

## From the first “Windmills Above Montgomery Creek?” community meeting, Jan. 18, 2011

### Notes taken by Margaret Jensen

The first part of the meeting involved a summary of research done to date by Randy Compton and Lisa Hanaway. Lisa, who led the “Stop TANC” movement, was the first local person to be contacted by the Redding Record-Searchlight a few weeks ago for comment on a big story that reporter Dylan Darling was working on, concerning the erection of a windspeed measuring tower above Windy Point. If you did not see the article, published on 1-16-11, here’s the link: <http://www.redding.com/news/2011/jan/16/145size-of-the-project-sense-of-the-wind/>. In a series of e-mail exchanges between Lisa and a representative of RES America, the company which has erected the tower (and built the windmills on Hatchet Mtn.), she was able to find out a little more than what was in the article, but not much. At this point, the company says it is just measuring the wind for one year to see if it might even be worth it to construct turbines in the area—they do not have any plans more advanced than that. However, they may go ahead and begin some environmental studies later this year, to take advantage of the weather window, even if they aren’t sure yet that they would go ahead with a project.

Randy showed some maps created using Google Earth. The meteorological tower is on land owned by Roseburg. The pieces of the 60-foot tower was brought up by way of Terry Mill Rd., and the company refers to it as being on Terry Mill, waaaay back, on what other people call the T-line road.

There is very little specific information available right now about what a windmill project might mean for our communities, but lots of general information that provides some guidelines for discussion and planning. Lisa mentioned that Carol Overland, an attorney who was very, very helpful in the TANC fight, has helped other communities/property owners in cases against RES. Some key things to remember are that RES is a private company, so if it wants to build a project it does not have the right of eminent domain (like a public utility), but must instead purchase “easements.” Also, while RES may erect the turbines, but they would want to probably tie into power transmission lines owned by someone else—PG & E, for example. There is absolutely no way of knowing at this point how a turbine project might be connected to transmission lines in our area—there are many possibilities. We can all also draw some conclusions about how things may go, based on how the Hatchet project has proceeded, but then again, maybe not.

As part of the discussion, we began to write down “things we’d like to know.” Some can be found out now—with some research work done by someone—and some are impossible to know now, but should be kept in the back of our minds. The questions, in the order they were raised:

1. Who/what company will do the environmental impact studies—and will they be any good or just hacks?
2. Who actually has to evaluate/approve the EIS plan and results; what is the role of the California Public Utilities Commission in this?
3. If RES decides to go ahead with a turbine project, would they be expecting public funding to help—either federal or state, or both?
4. How much wind does there need to be for the area to be a viable turbine site?
5. Are the turbines on Hatchet “state of the art” and the most efficient, or are there new designs that are going to make giant windmills obsolete in a few years?

6. What benefit could windmills be to our community? Would there be money for our school, other community projects, like there is for Burney? (Note: RM/MC organizations can apply to the project funds that are available through the Shasta Regional Community Foundation, from the Hatchet Project.)
7. What is involved in having a really good easement agreement with a company like RES? (Lisa had a story via Carol about how poorly they tried to treat a land owner in another region.)
8. What kind of reassessment of property values might happen if the windmills were erected?
9. Just how “green” is the wind power that might be produced here—what if 90% of it is being lost because it’s being sent to places far away, for example?
10. Has anybody measured the carbon footprint involved in the construction and transportation of wind towers, and had to mitigate that?
11. What would the traffic impact be, if a project were erected? (Various people in the audience with long experience on the Roseburg land all said that the towers, etc., would all have to be brought in by way of 299 access, up near Hatchet, so the impact would be like that of the Hatchet project.)
12. Are there other potential wind/other power projects that are also being proposed around the north state, that might end up needing to be tied together by lots more transmission lines, and with a much greater cumulative impact on our larger region?
13. If TANC had proceeded, one of the most powerful legal arguments that our community was going to be able to make was that a social injustice was being committed because of the already great impact that power projects have in our area. While a few people began discussing this, especially with advice from Carol, those arguments were never fully developed at the time. If we decided, as a community, that we wanted to fight the windmills—or, maybe more importantly, the new transmission lines that might come as a result of them—just how powerful would the social/environmental justice arguments be?
14. Just exactly why does the region that might be served by the windmills need more power now? Is it because of the various mandates that more power has to be “green” and replace existing fossil fuel power (substitute, but no overall increase), or is it to actually expand capacity overall?
15. What are PG&E’s thoughts about all this? (Lisa has begun a communication with them).
16. What really is the noise impact? Though RES is reporting no bird kills “yet” on Hatchet, the towers haven’t been running throughout a whole year, so do we really know the environmental impact? How was the potential bird-kill issue mitigated in the Hatchet plan?
17. What is the “flicker” effect on local power?
18. There are problems now with the access to the public land inside of/behind the Roseburg land, so what would a windmill project do to that access?
19. In the R-S article, Supt. Glenn Hawes said he thought a project would be good because of the additional revenues it could bring to the county. What else do we want our Supervisor to be thinking about?
20. How well is Shasta County encouraging residents to live off the grid or otherwise reduce energy use? Used to be very, very hard to get permits for off the grid stuff—has that changed much?
21. What impact is AB32—which requires an increase in the production of “green” energy—having on all the utilities operating in our region? (There was a lot of confusion about just what is required, by whom).

In addition to the above questions, we started keeping a list of things we don’t like/concern us about the potential project:

1. Any project like the windmills would produce no power that we would use locally.
2. Even if we like the “green energy” produced by wind turbines, we probably don’t like the transmission lines running across our lands, and the possible expansion of the PG&E substation or construction of a new substation.
3. The Hatchet project has lots of unused capacity—what ‘s the point in building new projects if the capacity won’t be used, or that a huge percentage of the energy will be lost in transmission? Why should we support anything that promotes such huge inefficiencies?
4. The Hatchet project has generated very little local employment.
5. One thing we all need to remember: everything that an energy company says is in their own interests (and those of their shareholders) and not in ours, no matter how nicely they say it.

Finally, we began to identify some potential next steps, some of which involve research and some with setting up future events. Acorn has a small grant through Shasta County Public Health that can pay a little bit towards further events, e.g. having coffee, making signs, renting the hall. Most of these next steps still need a person(s) to say that they’ll take on the responsibility, but I’ve put names next to the ones where someone is already working on it.

1. Someone should work with Pit River to learn more about any tribal cultural implications that a project in that area might have.
2. Let’s have another meeting in 2 months—Lisa Hanaway is already working on inviting the RES representative, Tom Hiester, whose e-mail for anyone who wants to contact him directly, is [tom.hiester@res-americas.com](mailto:tom.hiester@res-americas.com). We might also want to invite Glenn Hawes, and someone from the county planning office (Margaret will work with Lisa to set a date, do PR, and invite people.)
3. Lisa explained a little about how in Nevada County, they’ve created an Energy Task Force that proposes green policies, promotes a Sustainability Fair, and helps everyone be proactive rather than reactive to things like new power line proposals. She encouraged everyone to look at their website for the A.P.P.L.E. Center, at [www.applecenter.org](http://www.applecenter.org), “ the home of APPLE-NC, the Alliance for a Post-Petroleum Local Economy of Nevada County. “ Maybe we could begin to organize something like that here.
4. We could bring a speaker(s) to talk about some of the “state of the art” green energy technologies and how the “on grid” ones differ from the “off grid” ones—how we could grow green without big power companies/projects? (Some members of C.A.N. are looking for a speaker who could do something like this.)
5. Other things will emerge!

Anyone who wants to stay informed can be sure they’re on the Mountain Community News e-mail list by contacting [Margaret@acorncafe.org](mailto:Margaret@acorncafe.org), or by joining the Facebook group at “Round Mountain and Montgomery Creek, CA communities” page.

If you want information from Lisa or Randy, their e-mails are: [hanawaylisa76@gmail.com](mailto:hanawaylisa76@gmail.com), and [randycompton@hotmail.com](mailto:randycompton@hotmail.com).

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