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3 BEFORE THE
4 PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF WISCONSIN
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6 **Application of Wisconsin Electric Power**
7 **Company for Certificate of Public**
8 **Convenience and Necessity to Construct a**
9 **Wind Electric Generation Facility and**
10 **Associated Electric Facilities in the Towns**
11 **Of Randolph and Scott, Columbia County,**
12 **Wisconsin**

Docket 6630-CE-302

15
16 **DIRECT TESTIMONY OF MICK SAGRILLO**

17
18 **ON BEHALF OF RENEW WISCONSIN**

19
20
21 **Q. Please state your name, address, and occupation.**

22 A. My name is Mick Sagrillo. My address is E3971 Bluebird Rd., Forestville,
23 WI 54213. I have been an independent consultant in the small wind industry for
24 the past 28 years.

25
26 **Q. Please describe your professional experience.**

27 A. I work with various entities on a national level to teach wind energy
28 workshops and develop curriculum for other trainers and institutions. I work with
29 standards-making bodies to develop standards and codes, including the North
30 American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners, the Small Wind Certification
31 Council, a National Electrical Code section for small wind, and the American
32 Wind Energy Association standards committee. I also write for the American
33 Wind Energy Association's *Windletter*, the American Solar Energy Society's

1 *Solar Today Magazine, Home Power Magazine,* and other publications. I am a
2 co-author of the book *Power from the Wind*. While most of my work has been
3 done in the United States, I have also done work internationally as well, from the
4 Marshall Islands to North Korea. I have also been a Wind Energy Specialist for
5 Focus on Energy since its inception. One of my responsibilities for Focus on
6 Energy was to choreograph the development of a Small Wind Model Zoning
7 Ordinance for to guide townships and counties in the regulation of small wind
8 systems. Due to my understanding of the issues surrounding the installation of
9 small wind systems, much of my time with Focus on Energy involved answering
10 questions from town supervisors, zoning administrators, and plan commissions.

11

12 **Q. What is the purpose of your testimony?**

13 A. I am testifying on behalf of RENEW Wisconsin to shed some light on
14 Kewaunee County’s experience with the installation of 31 utility-scale wind
15 turbines in Lincoln and Red River townships in 1999. Since then, a number of
16 articles and Internet posts have appeared that grossly mischaracterize Kewaunee
17 County’s experience, presumably to further an agenda that opposes wind
18 development in other locations, such as the Glacier Hills project site.
19 Unfortunately, much of this misinformation remains in circulation today. Such
20 misinformation is often regurgitated whenever a wind project such as the Glacier
21 Hills Wind Farm goes through the permitting process.

22 To that end I wish to set the record straight on our community’s attitude
23 towards the 14 Wisconsin Public Service (WPS) wind turbines and eight Madison

1 Gas & Electric (MGE) wind turbines that were installed in Lincoln Township, and
2 how it has evolved over the past 10 years.

3

4 **Q. What makes you an authority on Kewaunee County's experience with wind**
5 **generation?**

6 A. Immediately after the 22 wind turbines were commissioned in Lincoln
7 Township (nine MGE turbines are located in adjacent Red River Township),
8 the township passed a moratorium on the granting of any other conditional use
9 permits for the installation of any other turbines until it had the opportunity to
10 evaluate the impact of the existing 22 turbines on the township residents. The
11 moratorium (See Exhibit 600) was passed on July 6, 1999, and was originally
12 intended to remain in effect for 18 months.

13 Because of my extensive experience with small wind, I was subsequently
14 appointed as the chairman of what became known as the Lincoln Township Wind
15 Turbine Moratorium Study Committee. The other members that were appointed
16 to the committee were:

- 17 (1) a farmland owner hosting two MGE turbines;
18 (2) a farmland owner who did not quite make the list of turbine hosts for WPS;
19 (3) a town resident, one of the two most vocal opponents of the wind farms;
20 (4) a second town resident and opponent, but only mildly opposed to the wind
21 farms.

1 The committee also had an alternate member, who was another farmland
2 owner. In addition, both the Town Chair and the Zoning Administrator served as
3 resources to the committee, attending nearly all meetings.

4 The committee was charged with evaluating the impact of the 22 utility-
5 scale wind turbines and making recommendations for any necessary changes to
6 the Township’s conditional use permit process for permitting wind turbines to the
7 township board of supervisors. In addition, as chair, I was to strive for a
8 consensus document—a difficult undertaking given the make up of the
9 committee.

10 The committee sought the assistance from a number of outside people
11 with experience in various areas, including the Bay Lakes Regional Planning
12 Commission, the University of Wisconsin-Extension Service, the University of
13 Wisconsin to help survey township residents, a University of Wisconsin wildlife
14 consultant, a retired utility transmission and distribution consultant, and a former
15 Lincoln Township zoning committee member. In addition, we occasionally
16 solicited input from both WPS and MGE for clarifications. At one point, we
17 solicited the help of Kewaunee County’s Corporation Council for clarification
18 from the Attorney General on the limits imposed by state statute relative to
19 municipal regulation of wind turbines in Wisconsin.

20 After wrangling with a number of issues and nearing the end of the 18-
21 month moratorium, a farmer adjacent to the WPS wind farm came forward with
22 concerns about stray voltage. As this was a new issue that had not been raised
23 previously, I considered it serious enough to go back to the board of supervisors

1 and request a six-month extension so that the committee could fully investigate
2 these concerns. That extension was granted.

3 It should be noted that Wisconsin State Statute 66.031 (now 66.0401) “is a
4 legislative restriction on the ability of municipalities to regulate...wind energy
5 systems.” The committee kept this restriction in mind when making its
6 recommendations, as the last thing we wanted was to have the Township end up
7 in court.

8 Since ss. 66.0401 essentially limits restrictions on wind energy systems to
9 public health or safety concerns, unraveling and researching those concerns
10 became the focus of the committee’s work.

11 Issues that the committee investigated due to concerns voiced by local
12 residents included: setbacks, sound, property values, stray voltage, wildlife
13 impacts, structure color, turbine spacing and density, overhead utility lines,
14 minimum lot size for turbines, insurance requirements, hearing fees, appropriate
15 construction schedule , blasting for foundations, TV reception, change orders,
16 post-construction clean-up and site restoration, site maintenance , safety during
17 construction and reporting of accidents, abandonment and turbine removal,
18 tourism and signage, trees and neighboring structures, access roads, road damage
19 during construction, reporting of any damage or repairs, adverse health and safety,
20 and periodic reviews of a conditional use permit (CUP).

21 While there was considerable disagreement from one member of the
22 committee, the committee essentially made a number of clarifications of our
23 existing conditional use process for wind turbines and a few recommendations for

1 changes in its final report to the board of supervisors. The committee essentially
2 concluded that the township had done an adequate job of protecting the interests
3 of the township and its residents when approving the wind farm permits in the
4 first place. The clarifications and recommendations were made to protect the
5 interests of the township residents, and assure that the taxpayers would not be
6 saddled with any undue burdens should another wind farm be proposed for our
7 township.

8 After meeting 39 times over two years, the committee sent its final report
9 to the board of supervisors on February 11, 2002 for review.

10

11 **Q. Subsequent to the initial permit approvals, have the two townships had**
12 **opportunities to review the Rosiere and Lincoln projects?**

13 A. Yes.

14

15 **Q. What happened at those reviews?**

16 A. The conditional use permits for both utilities and in both Townships
17 contained language for periodic review of the CUP every five years depending on
18 whether any issues had come up that needed investigating. In 2004, Lincoln
19 Township held such a public hearing on the CUPs for both MGE and WPS. In
20 the case of MGE, no one came forward with any concerns. After 15 minutes, the
21 Town Board told MGE that its CUP would be extended. WPS's Lincoln project
22 was another matter.

1 The farmer who originally raised the stray voltage issue with the
2 committee expressed concerns over the possibility that stray voltage and “earth
3 currents” were damaging the health of his herd. As the resident resource on wind
4 turbines, I suggested that the Township contact the Public Service Commission of
5 Wisconsin (the “PSCW”) to oversee testing of stray voltage and “earth currents”
6 from the WPS wind farm that might be harming this farmer’s dairy herd. After
7 much wrangling, this was eventually completed. However, the PSCW stated that,
8 while they could test for stray voltage, they stated that “we have no standards,
9 guidelines, rules, or science to support or interpret this type of additional testing.”
10 (See Exhibits 601 and 602) After the stray voltage tests came back negative, the
11 Township extended WPS’s CUP. for an additional five years.

12 This past June, the 10-year anniversary and second five-year review
13 period came and went in Lincoln Township without a CUP hearing for either
14 project, as no concerns from residents had been raised. To the best of my
15 knowledge, Red River Township has never held a follow-up hearing to review its
16 CUP with MGE. In fact, Red River Town Chair Gene Dalebroux has
17 repeatedly stated publicly that the MGE wind turbines have been very good for
18 the township.

19
20 **Q. Has the composition of Lincoln’s Town Board changed in the intervening**
21 **time?**

22 A. No. The three supervisors who reviewed the wind projects in 1998 and
23 adopted the moratorium one year later constitute the current Board.

1 **Q. Considering the polarizing nature of the initial permitting debate, and the**
2 **subsequent adoption of moratoria at both townships, is it reasonable to**
3 **conclude that the community’s attitude toward the wind generators has**
4 **changes?**

5
6 A. To begin with, the experience in Lincoln has been significantly more
7 polarizing than what prevailed in Red River. Almost all of the discord and rancor
8 triggered by the proposals to install utility-scale wind turbines in Kewaunee
9 County was centered in the Town of Lincoln, and specifically with the WPS
10 project. While some individuals in Red River expressed wariness over MGE’s
11 proposal, they did so much more politely and with considerably more civility.
12 Moreover, those who were not enamored of the wind turbines were willing to put
13 aside their reservations when Red River’s government approved MGE’s CUP.
14 They were able to move on. In contrast, the adversarial relationship between
15 project opponents and anyone who voices approval of the turbines in Lincoln
16 Township persisted for several years after the projects were approved in late
17 1998. The degree of polarization in Lincoln completely drowned out the relative
18 quiet that has prevailed in Red River since 1999.

19 In my judgment, the sharply drawn divisions that characterized the post-
20 installation environment in Lincoln Township were attributable to the WPS
21 windpower installation. For its Rosiere project MGE hired a land agent who
22 worked closely with landowners and neighbors. MGE’s land agent was in a
23 position to respond to complaints, and relieve tensions before matters got out of

1 hand. In contrast, WPS did not have such a person dedicated to its Lincoln
2 project. WPS's decision to forgo hiring a land agent or a community relations
3 specialist backfired on the utility. The absence of such a person encouraged
4 nearby landowners to view the turbines and the utility with fear and mistrust,
5 allowing for all manner of outlandish claims to be made about the dire
6 consequences the installation of the turbines would foist upon the community.

7 However, much of the suspicion and hysteria arising from proposed wind
8 developments was attributable to the fear of the unknown. With 10 years of
9 experience under our belts in Lincoln Township, I believe that residents now
10 understand and believe that the wind projects, pose no threat to themselves and
11 their community. None of the dire predictions voiced by project opponents have
12 come to fruition. The Town's decision to forgo a CUP public hearing at the
13 second five-year review date is significant, in that it demonstrates that town
14 residents do not consider themselves harmed by the proximity of wind turbines or
15 threatened by their presence. Yes, there are a few residents who may not like the
16 visual impact that comes from living in such close proximity to utility-scale wind
17 turbines, but that's an aesthetic matter that is completely outside the realm of
18 public health or safety. Except for two or three individuals who will take their
19 distaste for wind generation to their graves, the current level of acceptance in the
20 Town of Lincoln is the same as where it was in Red River in 2000.

21

22 **Q. Were there any external efforts to mischaracterize the Moratorium**
23 **committee's conclusions from its research?**

1 A. Unfortunately, yes. The committee’s final report has been repeatedly
2 mischaracterized by various antiwind factions. One document in particular, titled
3 “Excerpts from the Final Report of the Township of Lincoln Wind Turbine
4 Moratorium Committee,” is a particularly irresponsible misrepresentation of the
5 report it purports to summarize. It is replete with exaggerations and information
6 cherry-picked to build its case against wind farms. As such, as opportunity avails,
7 I have occasion to respond to such distortion and hyperbole, as I did with the
8 “Excerpts” document. That response is attached (See Exhibit 602)

9 To this day, such misrepresentations are repeatedly quoted, creating the
10 impression that life in the Town of Lincoln has been sheer, uninterrupted misery
11 ever since the two wind projects were placed in service. That slanted perspective
12 does not comport with the reality I and others, including the Town board of
13 supervisors, have observed and continue to observe.

14

15 **Q. To what extent is the change in attitude attributable to the turbines’**
16 **reliability, dependability, and unblemished safety record?**

17 A. To a very great extent. Again, there were many dire predictions regarding
18 ice throws, strobing and blade glint, stray voltage, plummeting property values,
19 unbearable noise, sinister health effects from low frequency sound, and so forth.
20 Our direct experience is that none of these feared outcomes have come to pass.
21 Many now wonder what the fuss was all about in the first place.

22 Keep in mind that most of these concerns emanated from the residents
23 near WPS’s Lincoln project, not from MGE’s Rosiere wind farm in Lincoln and

1 Red River townships. I believe that this fact speaks volumes about the bias and
2 subsequent slanted portrayal of the wind turbines.

3

4 **Q. As a property owner living in the Lincoln Township, have you seen any**
5 **impacts for the projects on your property tax bills and also on the level of**
6 **services provided by the township?**

7 A. The first year the 22 turbines were up in Lincoln Township, the utilities
8 contributed \$57,000 to our coffers. This past year, that amount declined to
9 \$48,000, still a substantial amount. These payments make a much-welcomed
10 dent on a township budget that hovers in the \$80,000 range.

11

12 **Q. Does this complete your testimony?**

13 A. Yes, it does.