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**County board OKs wind energy process  
Updated floodplain zoning ordinance adopted**

 [Terrell Boettcher](#) / News Editor  
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Concluding a series of public hearings, Sawyer County supervisors on Dec. 20 adopted an updated floodplain zoning ordinance. They also passed a wind energy ordinance allowing turbines of various sizes to be placed on private properties with a zoning permit.

County zoning administrator William Christman said the major change in the new floodplain ordinance puts additional responsibilities on owners who want to expand their campgrounds or create new campgrounds in floodplains.

But homeowners next to a body of water who seek a building permit "will be treated no differently under the new ordinance than under the current ordinance," Christman added. The ordinance contains FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) floodplain maps.

The county's wind energy ordinance allows four types of wind energy systems:

- A personal wind energy system with a nameplate capacity of 10 kilowatts or less, with one wind tower and turbine up to 35 feet high that is not visible from adjacent properties, produces no measurable noise and complies with all other zoning regulations;
- A small wind energy system with a nameplate capacity of 50 kilowatts or less and one tower with turbine;
- A large wind energy system with a nameplate capacity of more than 50 kilowatts with one tower and turbine;
- A wind farm system that includes more than one wind tower

Christman noted that large wind energy systems and wind farms could be located only in areas zoned for agriculture, forestry or industry on parcels of five acres or more.

The Wisconsin Towns Association-Sawyer County Unit

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asked that affected town boards have the opportunity to approve/deny such wind energy permits.

Supervisor Shirley Riedmann responded that this “would inhibit the county from doing something in the best interests of the entire county.”

Supervisor Bruce Miller said allowing towns to approve or deny wind energy permits “would create a balkanization of the county.” He said the zoning committee “still will listen to testimony and response from the town boards.” Also, town boards “need to seriously consider whether and where” such wind systems would be appropriate under their Smart Growth comprehensive plans, he said.

Town of Edgewater chairman Waldo Asp said that in all of Sawyer County “there is little wind available for generation” except for the Meteor/Blue Hills area of Edgewater and Meteor townships. In that area, wind towers up to 300 feet tall would affect many property owners and be visible for miles, he said.

Asp asked that the county board allow the towns the power to approve such wind energy requests. Christman said adjacent property owners and town boards have input under the current conditional use permit process.

Rezoning denied

In another zoning matter, the board voted to deny a request from Karen Nielsen and Richard Curtis to rezone a 1.9-acre parcel off Town Hall Road across from the Spider Lake Town Hall from RR1 (residential-recreational) to C-1 (commercial).

Both the Round Lake and Spider Lake town boards voted previously to deny the request, stating that they don’t know what type of business would be placed on the parcel. The application lists the intended use as a real estate office, office space, retail shop/coffee shop and possibly a service station.

The comprehensive land use plans of those towns do not identify that parcel as commercial. The parcel is in Round Lake township but adjacent to Spider Lake township.

The attorney for Nielsen and Curtis, Mike Kelsey, countered that the lot next to the Spider Lake Hall is zoned commercial, and directly across Highway 77 from the Nielsen/Curtis parcel is a riding stable.

Moreover, there are many current businesses along Highway 77 and Highway B that are “spot zoning,” he indicated, and “spot zoning, in and of itself, is not illegal,” Kelsey added. “There is no evidence that this rezoning would damage the rights of others or property values.”

Spider Lake Town Chairman Gene Krause retorted that the proposed rezoning “has been denied again and again. It goes against our comprehensive plan. Everything they (Nielsen and Curtis) are asking to do is already allowed under current zoning (with a conditional use permit).”

The board also approved an updated zoning permit fee schedule, with the only changes from the previous schedule being soil testing and wind energy fees.

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