

Woodford County Zoning Board of Appeal

Testimony Regarding

Panther Grove Wind Farm

Dr. Ralph L. Marshall

11/16/2020

RECEIVED ON:
NOV 09 2020
WOODFORD COUNTY ZONING

Hello, my name is Ralph Marshall and I come before you today to present testimony in support for the development of the Panther Grove Wind Farm. I would like to present this testimony in two separate areas.

The first is the impact on my wife Elaine and my family farm of 140 acres located in Minonk and Panola Townships of Woodford County.

The second will be from my past experiences as a superintendent of schools, college professor of educational finance, board member of the Illinois Rural and Small Schools association, and a member of three rural communities' economic development boards.

In the spring of 2019 Elaine and I, along with our three children, formed IM Farming which stands for Ioeiger/Marshall Farming in honor of our parents, Emma and Harold Ioeiger and Betty and Donald Marshall in addition to our ancestors most of whom where farmers. This began our journey of farming the farm land that Elaine inherited from her parents and helped to grant a wish of our two sons to someday be farmers or to begin a farm related business.

I am happy to say that through the hard work, knowledge, patience and willingness of our nephew to teach my sons and I the ins and outs of farming that we were not able to learn from our fathers or grandfathers we have completed the harvest of our second year of corn and soybeans.

The income from the single wind turbine that has been designated for our land will almost double the anticipated yearly income for our farm. This means we will have more funds to reinvest in repair and upgrading of our vintage 1970's farm equipment and potentially provide funds for us to invest in additional land and equipment so that some day one of our sons or grandchildren could become full time farmers. At a minimum, the wind turbine income will allow us to maintain our family farm.

More importantly, I know the development of the Panther Grove Wind Farm will bring economic development and an increased tax base for all public taxing bodies in its foot print. This will be especially true for school districts within the wind farm. The positive impact on schools districts is where I have the most experience and expertise concerning this discussion.

The benefits of this project will not only be for the land owners who have a designated wind turbine on their property, but also for all taxpayers in the school districts and the children who attend them.

It was interesting to wake up the morning after we signed an agreement to purchase the Old Feed Mill property in Minonk to learn from the morning news that the Fieldcrest School Board had approved the issuance of bonds to complete needed life/safety repairs on the aging buildings in the district. Since such bonds are for a fixed dollar amount, the tax rate will increase for all taxpayers to pay off the debt on these bonds.

This increase of the tax rate on all taxpayers can be decreased if new equalized assessed evaluation can be added to the tax base of the taxing body, in this case the Fieldcrest School District. In reality, if the tax base is increased enough, taxpayers could see a decrease in the total tax dollars they pay to the school district.

Finally, I feel the most positive impact will be seen on educational programs available to our children. Not only for those students who are heading to college and will most likely currently need to leave the area after graduation in order to find a job, but also for students with special needs, students who want to enter a vocational career area and those who want to be involved in a variety of fine art programs. These are programs that have often been reduced or eliminated in times of budget shortfalls.

New tax dollar generating development is hard to find for any community. Such opportunities are even less in our small town, rural communities where our populations and true family farms are declining and where we see numerous empty store fronts and deteriorating buildings in our downtowns. During my twenty-one years as a superintendent in Illinois I and many of my board members have needed to put aside our personal beliefs, desires and even impacts on personal businesses to make tough decisions that will best impact the largest majority of our constituents.

I ask each of you to do the same and vote to approve the zoning requests for the Panther Grove Wind Farm and keep in mind the slogan that I brought to my school districts for board members and I to remember when making decisions.

CHILDREN FIRST Put the children's best interest first in all your decisions.

Thank you