to die.
PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

The New York State Education Department (SED) is the administrative arm of the State Board of Regents. Unlike most agencies in Albany, SED is not under the direct control of the State Governor. Instead, it is directed by a group of 16 distinguished citizens known as the “The State Board of Regents.” The Regents are appointed for seven year terms by joint session of the Legislature. They then appoint the Commissioner of Education and, at his recommendation, the Five Deputy Commissioners who direct each of the five distinct Agencies under the Regents purview.9

I served SED and the Board of Regents from 1969-1996; holding a series of increasingly responsible positions (8 in all) that gave me a wealth of hands on experience with all aspects of government; Legislative, Judicial, and Executive. Most of my upper management experience was in the State Office of the Professions. This office oversees all aspects of regulating the 40+ licensed professions recognized under Title VIII of The Education Law (Medicine, Engineering, Pharmacy, Accountancy, Nursing, Dentistry, and so forth)10.

New York is the only state in the country that places all aspects of regulating the licensed professions under a single agency with lay leadership. I served in several capacities within the Office of the Professions, ultimately becoming its Chief Executive Officer.

My approach to governing the Professions was an inclusive one. Whenever developing new Laws, Rules, or Regulations all parties with an interest or “stake” were invited to help deliberate and develop public policy. Also, each of the 20 State Boards reporting to me (such as the State Board for Nursing) was required to have one or more “public” members. Public Members were people who were not licensed in a given profession, but were “consumers” (in some meaningful capacity) of the services of that profession. Initially, there was considerable opposition to the concept of Public Members. But in time, they became prized assets of the Boards on which they served. They brought a unique point of view to professional governance. Ultimately Public Members were so valued that several were elected officers of the Boards on which they served.

While Commissioner of the Office of the Professions, I also had important judicial responsibilities. I was Chair of the Regents Committee on the Professions. This was a tribunal that, among other things, heard and decided cases where a person whose license had been revoked sought restoration of his credentials. I also served as State Review Officer. This is a position mandated by Federal Law that has broad responsibilities with respect to the educational needs of school children with a variety of disabilities. Whenever a school district and the parents of a child with special needs could not agree upon an educational strategy these disputes were brought before me for review and adjudication. In such cases my determinations about the services that must be provided were final and appealable only to federal court.

I have definite and proven beliefs with respect to what constitutes good government and ethical behavior by public officials. I am a devotee of principals such as those advanced by the Open Meetings Law, the Freedom of Information Act, and Public Officer’s Law. Regardless of the

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9 Most people know that the Regents are responsible for regulating Public Schools. The Office responsible for this is called “The Office of Elementary and Secondary Education.” But there are four other distinct Offices within the purview of The Regents. These include: “The Office of Cultural Education,” “The Office of Higher Education,” “The Office of Vocational Educational Services,” and “The Office of the Professions.”

10 There are three separate functions that comprise governance of the Professions. One is accrediting Professional Schools and Training Programs (such as Medical Schools). The second is the process of licensing new professionals and issuing their triennial re-registrations. The third is overseeing the practice of over 750,000 licensees working in our State. That function includes setting minimum standards of practice and investigating, prosecuting, and disciplining licensees guilty of Unprofessional Conduct. (Misconduct includes things such as negligence, incompetence, substance abuse, sexual abuse, fraud, and criminal activity.)
level of government, any and all of our public officials must be held to the highest standards. A good public servant must do the right thing whether anyone is watching or not. Our Public Officers should never behave in ways that are divisive or invite reproach. There is no greater responsibility than being a steward of the public’s welfare.

**Limitations of This Report**

Unlike my years of service to SED and the Board of Regents, I had no staff and experts available to assist me in researching and writing this report. Accordingly, what I have to say here is not as comprehensive, complete, or definitive as my work as a Public Administrator. But is does rest on my years of public service and my best effort to be honest, forthright, and clear in stating my observations and conclusions. While I do not claim to be an expert, I have gained substantially more knowledge about energy than the average lay person. In part, it is this knowledge that led me to realize how badly our Town Board may have erred in not involving independent, outside experts in the review/decision making process.

**Ownership/Use**

This document does not speak for any organization and does not represent an attempt to defend or explain any group’s point of view. The Paper is mine and mine alone. I place it in the public domain; so it may be copied or used by anyone for any reason. I do hope that my work will help others to better understand the subject and what is transpiring in our town.

**Openness to Discussion and Debate**

I would be willing to discuss anything within this document with any other resident of Hammond who may wish to challenge my views—or reinforce them. As long as such dialogue is civil, I remain open to being corrected or having my mind changed. This report is a snapshot in time and as events move forward it will become increasingly limited. At some point farther down the road, I may decide to issue revised editions of this Paper. There is one area in which I am unlikely to revise my views. That area is my beliefs with respect to what constitutes good government and appropriate behavior by public officials. I know good government when I see it. And I am equally adept at spotting flaws

**Final Thoughts**

I intend to continue attending meetings and sharing my opinions and suggestions with any person or group so long as I perceive that their intentions are noble and that their commitment to honesty and decorum is unequivocal. Given the circumstances, it is unlikely that I will be asked to attempt to somehow mediate differences between the Town Board and CROH. But if asked, I would be willing to try. It is something I’ve done many times in my career—usually to good effect.

When I retired to Legacy Cove I had given my youth and my health to the people of our State. I thought I owed it to my family and myself to disengage from the business of government and to lead a private and quiet life. My success in this regard is apparent by my admission that I did not know a Wind Law was pending or passed and had no idea that it had become such a contentious matter. But I love my town and her people and I cannot deny my efforts and meager talents if they can be of any help to the community around me. That is why I have decided to become involved in this issue—and will continue to be involved until the public good has been properly served.

**Attachments:**
- Letter from Nancy Parrish, CROH President, to the Hammond Town Board (see pages 17-18)
- Photos of Signs in Town Supervisor’s Yard (see page 19)
- Graph from NYISO Whitepaper: “Integration of Wind into System Dispatch” (see page 20)
To: Members of the Hammond Town Board
From: Nancy Parrish; President of the Concerned Residents of Hammond (CROH)
Subject: Wind Turbine Regulation
Date: January 5th, 2009

I write to you concerning a matter of great importance to all residents and property owners in Hammond. That matter is the circumstances under which Wind Turbine Generators might be erected and operated within our community.

First, I want to formally introduce and identify ourselves to you. Concerned Residents of Hammond (CROH) is a growing group of citizens concerned about both the process that has been followed in addressing the subject of Wind Turbines and the resulting law and its provisions. We are broadly representative of our community. We have both young and old members. We have both prosperous individuals and those “scraping by” in these difficult times. We have both full time and part time residents. We have men and women; employers and employees; healthy and disabled; liberals and conservatives.

What unites us is concern that private interest, rather than an informed citizenry, has been at the center of deliberations and “law making” on the matter of Wind Turbines. Decisions in this area will affect every resident every day, for years to come. Yet there has been only limited provision for residents and property owners to learn about the issues, express their concerns, have their questions answered, or take part in the decision making process.

CROH is not opposed, in principle, to viable, renewable energy. Rather our concern is with when, where, and how the benefits of any source of power outweigh its inherent limitations. If Wind Turbines are to be permitted in our town they should be constrained by provisions that we—as a community—deem necessary to safeguard our health, safety, and well being. And then, allowed only if there are direct and guaranteed benefits to each individual resident and property owner.

The second purpose of this letter is to outline the nature of our concerns. Later this month I will send the Board another, more specific, communication that lists and explains the issues that concern us. In that letter, I will also suggest a public process for exploring the matter of Wind Turbines. That process will afford all interested parties an opportunity to provide information, pose questions, express concerns, and offer opinions on the two critical questions before us—i.e.:

1. Should Wind Turbines be permitted in our Town? and, if so,
2. Under what Conditions and Constraints?

The third purpose of this letter is to ask the Board to reinstate the moratorium on the matter of Wind Turbines until we establish and carry out a formal, public, and thorough process for addressing the two questions posed above. CROH believes that too much is at stake for decisions in this matter to be made by a select few operating largely
“off-stage.” While Town residents may not be experts on Wind Turbines, they can be trusted to listen, learn, and decide for themselves what is right for their families and for families to come. This principle is the birthright of all Americans and we can think of no valid philosophical arguments against it.

There are no urgent needs that would justify a lesser, more expedited approach. We have all faced the sales pitch that says if you don’t take the deal right now—it won’t be available tomorrow. When we hear this, warning lights go on in our minds. We should be even more cautious when being asked to share one of our most important economic assets (our environment) and just “trust” those outsiders or privileged few who stand to benefit. We have found that some of our initial and positive assumptions about Wind Turbines were not always borne out by the facts. Let those who have pressed for action favorable to private interests come forward, identify themselves, and engage in a fair and open public dialog.

Too often in our country private interests are being served by keeping the public misinformed or “in the dark.” Too often in our country large corporations drive public policy decisions by outspending any opposition. At such times those with the deepest pockets get to decide just what “the truth” is about a given subject. In this regard I would draw your attention to the attached excerpt from an article in the 8-17-2008 edition of the NY Times entitled: “In Rural New York, Windmills Can Bring Whiff of Corruption”. Companies do not spend hundreds of millions of dollars on a Wind Farm unless they expect to make many more hundreds of millions of dollars in profits. We need to be wary and skeptical. There are powerful and perhaps unprincipled forces at work here.

The people of Hammond can be far better served than they have been thus far. The Board can, and should, tap local expertise in public policy making to assure that everyone’s interest will be heard and will guide the decision making process. Good ideas endure careful scrutiny; bad ones are brought into focus. And along the way we can and should learn from experience of the MANY other communities who have been down this road already. Failure to do so blinds us to potentially critical information. The citizens of Hammond could only benefit by hearing the views of residents in similar communities that already have Wind Turbines.

In closing, please consider this. Although it may be a good spot for Turbines, we will never see Wind Farms along the north and south rims of the Grand Canyon. It is too precious an environment to be sold, leased, or developed by large, profit driven corporations. Well, the ridge that runs along the majestic Saint Lawrence River is OUR “south rim of the Grand Canyon.” And it deserves every bit as much care and stewardship.

Sincerely,

Nancy Parrish; President of CROH
SIGNS IN TOWN SUPERVISORS YARD

CROH-LIES
DISTORTS-FACTS

CROH
IS
FEAR
MONGERING
Figure 5-1: Average Hourly Wind vs. Load Profile in New York, June 2008 (NYISO Whitepaper: Integration of Wind into System Dispatch)