

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
CONNECTICUT SITING COUNCIL**

**Petitions of BNE Energy Inc. for a
Declaratory Ruling for the Location,
Construction and Operation of 4.8 MW
Wind Renewable Generating Projects on
Flagg Hill Road in Colebrook,
Connecticut (“Wind Colebrook South”)
and Winsted-Norfolk Road in Colebrook,
Connecticut (“Wind Colebrook North”)**

Petition Nos. 983 and 984

March 15, 2011

PRE-FILED TESTIMONY OF SUSAN WAGNER

Q1. Please state your name and address.

A1. My name is Susan Wagner, and I reside at 117 Pinney Street in Colebrook, Connecticut.

Q2. How long have you lived in Colebrook?

A2. My husband and I purchased our property in the early 1990s, with plans to design and build our retirement home there. Over the next few years, we designed and built that house, where I have lived full time since 1998.

Q3. What initially drew you to Colebrook?

A3. When looking to buy land for construction of our future home, we specifically sought out a spot characterized by a quiet, serene, untouched natural landscape where we could enjoy a peaceful life in retirement. The plot we purchased in Colebrook, with its acres of forest and rural setting, perfectly fits that description. We also were particularly interested in the opportunity to observe the birds and other wildlife that would live near our home, an opportunity that was realized in the form of several kinds of ducks including the lovely mergansers, herons, red-tailed hawk, turkeys, deer, and bears that inhabit the property. Over the years, I have

frequently seen all of those creatures and many other species of birds on my property. I was very surprised to read in the bird survey submitted by BNE that its consultants had seen only a small number of species of birds, and I was even more surprised to read that the no raptor sightings were reported.

Specifically, some of the birds we regularly see during the year around here include crow, pileated woodpecker, downy and hairy woodpeckers, pine siskin, chickadee, junco, cardinal, blue bird, robin, blue jay, common yellowthroat, cedar waxwing, vulture, rosy-breasted nuthatch, barn swallow, chipping sparrow and various other sparrows, towhee, house finch, phoebe, red wing blackbirds, tufted titmouse, red eyed vireo, ruby-throated hummingbird, kingfisher, goldfinch, great horned owl, pigeons, morning doves, bald eagle, red-tailed hawk, and goshawk. Ground birds include woodcock and grouse. We also regularly see birds in and around the pond, including herons, wood ducks, mallards and mergansers.

Q4. Please describe your land for the Council.

A4. I own 200 contiguous acres of land abutting to the east and southeast of the parcel on which BNE proposes to construct its industrial power facility known as Wind Colebrook North. The vast majority of this land is maintained in its natural state as a forest and is untouched by development but has a walking trail that goes through it. My property is less than one mile away from the proposed industrial power facility known as Wind Colebrook South.

On the east side of the pond, overlooking both the pond and the forested hills behind it, my husband and I built the house that we designed for our retirement. We took particular care to build a house that would embrace the beauty of the natural landscape around us by including, for example, a number of large windows facing west to capture the natural beauty of the environment. If BNE is permitted to construct their proposed industrial wind farms, those windows will instead provide a year-round view of two sets of 500-foot industrial wind turbines.

Q5. Did you have to take any specific action in order to comply with local regulations when building your house?

A5. Yes, we applied for all necessary permits and found the local Colebrook officials to be steadfast in their dedication to ensuring compliance with all applicable building regulations and codes. The wetlands on the property were marked with tags, black cloth screening, and color-coded stakes. On one occasion, an inspector determined that the railing on the stairs leading down to the pond was eight inches too high. Accordingly, we were instructed to install another railing below the first, with which we of course complied. The wooden stakes marking the proximity to both wetlands and the pond itself remained for many years in the woods around us. We had to do all of that to build our house. BNE apparently needs no approvals from any town officials.

Q6. How did you first hear about these petitions?

A6. I learned about the potential Colebrook South project last year when people on Flagg Hill were trying to educate us all about what was to come. We of course were told by others that there is not enough wind in this part of the world to allow a large turbine to function, so we did not take it seriously. The website put up by one Stephen King, who led the opposition to the met tower installed at the Flagg Hill site was closed down, evidently under pressure, when he sold his property to BNE. But I had not paid much serious attention to the possibility of wind turbines so close to my house.

I first heard about the Colebrook North petition while attending a November 2010 “informational meeting” regarding BNE’s attempt to site industrial wind turbines on Flagg Hill Road, which is the Colebrook South project. At that point, neither my neighbors nor I had heard anything about the proposed Colebrook North project, and we attended the meeting expecting only to hear about BNE’s Colebrook South plans. As you might expect, we were completely stunned when BNE announced at that meeting that they planned to construct additional wind

turbines on the street behind where we live. At no point prior to that moment did I have any idea that BNE was attempting to site its turbines on land abutting my property.

Q7. Why did you join these proceedings as a party?

A7. After I discovered BNE's plan to site additional wind turbines on the land abutting my property, I became concerned about the possible effects that those turbines would have on me and family, as well as on my neighbors and town. I was also struck by the unfairness of BNE's attempt to place a series of six nearly 500-foot tall structures next to my home without involving the town, or even abutters like me, in the decision-making process in any meaningful way. As a result, I joined Petition 984 as a party in order to explain the impact that these structures would have on the local community and to ensure that my rights as a property owner and resident of Colebrook were being protected. I joined Petition 983 because although those turbines are farther from my house, they are still uncomfortably close given the literature I have read recommending setbacks of at least 1.25 miles. I also joined both petitions as a party under the Connecticut Environmental Act because I am concerned about the damage BNE will do to these sites and the surrounding properties in its efforts to install these turbines.

Q8. Can you describe some of the concerns that you just mentioned?

A8. First, I have grave concerns regarding the adverse health effects known to be caused by large industrial wind turbines like those BNE is seeking to site next to my property and just a short distance away from my property. Although denied by the industry, industrial wind projects of this scope can cause significant health problems in nearby residents, including sleep deprivation, dizziness, tinnitus, memory and concentration problems, nausea, headaches, vertigo, ear pressure or pain, irritability, fatigue, racing heartbeats, visual blurring, and panic episodes. These problems are typically associated with the noise, vibration, and shadow flicker caused by the industrial turbines. Also, considering my age and the age of my grandchildren,

who frequently visit, often for much of the summer, the fact that the two populations most vulnerable to these health issues are the elderly and children is particularly worrying.

Apart from health impacts, I am also very concerned about the safety of me and my family living in such close proximity to the turbines at Colebrook North. BNE's turbines are at risk of catching on fire, in which case my home and family would be at a particular risk for harm, because Colebrook does not have fire safety equipment that could reach the top of the turbine hub. In light of how much of my land is wooded, a turbine fire could quickly spread throughout my property and beyond. Beyond the possibility of fire damage, the blades on the turbines themselves can become separated from the hub and can travel several hundred feet, and the blades similarly can throw ice hundreds of meters in the air. Finally, the turbines themselves can collapse. Considering the fact that BNE's Colebrook North petition shows that one turbine will be less than 300 feet from my property line, and the fact that the turbines will be nearly 500-feet high, a turbine literally falling onto my property is a very real concern.

Further, I am concerned about the negative impact these turbines will have on the value of my property and the property of my neighbors, some of whom have their total monetary worth tied up in their home. The reason I came to Colebrook in the first place is the same reason that everyone does – to escape the busy, loud, cramped life of cities and inner suburbs to a quiet, rural, spacious, natural environment. If one of the area's main attractions is destroyed by towering, loud industrial wind turbines, there is no question that area property values will decrease. My home and property together are a substantial asset, and any depreciation in value caused by BNE's turbines will cause me significant harm.

Finally, siting these turbines next to my home and a short distance away from my home will change the character of my property for the worse. As I mentioned earlier, I moved to Colebrook in order to appreciate the natural beauty of rural Connecticut, to observe birds and other wildlife, and to enjoy the walking trails through the forested land I invested in. In addition

to the harms described above, if BNE were to site the proposed turbines in such proximity to my home, I would no longer be able to enjoy the quiet serenity of life in the woods, and the turbines would cause extreme harm to the local wildlife that we in Colebrook currently appreciate so much.

Q9. What do you base these concerns on?

A9. I have done significant independent research looking into studies of the effects suffered by those in close proximity to industrial wind turbines like those BNE intends to site next to my home and a short distance away. I also have independently researched issues related to property value decline in localities where such turbines have been sited.

Further, in order to get a real sense of what these turbines would mean for our community, I also visited Vinalhaven, Maine, where a developer has built three 1.5 MW industrial wind turbines in a town basically the same size as Colebrook and where the effects of that development are just now beginning to be understood.

Q10. Please describe for the Council what you discovered when you visited Vinalhaven.

A10. It is tragic to see the families living close by suffering miserably and whose health is deteriorating as the months go by. There is an accumulative factor in exposure to both the audible noise and the infrasound or inaudible low frequency waves. Both of the families we visited exhibit health problems, all of which match exactly the symptoms found all over the world related to proximity to large industrial wind turbines. One family is 2440 feet from the turbines, and the other is a few hundred feet further away. Regardless of whether there is strictly “proof” of a connection between wind turbines and illness, there is clear evidence of distress. My impulse was to encourage them to leave before they got sicker. I also noticed that those who live more than three miles away do not appear to suffer such unpleasant effects.

The noise itself surprised me: it is not the loudness that is offensive, for certainly one hardly notices the sound indoors when the wind is slight. But it is the relentlessness of it: day and night, often indoors and always outdoors, a constant variable “whoofing” from which there is no escape. One can understand that in the quiet of the night when the wind is stronger, the noise would be intrusive, even into one’s bed. We spent several hours within audible range, and it is the feeling of being entrapped, never being able to get away from the sound, that is so deleterious. I cannot imagine withstanding this relentless hum all my days. Our hosts told stories of summer people coming up and saying, “Oh, I can manage this, I am only going to be here one month.” But even after about two weeks it begins to get to them, and they instead say, “I don’t know if I can stand it here.”

Q11. What else did you observe in Vinalhaven?

A11. When we visited the turbine site, we noticed that the layout is in a triangle, similar to the proposed BNE installations in Colebrook. We were told that that particular formation is part of the problem: one turbine is always downwind, causing more turbulence. General Electric, our informant told us, said they would not approve such a triangle formation again.

Q12. How has the Vinalhaven project affected the town?

A12. One sad aspect of the Vinalhaven situation is that those who complain have become stigmatized. Neighbors who live close to the turbines and work at semi-skilled jobs or as electricians, plumbers, or carpenters feel restrained from objecting to their situation for fear that they will not be hired in the future. So they suffer in silence, sometime whispering their feelings of alliance to those who are publicly fighting against the noise.

Three houses for sale within about a mile of the turbines have not sold. The families we talked to felt that they would not be able to sell their homes either, but they face financial destruction if they abandon their residences. Needless to say, they are depressed and fretful.

The statements above are true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

12 March 2011

Date

Susan A. Wagner

Susan Wagner

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that a copy of the foregoing document was delivered by first-class mail and e-mail to the following service list on the 15th day of March, 2011:

Carrie L. Larson
Paul Corey
Jeffery and Mary Stauffer
Thomas D. McKeon
David M. Cusick
Richard T. Roznoy
David R. Lawrence and Jeannie Lemelin
Walter Zima and Brandy L. Grant
Eva Villanova

and sent via e-mail only to:

John R. Morissette
Christopher R. Bernard
Joaquina Borges King


Emily Gianquinto