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An Open Letter Regarding Wind Energy in Henry County Indiana

One of the roles of the New Castle – Henry County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) is to present growth opportunities to the Henry County community for consideration. Local elected and appointed officials decide which opportunities to implement. Residents and other stakeholders also have tremendous input in the approval process along the way.

The initial decision to pursue wind energy was made in 2010 when Henry County adopted the current ordinance to govern the construction of Wind Energy Conversion Systems (WECS) or “wind farms.” Over the last six years, numerous newspaper articles, public notices, public meetings and public hearings have been held on the topic. Two wind farms (Apex Flat Rock and NextEra Whitewater) have received zoning approval and tax abatement.

Wind farms represent a growth opportunity for Henry County. The main benefits are: substantial new tax base, additional diversified revenue for local farm families, and road improvements.

Many members of our community believe the risks of wind farms outweigh the benefits. The main risks shared by community members are: a visual change to the landscape, declining property values, and unknown health effects.

The county is now engaged in a WECS Ordinance Review process with a primary focus on the setback distance between wind turbines and dwellings. As a member of the WECS Committee, I have reviewed hundreds of pages of information and joined the wind industry trade association to better understand the wind energy sector.

Over the recent weeks, I have closely listened to the community and it is clear there is not consensus on the issue of wind farms in Henry County. The path to achieve compromise could be damaging to our county’s reputation in the business marketplace. A flickering “Open for Business” sign is not helpful but rather detrimental to our reputation.

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Despite the potential economic benefits of wind farms and previous approvals, it is not the role of the EDC to unnecessarily and single-handedly pursue development projects without significant community support.

In spite of the risks of turning down wind farms, the EDC staff will no longer pursue new wind farm development in Henry County. It is our hope that Flat Rock and Whitewater wind farms are built as previously approved.

The community's goodwill and continued support is critical for the long term mission of the EDC.

Sincerely,



Corey L. Murphy
President / CEO

New Castle – Henry County Economic Development Corporation