

City of Lawrence City Planning Commission Meeting, September 27, 2023

Possible Sources to ask further questions:

City Manager: **Craig Owens**

- Phone: **(785) 832-3400**
- **craigowens@lawrenceks.org**

Economic Development: **Britt Crum-Cano – Director**

- Phone: **(785) 832-3472**

Human Resources: **Megan Dodge, Director**

- Phone: **(785) 832-3202**

Planning and Development Services: **Jeff Crick, Director**

- Phone: **(785) 832-7700**
- Building Safety/Contractor Licensing: **buildinginspections@lawrenceks.org**
- Planning/Planner of the Day: **planning@lawrenceks.org**
- Rental Licensing/Code Enforcement: **rentallicensing@lawrenceks.org**

Passionate Debate at Lawrence Planning Commission Meeting Over Wind Turbines

The monthly Lawrence Planning Commission Meeting on September 27, 2023, turned into a heated debate over the installation of wind turbines in Douglas County. When the meeting began, right from the start, it was clear that this was no ordinary gathering.

During the initial segment of the meeting, the floor was open to public comments, and emotions ran high. A resident from Namaha County wrote a testimonial, and a woman took the podium to voice their distress about wind turbines near their home. “The horizon of my homestead used to be filled with the most beautiful sunset, now it is blocked by wind turbines.” said the resident in the testimonial. They implored the audience to consider that life should encompass more than just financial gains, delivering an emotionally charged message that resonated with many.

Jeffrey Ohmer, a local Douglas County resident, followed with strong opposition to wind turbines in rural areas, especially close to homes. He raised concerns about safety, particularly the prescribed setback distance of 1500 feet, which he deemed insufficient. Ohmer argued that wind turbines should not be more prominent than existing water towers and should not be visible from long distances. Moreover, he advocated for greater involvement of nearby property owners in decision-making processes, emphasizing the need to maintain peace within Douglas County.

Amanda Lang, also a rural Douglas County resident, conducted a Facebook survey to gauge community sentiment on the wind turbine issue. Her survey garnered over 1200 signatures from individuals who expressed their disapproval of large wind turbines near their homes. This

highlighted a prevailing sentiment among rural residents who felt that their voices were not being heard by the city commission, further deepening their sense of abandonment.

In contrast, Tony Schmidt, a landowner with 40 acres near Clinton Lake, voiced support for wind turbines. He acknowledged the concerns of those in opposition but pointed out the pressing need for transitioning to renewable energy sources like wind and solar. "I don't think that we should just depend on Western Kansas for wind energy. I think we should do our part here in Eastern Kansas." said Schmidt. Furthermore, Schmidt argued that relying solely on natural gas was untenable, especially given environmental concerns and rising temperatures.

The Lawrence Planning Commission Meeting underscored a sharp divide within the community regarding the installation of wind turbines. While some residents raised concerns about safety, aesthetics, and potential disruptions to their lives, others viewed wind and solar energy as indispensable for meeting the region's energy demands while addressing environmental concerns. As the city commission faces the challenge of reconciling these divergent perspectives, the future of wind turbine installations in Douglas County remains uncertain.

"In Douglas County we're committed to considering all perspectives. Our aim is to strike a balance that benefits our community as we move toward a sustainable energy future." said Planning and Development Director Jeff Crick.

The meeting showcased the complexities of local decision-making on renewable energy, highlighting the need for thoughtful consideration and compromise to address the concerns of all stakeholders in Douglas County.