

Wind project studied

By Laura Tester - Red Deer Advocate – August 11, 2008

County of Paintearth residents will have their say on proposed wind regulations as the region gears up for its first major wind power project.

County council is holding a public hearing on Tuesday starting at 1 p.m. inside the municipal building in Castor. The hearing will address making changes to the land-use bylaw so that wind energy regulations can be introduced.

First reading for the proposed land-use amendments was given on July 17.

County administrator Julie Falkenberg said it's possible that second and final reading could be given on Tuesday following the public hearing.

The rules are necessary to determine where these wind turbines should be, in proximity to roads and buildings.

"We're proposing the setback from the road allowance be the height of the tower," Falkenberg said. "In essence, if it fell over, it wouldn't fall on anything."

Representatives from Calgary-based Greengate Power Corp. may attend the public hearing, Falkenberg said.

The company is proposing to build a 300-megawatt wind power project on about 25,000 acres of private land, 40 km east of Stettler. One hundred wind turbines that are 80 metres tall are expected to be installed on the land.

Greengate hasn't gone through any county approvals yet, Falkenberg said.

"This is the first part of the process . . . to get the regulations in," she said.

Falkenberg said it's unlikely the regulations would negatively affect the proposed project.

Municipal officials met with counterparts in the Municipal District of Taber to discuss the wind turbine requirements within their land-use bylaw.

"These are pretty standard requirements," she said. "Although these (wind towers) are pretty new to our area, they have them down south all over."

Greengate approached the County of Paintearth early about its intentions, Falkenberg said.

"They have wind monitoring towers (in the area), which gives them a feel for the wind speeds . . . if they can sustain what the wind turbines need," Falkenberg said.

"We're told the testing has been very positive."

Ratepayers in the area have been generally supportive of Greengate's proposal, Falkenberg said.

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