

Davison Co. wind setback tabled indefinitely

By Evan Hendershot on May 2, 2017 at 9:47 p.m.



Davison County Planning Commission Chair Bruce Haines speaks to the audience on Tuesday during the monthly Planning Commission meeting at the Davison County North Offices. (Evan Hendershot / Republic)

Hurry up and wait, Davison County residents.

Approximately 25 locals in attendance at a Davison County Planning Commission meeting have been on the edge of their seats regarding a proposed 1,000-foot setback for wind towers for months, but a decision will not come any time soon.

"We may be on wind energy for six months," said Planning Commission Chair Bruce Haines at Tuesday's meeting.

The county will continue to have no specific regulations on the books to cover wind energy systems, although Haines said there are no proposed wind energy systems are planned in the county.

The Planning Commission recommended virtually all of the 119-page zoning ordinance for a Davison County Commission vote, excluding only two sections regarding wind energy.

Those in attendance Tuesday night at the Davison County North Offices — many of whom vehemently opposed a 1,000-foot setback in favor of a much larger distance — will now have to wait. And while they wait, commission members believe they will be able to craft the right ordinance for their neighbors in county limits.

"There's nothing beating down our door right now, and we're in a good place to just get grounded," said County Commissioner and Planning Commission member Kim Weitala.

Now on hold is a plan that would have established sound and sight restrictions, as well as a 1,000-foot setback.

While the proposed ordinance is up in the air, Haines acknowledged that 1,000 feet from the base of a wind tower to the next non-participating residence or business may not be enough. A few feet to his right, Haines' fellow commission member Gary Stadlman also hoped to learn more about wind energy systems before making a decision.

"I need to educate myself," Stadlman said. "I need to know what I'm looking at before I say, 'This is good, this is bad.' "

Across the room from Stadlman, commission member Lewis Bainbridge said he will ultimately make his decision based on facts, not opinions. Bainbridge also said he didn't want to set a large setback and zone a wind energy system out of the county.

"I don't want to shoot ourselves in the foot for some future thing that may come along," Bainbridge said.

With the proposal now on hold, Haines took a moment to express his pride in his neighbors of Davison County for working through the ordinance without any "battle scars." And Gene Stehly, an opponent of the 1,000-foot setback, thanked the board for considering input from the public.

"I'd like to commend you, first of all, for talking to folks that experience these things first-hand and live with them everyday, I think that's very important," Stehly said.