SCANDIA WIND-ENERGY FORUM
Keith Van Beek, Mark Knudsen, Matt Hehl and I all attended the Scandia wind energy forum in Grand Haven Wednesday evening. There were several hundred in attendance. The lower section of the auditorium was about half full with more in the balcony.

Scandia made its presentation and instead of the audience directly engaging the presenters with questions a card system of writing down questions was used. The crowd appeared to be evenly split among those opposing and those in favor of pursuing off-shore wind turbines.

Scandia is no longer asking the Board of Commissioners for a decision of any kind. They will work with the North Ottawa communities first and if their approval is obtained there may be a resolution of support requested at that time.

The Grand Haven Tribune account of this meeting follows later in the Digest.

EECBG LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROGRAM UPDATE (Keith Van Beek)
A meeting was held on Wednesday, June 16 for the 22 local units of government participating in the EECBG local government program. The approved federal grant amounts and projects were announced and plans set in motion to execute the necessary agreements and secure bids to begin the various projects. In all, 49 specific projects representing $343,012 in funds have been approved. It is estimated that the projects will realize $73,395 in annual energy savings, which calculates to a 5 year payback on the investment. This federal program does have significant administrative and reporting requirements, but the County is partnering with the local communities to best craft a system that mitigates the work associated with these requirements and yet realizes the benefits of the funding and projects. We hope that projects will be able to begin during the summer.

TREE CANOPY ON LAKESHORE DRIVE
Park Township resident Mr. James Nelson and his neighbors replanted trees where trees had been removed from the tree canopy line on Lakeshore Drive without a necessary permit from the Road Commission. They were subsequently asked to remove the trees. Mr. Nelson brought this issue to a Road Commission meeting and the Road Commission decided to take a month to review the situation. Mr. Nelson then contacted Mark Knudsen and asked if the County would take a position on the issue.

The Planning & Performance Improvement Department was working actively with a Tree Legacy Committee to develop tree canopy standards throughout the County. A report is mostly done but was set aside when manpower cuts were made to the department to balance the budget. Mark Knudsen brought this issue to the Planning Commission and they unanimously supported having Mark send a letter to the Planning Commission supporting the planting of trees in the existing line on Lakeshore Drive and supporting Mr. Nelson's request to have an exemption from removing the trees.
The news article that ran in the Holland Sentinel on this topic follows in the Digest.

**GVSU EVENT AT MAREC**
I attended an event at the Michigan Alternative and Renewable Energy Center (MAREC) in Muskegon earlier this week. GVSU President Tom Haas spoke of the importance of Muskegon and the GVSU presence in Muskegon both at MAREC and the Annis Water Resources Institute. Dr. Alan Steinman gave an update on the activity of the Institute including the fact that they have obtained $50 million in research grants over the past three years. Mr. Arn Boezaart, Director of MAREC also gave an update on the status of this newer effort. All in all it was an informative event.

**JOINT TERRORISM EXERCISE**
Last week I observed a couple of hours of the joint terrorism exercise that was held at the Grand Rapids Lake Michigan Filtration Plant in Ottawa County. The exercise involved staff from Ottawa County, Kent County, City of Grand Rapids, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, FBI, Michigan State Police, and the United States Coast Guard. This exercise was a good test of the local and regional capabilities to respond to a large scale event and to operate state of the art comm
Scandia alters strategy in light of county board rejections of wind farm proposal

Published: Thursday, June 17, 2010, 5:58 AM     Updated: Thursday, June 17, 2010, 7:57 AM

Dave Alexander | Muskegon Chronicle

Thumbs down: Commissioners in Mason and Ocean counties rejected a proposal to use wind turbines similar to this offshore wind farm demonstration project located in Brussels.

GRAND HAVEN -- Scandia Wind Offshore has pulled back from asking for county board votes on its plans to build wind farms off the West Michigan coast of Lake Michigan.

That strategy, and a tightly controlled "public information meeting" by the city of Grand Haven, turned down the volume on the opposition as the wind farm developers took their plans to Tri-Cities residents at Grand Haven High School Wednesday night.

The Grand Haven meeting was in stark contrast to the emotional opposition at a December meeting to two wind turbines proposed by the city of Grand Rapids at its water filtration plant along the Lake Michigan shoreline in Grand Haven Township.
About 200 residents heard Scandia Project Manager Harald Dirdal of Havgul Clean Energy in Norway outline the company’s $4 billion plan for two wind farms in Lake Michigan, including plans to build 50 to 100, 450-foot turbines six miles off the Grand Haven pierheads.

The public was only able to ask written questions through Grand Haven City Manager Pat McGinnis.

"The bottom line here is about views, and that's a very relevant issue," Dirdal told the Grand Haven audience before taking questions. "We want to move forward based on facts, not fears. It is easy to play the fear card. And right now we don't have all of the facts. That's why we want to move into deeper studies."

McGinnis said the meeting was not a debate or a public hearing. He said the Grand Haven City Council has not decided to take a position on the Scandia plans, and if it does, a hearing and debate would occur at that time.

Scandia CEO Steve Warner said before the Grand Haven meeting that his company will not ask for a county board vote in Muskegon and Ottawa as it did in Mason and Oceana counties. Instead, the company will seek informal advice from government officials, business leaders and citizens as it determines whether to spend $7-$10 million on economic and environmental studies for its West Michigan project, he said.

Plans for a similar installation four miles off the shores of Pentwater on the Mason-Oceana county line resulted in the Mason County Board of Commissioners voting 9-1 earlier this month to oppose the project. Mason and Oceana counties were asked to advise Scandia on the visual issues created by the offshore wind farms by Sept. 1.

But the same will not be asked of Muskegon and Ottawa county boards, Warner said.

"Commissioners were uncomfortable with what we were asking in Mason County, and we understand that," Warner said before the Grand Haven meeting.

Oceana County commissioners are not ready to give Scandia an answer, Oceana Administrator Sue Ann Johnson said. The county board will wait until an Aug. 4 meeting at Hart Middle School before taking up the offshore wind proposal, she said.

Community leaders in the Grand Haven area privately say votes from the county or local communities are premature before the state establishes regulations on offshore wind and procedures to lease the state's Great Lakes bottomlands for wind farms.

Legislative language is being developed in Lansing and might be introduced this summer.

At the Grand Haven informational meeting, former state Rep. Bill Bobier, now a consultant and lobbyist for Scandia, said Grand Haven and all of West Michigan has to realize it has some of the best winds for energy
production off its shores.

"We can't dismiss the fact that this wind energy resource is so good that it attracted a group from Norway who want to spend the resources to study it further," said the Oceana County resident. "Wind energy is not a perfect solution, but it will be a good part of the solution in the future."

A Muskegon-based Yes to West Michigan Wind Power group had members at the meeting, but opponents from the Pentwater-based Lake Michigan POWER Coalition did not make a formal presentation as they did in Ludington last month.

Instead, McGinnis said Lake Michigan POWER will have a Tri-Cities public meeting June 26 at 9 a.m. at the Ferrysburg City Hall.

E-mail Dave Alexander: dalexander@muskegonchronicle.com

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May 25, 2010

Ottawa County Road Commission
Kent Rubley, Managing Director
14110 Lakeshore Drive
P.O. Box 739
Grand Haven MI 49417

Dear Kent:

It is my understanding that the Ottawa County Road Commission will be considering a request from James Nelson, at their Board meeting on Thursday, May 27, 2010, to approve the planting of seven Maple trees along Lakeshore Drive.

As you know, the Ottawa County Planning Commission and Parks and Recreation Commission jointly created a Tree Legacy Committee in 2006. As a member of that committee, you may remember that one of its primary purposes was to “create recommended guidelines to preserve and enhance the aesthetic quality of the Lakeshore Drive Corridor for future generations.” Another of the committee’s objectives was “to help maintain and improve the aesthetic beauty of the tree-lines and tree canopies along scenic roads in Ottawa County.”

The Tree Legacy Committee was comprised of a diverse group that represented Consumers Energy, Grand Haven Board of Light and Power, Holland Board of Public Works, local units of government, Ottawa County Planning Commission, Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission, Ottawa County Road Commission, and interested citizens.

At one point, the Ottawa County Road Commission indicated that their opposition to replanting trees in the road right-of-way was due to potential liability. In response, the Ottawa County Planning Commission passed a resolution (see Attachment A) encouraging the passage of legislation that would limit the potential liability of county road commissions for trees that are replanted within the right-of-way of scenic corridors. The Road Commission took action to support the resolution for a limited period of three years to see if the issue could be resolved. Shortly thereafter, case law was identified that showed that road commissions were not liable for trees planted in road right-of-ways. At a subsequent meeting of the Tree Legacy Committee (January 9, 2007), you indicated that the Road Commission may be able to make some exceptions (on a case-by-case basis) to the allowable locations for tree planting as outlined in the Road Commission’s Tree Planting Policy. That overture was warmly received by the Tree Legacy Committee members.

Unfortunately, due to budgetary constraints and staff layoffs, the Tree Legacy Committee was disbanded and the Tree Planting and Replanting Guidebook was left uncompleted. However, a draft document (see Attachment B) was nearly completed at the time of the
budget cuts. This document contained several recommendations. Three of those recommendations are as follows:

- The Tree Legacy Committee is encouraging property owners along the corridor to replace trees which line the corridor.
- If a current mature tree line exists, plant new trees in line with the existing trees.
- When no overhead utility lines exist, planting within the right-of-way is allowed. Plant medium or large trees to create a canopy effect over the road. When replacing dead or diseased trees where an existing tree line is present, plant the new trees in the existing tree-line.

These recommendations were developed by the collective members of the Tree Legacy Committee. It seems that James Nelson’s request to plant Maple trees along Lakeshore Drive is exactly the type of community initiative that the Tree Legacy Committee was encouraging in order to maintain and improve the aesthetic quality of tree-lines along scenic roads in Ottawa County.

Mr. Nelson’s request was discussed by the Ottawa County Planning Commission at their May 24, 2010 meeting. The members indicated their unanimous support for the concepts included in the original Tree Planting and Replanting Guidebook as well as James Nelson’s request.

It is our hope that the Ottawa County Road Commission will support the continuation of a historic legacy that has promoted natural beauty, scenic roadways, and tourism in Ottawa County by approving this request.

Sincerely,

Mark Knudsen
Director

cc: Ottawa County Road Commission
    County Board of Commissioners
    Ottawa County Planning Commission
    Al Vanderberg, County Administrator
    James Nelson
Magnificent miles

Lakeshore Drive near Holland offers tree canopies and gentle curves.

Tunnel of trees: scenic asset or maintenance mess?

BY PETER DAINING
pedpcaining@hollandsentinel.com
(616) 546-4269

Longing for a tree-canopied stretch of open road? In the Holland area, you don't have to look far.

There’s the long tree-lined stretches of Lakeshore Drive and the scenic streets curving with the Grand and Kalamazoo rivers.

But who’s protecting these shady lanes from chainsaws and development? So far, no one has stepped up.

Natural Beauty Roads, a Michigan program to save such stretches, was..."Our county road commissions and electrical utilities are issuing directives to destroy our community's natural beauty that has taken over a century to create."

JIM BROOKS philanthropist and businessman

These two pictures are taken from the same spot on Stanton Street near Pigeon Creek Park in Olive Township. The first one was taken several years ago when the tree canopy stretched over the road. The second picture was taken Monday, after the trees were trimmed back by county road crews.
Tunnel of trees: scenic asset or maintenance mess?

By PETER DAINING
The Holland Sentinel
Posted Jun 16, 2010 @ 05:01 AM

Holland, MI — Longing for a tree-canopied stretch of open road? In the Holland area, you don’t have to look far.

There’s the long tree-lined stretches of Lakeshore Drive and the scenic streets curving with the Grand and Kalamazoo rivers.

But who’s protecting these shady lanes from chain saws and development? So far, no one has stepped up.

Natural Beauty Roads, a Michigan program to save such stretches, was launched in the 1990s. But it takes a petition and road commission approval to get the designation.

Kent County has 34 Natural Beauty Roads, stretching more than 42 miles.

Ottawa County has one, a mile-long section of Johnson Road tucked deep in Tallmadge Township. Allegan County doesn’t have a single Natural Beauty Road.

“We’ve had a couple that have been submitted, but the board has never approved any,” Allegan Road Commission Director Bill Nelson said.

A few years back, Ottawa County started a Tree Legacy Committee, but the group died out before finalizing its report.

Now, the Ottawa Planning Commission may reinstate the committee in light of concern from residents over the recent shearing of the tree canopy of Stanton Street in Olive Township.

“The limbs have been removed from the trees almost completely along the road corridor,” Ottawa Planning Director Mark Knudsen said. “If the practice can occur in a location like Stanton, it could occur in other parts of the county, which would be a pretty unfortunate situation.”

Residents of a neighborhood along Lakeshore Drive recently came to the road commission, hoping to keep recently planted trees as close to the road as possible to preserve the canopy.

“We think it’s more than just a primary road,” resident Jim Nelson told the commission. “It really adds a lot of beauty and quality to our area.”

Holland businessman and philanthropist Jim Brooks trumpeted scenic roadways as economic assets in a letter to the Michigan Department of Transportation.

“Unfortunately, our county road commissions and electrical utilities are issuing directives to destroy our community’s natural beauty that has taken over a century to create,” he wrote.

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Comments (19)
Jim Sanders
6 hours ago
Report Abuse
You must be logged in to report abuse.
The County Road Commission reminds me of Ralphie from a Christmas story. His friend in Flick has accepted the Triple Dog Dare to lick the flag pole during recess in the dead of winter. Flick is pleading for help when the bell rings and Ralphie replies... but the bell rang, indicating that he can't help because the bell is all powerful and overrules even helping his best friend.

The Road Commission is saying... "But the rules say we have to cut the trees" or "The rules say you can't plant trees there." The rules can be changed, overridden and/or variances could be allowed. The Road Commission must remember that they are in charge of the rules and if the rules are not appropriate they should be changed.

Tree Canopies are a great traffic calming technique and a psychologically calming effect. Change the rules Road Commission and accept the offer from citizens to beautify the road ways.

margy997
5 hours ago
Report Abuse
You must be logged in to report abuse.

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I love this stretch of road. When I was going to college in Muskegon, I chose to take this road all the way into Grand Haven rather than take 131 up. It was a beautiful missing drive, especially in the fall. So sad...

Jaquarwe
5 hours ago
Report Abuse
You must be logged in to report abuse.

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Amen! These people have never seen a tree they didn't want to cut down...and we let them get away with it everyday. You want to see a place that has reduced its' property values due to tree cutting...look at Holland Twp...one example is Butternum Dr, where ghj third and Huntington banks stand...and the huge trees that the Nells Dutch village cut that left it looking like a prairie at James and x36. Wealthy progressive communities know they have to keep their trees to keep it from looking like a trailer park.

infield
4 hours ago
Report Abuse
You must be logged in to report abuse.

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Remember that if a tree falls on a car and hurts or kills someone a lawyer will take Ottawa county to court. So the road commission and the state are being proactive and cutting trees down because of the fear of going to court. Also the electric companies also have been taken to court for lost electric service and damages to houses and cars.

Jim Sanders
4 hours ago
Report Abuse
You must be logged in to report abuse.
If you throw a brick up in the air, odds are it will land on a lawyer waiting to sue someone for something. Not a valid argument for butchering these trees. The trees I've seen around the township look like they were attacked by a drunk with a chainsaw. Maybe one of those lawyers could sue these people for tree rape. That's what it constitutes.

We have too few big beautiful trees that take decades to grow to maturity, and too many idiots wanting to cut them down. I know which one I'm in favor of eliminating.

[Comment](report_abuse)

**hudson:** because of a fear of going to court? If you truly believe the county is being pro-active by responding to fear; 'God help us!!!! We need new leadership.

[Comment](report_abuse)

**larihigandez:** take the chainsaws to Pine creek bay and cut down the trees that block the water view.

[Comment](report_abuse)

**Jim Stiders:** I agree with 'hudson'... just read the article about the poor man in Ada, MI who died today because of a tree.... probably a tree that should have been cut down because it was in the road commissions right of way. The tree should not be cut down. More trees will grow five feet behind the ones cut down. Please stop getting trees before people.

[Comment](report_abuse)

A tree falls on someone so that's justification for butchering the trees that are the subject of this discussion ????? Woah...that's great logic!

Login or register to post a comment.

Login

Username:
Password:
Forgot password:
Login

Register

Email:
First Name:
Last Name:

I agree to the terms of use
I am over 13 years of age

http://www.hollandsentinel.com/feature/x767638514/Tunnel-of-trees-scenic-asset-or-main... 6/16/2010