

OPINION: Another dose of facts and reality on wind energy

By [Ronnie Hornstra](#) on Feb 26, 2016 at 10:17 a.m.

After the November 2015 Bon Homme County Commission meeting, I felt compelled to write a Letter to the Editor using the theme, "Facts and Reality." After reading Gregg Hubner's recent editorial and the headline news, "Wind farm request denied" in the Avon Clarion, it is time for another facts and reality check.

First of all, comparing the vote taken by the Davison County Zoning Board to the Bon Homme board's action is not reality. The Davison board was voting on the construction of a wind project. The Bon Homme board was putting in place construction guidelines to regulate the construction of a wind farm.

There certainly is a vast difference between a permit to build and site regulations. Plus there is nothing to say that Bon Homme may not deny a building permit for a project in the future.

Presented as fact: The majority at a meeting should rule.

Reality: Any elected board is serving the entire electorate that empowered it to make decisions on their behalf. If someone does not feel that the determination represented the true voice of the people, a petition can be filed and the matter brought to a popular vote.

Presented as a fact: That letters to the commissioners were miscounted by the county auditor in favor of the developer.

Reality: There were 17 letters in support of Article 17, and seven opposed. These should be still on file, as should be the audio tape. I can accept false accusations directed toward myself, but I think slandering a county official borders on being criminal.

Presented as fact: That someone could actually have a wind tower built within 1,000 feet of their home. This I will need to disclaim somewhat in that the actual statement was: "A witness at the Mitchell hearing who lived 1,000 feet from a wind turbine was quoted."

Reality: It is impossible under both state and Bon Homme County ordinances to ever site a turbine anywhere approaching 1,000 feet from a dwelling.

The turbines that are pictured on the front of Feb. 17 Clarion with the caption "nearly in their backyard" are about 2,330, 3,050 and 3,940 feet away.

Presented as fact: That all developers are slick and try underhanded dealings, such as SB 76.

Reality: There is more to this story than someone intentionally building too close to a property line, and in this case it appears to have been an honest mistake. The system worked as intended, and SB 76 never got past its initial committee hearing.

I did have an editorial in the Feb. 3 Clarion explaining Prevailing Winds' opposition to this bill. Of course, there are always a certain number of dishonest persons in every profession, and people on the other side of the issue trying to extort money from an honest mistake. We are hoping to have an equitable answer to this problem this legislative session.

Presented as fact: The Production Tax Credit goes to wealthy and foreign owners of wind farms.

Reality: The PTC benefits are what the name states: a credit on taxes owed to the United States; there is no payment made, only a credit. In the case of the Beethoven project, all the credits are given back to the rate payers as a rate reduction. The Rural Electrics in South Dakota have also benefitted by Basin Cooperative adding wind power to their generating capacity and now supply about 17 percent from the wind.