
FAIR WIND

Your newsletter on industrial wind
development in Jackson ME

An Open Letter to Jackson

Dear Neighbors and Jackson Residents,

My wife Heather Selin and I are new residents of Jackson. We are from away. I guess we are called flat-landers. But we love Jackson and now call this beautiful place our home. We have never met so many wonderful people in our lives.

When Heather and I met a few years ago we made some major life changes together. We both left our jobs, and I completely changed my career to become an organic farmer. We decided to start a new life homesteading and farming our own land. We drove 7,000 miles across New England and the Maritimes to find a place to call home. We fell in love with Jackson, and bought Rick Borden's land on East Chase road.

In June of 2007 we got married on our property. We are slowly building a small timber frame cabin and farm. We look forward to living near our Chase Road neighbors. And yes, we hope one day to put up a small wind turbine.

We know some in town think we're troublemakers. We haven't paid our dues. Tourists. We'll soon be gone. Abrasive. Arrogant. We speak our mind. We don't seem to be able to shut up. We write that damn Fair Wind; many think there's nothing fair about it.

Our strong beliefs and our positions taken in this debate have made us more than a few enemies. Most people probably think we're just crazy.

Our property and new home are about a mile and a half from the nearest ridge, so the new ordinance won't really affect to us. What we *do* care about is open local government, economic justice, our natural environment, and doing community wind the right way so that everybody benefits.

Heather and I care passionately about open government. We believe this is the only way people can have a louder voice than big corporations. I admit that I naively believe democracy should be fair and open. Town meetings are great, with the give and take of public debate. But after the town meeting is over, people drift away. We rely on Selectmen to make decisions between town meetings. Normally this is fine, and the Selectmen do a thankless job for all of us. But a \$36 million wind turbine project is a massive project to leave up to just three elected officials.

We've gone to almost all the Selectmen and Planning Board meetings in the past 16 months. So have a few other townspeople. But most of us stay home and wonder what is really going on. We get limited information, filtered through the Selectmen or Fair Wind or the rumor mill. Shame on all of us. We need lots of folks attending these meetings, especially on big issues like wind turbines. Democracy can't work if we don't show up.

And we believe part of open government means dealing openly and honestly with any real or potential conflicts of interests, even when it's uncomfortable to ask the questions of your elected officials. And we've asked the uncomfortable questions.

Heather and I also have a unique way of looking at how we earn a living. Money is certainly important, and we're lucky. Heather makes a decent salary as a consultant and I tend our farm and build our house. We're not rich, we're not poor. We strongly support businesses, especially local businesses. We buy local and think others should too. Earning a living is how we all prosper and care for our families. Without local employers like John Work we all starve.

But we believe making money at the expense of potentially harming your neighbor is wrong. We fear the noise from industrial wind turbines may do just that if we don't have adequate setbacks. Neighbors don't do that to neighbors.

We are also very skeptical of the promise of money being thrown around by big corporations and developers. Money makes us all do crazy things. We think money is making this town do crazy things, turning neighbor against neighbor.

The wind leases are very lucrative and no one can carelessly disregard economic security for their family. It would take a very strong person to turn away what is basically free money. We all want to win the lottery. But in the end, when things are really tough, you'll turn to your neighbors for help, not your bank account. Ask anyone dealing with the death of a loved one or a serious illness what is more important- a million dollars in the bank or all the love of their family, friends and neighbors. For most of us, after we're safely housed, fed and clothed, money is not the most important thing in the world. Family, friends and neighbors are.

An Open Letter *Continued*

We believe Jackson is beautiful. The woods, and mountains, brooks and scenic beauty are what brought many of us to this area and what keep many of us firmly rooted here. We cannot drive across the crest of the ridges into Jackson from the north or south without being awed by how stunningly beautiful our little place on earth is.

But in this debate we're not really allowed to publically care about things like scenic beauty and how beautiful our town is. Nobody seems to worry publicly about an entire string of large industrial wind turbines running along our entire ridge. The thought of eleven or twelve or even more industrial wind turbines, plus a road cutting across the mountaintop, is hard to imagine without some measure of sadness.

We're not NIMBY's. If it makes economic and environmental sense we would strongly support a smaller-scaled community wind project on Common Hill. As long as everyone living close-by in Jackson and Dixmont is adequately protected from noise, a two or three turbine project would look fine up there, generating electricity and making money for the town.

But we do not believe Jackson needs a large company like Competitive Energy Services or Mt Harris Wind LLC to develop a wind project on the Town lot. We will end up giving away far more than we get in return.

John Kerry from the Governor's office was a recent guest speaker at a Jackson Selectmen's meeting. When asked about doing a special wind project on our Town lot, including net metering for every resident in Jackson (i.e. everyone's electric bill is offset by a common wind project), Kerry practically agreed on the spot to work with our town. We can do this ourselves and the state could help us do it.

I believe if you put smart people like Mick Womersley, Duane Lahaye, Mike Comer, Cindy Ludden, Bob Moore, Tom Olds, George Faulkner, Debbie Ludden and Chris Banikiotes on a community wind committee, our town would have a plan to be energy independent within a year. Do not think for a minute we need millions of dollars of a wind developer's capital for a project like this. We are a non-profit municipal entity. We can use grants, stimulus money, municipal bonds and direct community investments to creatively finance a fairly large project. The key is to involve lots of people with lots of creativity, keep conflicts of interests away, and keep the project reasonably scaled.

We can learn from Vinalhaven. They *almost* did everything right. What Vinalhaven did wrong was forget to look at the health, safety and welfare of everyone on the island. A strong ordinance to protect people from noise has to come first. Then we can work together to develop a sound community wind project if we so choose, and if it makes financial sense for the town.

This is what the Planning Board ordinance does. It can bring the town together. It allows community wind on the Town lot. It looks out for the health, safety and welfare of everyone. It looks out for the financial welfare of our town.

We hope you will show up on Saturday February 6th and vote yes to support the Planning Board's Wind Turbine Ordinance. **Please vote yes on Saturday.**

Your neighbors,

Heather Selin and David McDaniel

Fair Wind is produced by Heather Selin & David McDaniel.

If you have a comment, please mail us at 372 Moosehead Trail, Jackson ME 04921, or send an email to: heatherselin@mac.com.

FAIR WIND

OR CURRENT RESIDENT