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Threatt, Linnetta

From: Kenneth and Jeanne Van Staalduin kjvan@gotriccounty.com
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Clerk's Office
N.C. Utilities Commission

Dear N.C. Utilities Commissioners,
Please read for your consideration. We are hoping that you will seriously consider the environmental, cultural, and technical issues that were presented to you on Monday night and that you will not allow this to be a political decision. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Jeanne Van Staalduin
Emp-93, Sub 0

From the Beaufort Observer:

Was the solar project hearing a waste of time?

March 21, 2018

The N. C. Utilities Commission held a public hearing in Washington, NC on March 19 to receive comments from the public on Wilkerson Solar's application to install a solar facility in the Terra Ceia area. You can hear some of the comments in the video clips below. We were not able to capture all of the speakers because of technical difficulties. We apologize to those speakers. The first two speakers focused primarily on technical issues related to the project. They speak for themselves and we feel no need to elaborate on their comments.

The first focuses on some of the environmental concerns related to the project:

The second presentation focuses on technical issue related to the viability of the proposed facility:

Commentary

We think the nine-hundred pound gorilla in the room Monday night was effectively ignored by these excellent comments. The issue ignored is the politics of solar energy. And we suspect that is how this application will be decided, no the issues discussed in these presentations. Here's the way we see it.

The permits that will determine whether this project is allowed or not will be decided by the Cooper Administration. If it goes the way the natural gas pipeline and other similar projects are going these days it will be decided by political contributions, not technical issues. The solar industry is notorious for lobbying to get favorable treatment for their projects. Otherwise, none of the projects would be economically viable for them under the current market conditions. And it certainly does not make sense for the electric ratepayers. It does make sense for those who want to turn a profit on "green energy." Ever since the alternative energy mandates, going back a decade or so ago, the proliferation of solar and wind projects has depended on special tax treatment for these companies. These special tax treatments come from political contributions. And we suspect that is how this project will go also. If Wilkerson has greased the right palms they'll get their permits, regardless of whether this project is in the public interest or not.

Much of the money coming into political coffers has gone to legislators, and specifically to the legislative leadership. This has been documented by NC Civitas, the John Locke Foundation and published here. It is no secret that alternative energy dumps tons of money into lobbying. Thus, what we predict is that the test of whether Wilkerson will get its permits or not will depend on how effectively they have played the lobbying game.

Pardon us if we are cynical, but we don't expect the Utilities Commission to be at all concerned about environmental issues—because if they were they would never approve these projects—or even the energy issues, as explained by Dr. Eckerlin, the second speaker. Whether Wilkerson gets the necessary permits will most likely be left up to various state and Federal agencies that have to approve permits for various features of the project and that will be decided by a Democrat controlled administration. But much of the lobbying money has gone to the legislative branch. We expect a dog fight between them, not over this project but rather who can rack in the most political contributions.

The issues raised in later videos we will post, such as the cultural impact, including agriculture, will not, we suspect carry any weight. Probably what will play into the ultimate outcome of this application will the policies of the Trump Administration, which has not been as supportive of "alternative energy" as was the Obama Administration.

Our point can be simply stated. The issues discussed at the public hearing are not, in our opinion, how this application will be decided. It will, instead, be a political decision. Solar energy does not make sense, except for the profit seekers using taxpayer subsidies, and for the politicians. It just does not make technical sense.

We may be wrong, but we'll see.