



For Immediate Release

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ICEBREAKER WIND CLEARS SIGNIFICANT HURDLE

ODNR representative to State board suggests eliminating controversial “poison pill” condition to revive Lake Erie wind turbine project; Board agrees

Columbus – September 17, 2020 – While the final decision is not yet in place, Icebreaker Wind received a critical lifeline today thanks to an amendment offered by Mary Mertz, director of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. Mertz stated at today’s Ohio Power Siting Board meeting that she believed there were some “valid objections” to the questionable nighttime shutdown decision that made the Lake Erie wind project financially unfeasible.

The amendment was unanimously approved. However, the revised ruling has yet to be drafted and voted on. Project developers were extremely pleased with the amendment and grateful to the numerous project supporters. Lake Erie Energy Development Corporation (LEEDCo) President Dave Karpinski said he is anxious for the official vote, after which LEEDCo looks forward to working with the State of Ohio on additional steps needed to make this project a reality.

“This is an important and positive development for Ohio, and we want to thank Mary Mertz for hearing our concerns and introducing this amendment,” said Karpinski. “I especially want to thank Rep. Jeff Crossman and Sen. Sandra Williams who, as non-voting members of the board, strongly advocated for this project and on behalf of transparency, clean energy and new jobs.”

LEEDCo has been planning the Icebreaker project for more than 11 years. The project is expected to create more than 500 jobs and generate \$253 million in economic impact during construction and throughout the life of the project.

Today’s decision follows a LEEDCo appeal for a rehearing on the siting board’s May decision to mandate the wind farm cease operations every night from March until November. LEEDCo said that shutdown mandate contradicted evidence presented. OPSB staff had recommended the project without the condition and the State’s own experts testified that the condition wasn’t needed. For all of these reasons and more, LEEDCo was stunned by the board’s ruling that included the provision.

In addition to Sen. Williams and Rep. Crossman, 30 additional legislators comprising a quarter of the Ohio General Assembly sent a letter to the State a month ago encouraging the board to revisit the puzzling May ruling.

LEEDCo also thanked Senate President Larry Obhof and Sen. Steve Wilson for issuing a statement today that encouraged the board not to preclude any development that detracted from Ohio consumers having an abundant diversity of energy options to choose from.

Independent studies have also concluded that the project poses limited risk to birds and bats, and LEEDCo has committed to measures that would minimize any adverse impacts on wildlife

Icebreaker has been opposed by the coal industry.

Icebreaker, if constructed, could be the first freshwater wind project in North America and will position Greater Cleveland to be an innovation leader in clean energy. It would allow Ohio to tap into a multi-billion dollar industry that is exploding across the country.

“Icebreaker Wind is a tremendous opportunity for the state to diversify its economy and a win for clean energy options in Ohio,” Karpinski said. “Already, more than 275 area companies in Ohio have registered to be a part of it.”

Ohio has the largest wind energy manufacturing base of any state in the U.S., according to the American Wind Energy Association. The industry employs a wide array of workers, from engineers to pipefitters.

The project has earned approvals during an exhausting, detailed, 11-year-long process from regulatory agencies including the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It has the support of many environmental groups, including the Sierra Club, the Environmental Defense Fund and the Ohio Environmental Council. And the National Audubon Society submitted a letter to OPSB voicing support for the conditions related to avian issues in the agreement with ODNR, OPSB staff and LEEDCo signed in May 2019.

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