

Huron County turns back on wind farm

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Provided photo/APEX CLEAN ENERGY

A simulation of what the view could look like from West Willard Road in Richmond Township if the Emerson Creek Wind Project is approved.

NORWALK

The Huron County commissioners joined their Erie County counterparts and denied the payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) for a local wind project.

Apex Clean Energy is hoping to place up to 71 wind turbines in Erie and Huron counties as part of its Emerson Creek Wind Project.

The Huron County commissioners — Terry Boose, Joe Hintz and Bruce “Skip” Wilde — previously supported the project and the PILOT, according to minutes from meetings in March 2018.

But in February the commissioners reversed their previous support because they said the scope of the project and the economic benefit had been reduced, according to the Norwalk Reflector.

After holding a public hearing last week, the three commissioners unanimously voted Thursday to deny the payment in lieu of taxes for the project, according the resolution.

“There is no guarantee on how long the wind turbines will last, that being said we chose to have regular taxes paid rather than lower equal payments over the 30 years,” Wilde said. “The difference in the first year would be approximately \$1 million and then decrease each year after. But there are variables as to how much they might decrease.”

A PILOT is a set payment over the life of the project and doesn’t change like property taxes do. Apex argued the payment helps spread the cost of the investment over the project’s lifespan.

“By opting out of the PILOT system, Huron county commissioners decided to forgo long-term benefits and a significant sustainable revenue source for the community,” Apex spokeswoman Jaci Friedley said. “Regardless of the Huron County commissioners’ decision on the PILOT, Apex is committed to the development of the Emerson Creek project.”

Erie and Huron counties could only decide how the money would be received if the project happens. The ability to approve or deny the project is in the hands of the Ohio Power Siting Board.

The board recently ordered Apex to host another public information meeting because of changes to the project and allegations they had a woman removed from the first meeting in November. The new meeting is scheduled for 5-7 p.m. April 3 at the Bellevue VFW, 6104 U.S. 20.

Huron County commissioners Hintz and Boose couldn’t be immediately reached for comment.