

CAC Scoping Public Hearing – ESF April 26th

Reaching Common Ground – Electricity – Renewable Energy

There is a great conflict going on in many of our rural towns. A significant percentage of farmers and residents are opposing renewable energy projects. Some towns have voted to ban large scale solar and wind power. The problem is that under the banner and power of the Office of Renewable Energy Siting, private companies, many of whom are controlled by international renewable energy companies, come into towns and sell leases of thousands of acres of land to owners. ^{they} They do this without consulting local leaders and residents and proceed with their projects, like it or not. When people find out about these deals, issues of the use of prime farm land, the impingement on residential housing and land use cause huge push back.

If it's not too late, all this could be avoided if there was a thoughtful dialogue between the renewable energy companies and local people to reach some "common ground".

What is needed is a state-funded mechanism that lays down specific guidelines and processes that towns could use to reach common ground with ^{Renewable Energy Companies} private industry. A thoughtful program, developed by professionals who know about community-wide dialogues, with specific activities and time-lines can be used. Trained facilitators, who do not have vested interests in the issue, can be hired by the state to lead these dialogues. If a town and the companies can reach an agreement and the town gives its "stamp of approval" then these companies would move up the queue for approval before those who fail to engage in this thoughtful process.

Yes it will be more time consuming and require some funding but it will a great deal of conflict and communities undermining projects that could drag on for years to come.

Philip G. Rose

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