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Westby Wind Energy project gets green light

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The Westby Wind Energy project is no longer just blowing in the wind after Westby City Council members agreed with a planning commission consensus to offer conditional use permits to Heartland Wind LLC.

The permits are for the implementation of three wind turbines on city-owned and annexed land west of Westby. Heartland Wind LLC is the Illinois limited liability company that will be leasing land from the city of Westby and Glen Stalsberg, who owns property adjacent to the city.

The contract easement will allow Heartland Wind LLC to lease the property for 20 years, conduct soil testing, studies and surveys and make payments of \$1,000 per year, per turbine site during construction phase and \$6,000 annually per turbine once they are operational.

After the 20-year lease has expired the company may offer two five-year renewals for a possible total 30-year contract. Heartland Wind LLC will be responsible for property taxes as a result of the turbine installation and carry a broad form insurance policy against any liabilities incurred with the project. If the project fails Heartland Wind LLC would be responsible for the removal of all the facilities, including foundations to a depth of 48 inches and all removal would have to occur with six months of the contract cancellation.

As part of the easement agreement the city of Westby and the Stalsbergs will not be allowed to plant trees or construct buildings on the leased property, which could interfere with wind flow. A 164-foot temporary wind measurement tower was constructed in Westby in April of 2007 by EcoEnergy, who is piloting the entire project, to test for wind speeds before the project could be given a green light. A long-term 16-foot wind measurement tower is located at the same elevation on the ridge, seven miles north of the Westby project site. The entire Westby Wind Energy Site will be constructed on a 1.300 foot elevated ridge on the west edge of

the city and will interconnect with the city of Westby's electric substation on Black River Avenue. According to Curt Bjurlin, project developer, the wind speeds recorded at the site were 15.0 mph at a hub height of 80m.sufficient, which was adequate for this part of the state and for a project of this magnitude.

The initial project calls for the construction of three wind generated turbines at a cost of \$3-4 million dollars per unit, with construction anticipated to begin in 2009 or early 2010. Once operational the wind turbines could produce up to 100 percent of the energy now used by residents in the city of Westby, depending on wind speeds and electricity usage, but that doesn't equate to a reduction in residential and commercial electric rates since the power generated by the turbines from the test project will be purchased as a whole by WPPI, the power purchaser for the Westby Utilities. The overall savings as more natural energy is generated throughout the state by projects like the one EcoEnergy is developing in Westby will be seen in future savings by all WPPI members, not initial reductions for customers living where the wind turbines are located.

EcoEnergy has many projects under development in Wisconsin, with the closest project in EcoGrove, near Lena. The EcoGrove project is much larger and consists of 67 turbines. Other ongoing EcoEnergy projects are underway in the communities of Kaukauna, Evansville and New Holstein along with projects in Calumet, Rock, Lafayette and Dane Counties in Wisconsin.

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