

Another Voice: Wind turbines are vital to our energy future

By Another Voice

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By Larry Beahan

Windmills are beautiful. As a lover of Lake Erie's bluffs, beaches and sunsets, as a former Bennett Beach lifeguard and Learzaks patron, as a current property owner on its shores, I was astounded to read:

On Sept. 19, the Erie County Legislature's Energy and Environment Committee has scheduled a hearing to consider a bill by Legislators Lynne Dixon and John Mills condemning wind turbines on the lake.

They give whereases left and right. When you add them up, compared to the cost of climate change and the risks of nuclear energy to the lake, they amount to no more than:

- Whereas, many land owners consider wind turbines to be an eyesore at best. And therefore,
- Resolved, this honorable body is opposed to building any wind turbines along the shores of Lake Erie.

What'll we do without them?

I just got up from watching "Chernobyl" on HBO. It knocks your socks off with the tale of denial and cover-up around that horrific 1986 nuclear disaster that released the radioactivity of 100 Hiroshima bombs.

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Chernobyl, in the name of clean energy, killed 16,000 people, so far, contaminated 38,000 square miles of Europe with hundreds of years of radioactivity and cost \$68 billion to clean up.

The consequences of the Fukushima catastrophe in 2011 are rated on a par with Chernobyl's. Our own aging Indian Point nuclear power station on the lower Hudson has risks that are comparable to Fukushima. Those risks are compounded by Indian Point's location a few miles north of 20 million people and by the proposed Algonquin Incremental Market, a 42-inch fracked-gas pipeline that would pass within 150 feet of it.

Western New York needs electricity from wind turbines to light and heat our homes, drive our electric cars and buses, power our recovering economy and do it without producing greenhouse gasses or exposing us to the risks of nuclear energy.

Climate change has done too much damage to Western New York already: It has shortened our ski season enough. We can hardly take a hike in the woods for the Lyme disease-bearing ticks. The freaky weather threatens fishing and boating.

West Valley nuclear waste sits on a crumbling bank ready for the next "extreme weather" to dump it into the Cattaraugus and Lake Erie. Toxic algae blooms down the lake at Toledo. I was there a couple of years ago, when the water was too toxic to drink or swim in. Let's not let that happen to Buffalo.

With all this in my mind, the sight of wind turbines becomes sweeter and sweeter to me. May that awful resolution against them die in committee.

Larry Beahan, of Amherst, is conservation chair of the Sierra Club, Niagara Group