

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE  
BEFORE THE  
SITE EVALUATION COMMITTEE

*Application of Antrim Wind Energy, LLC*

Docket No. 2015-02

TESTIMONY OF EVERETT THURBER

May 23, 2016

1 **Q. Please state your name and position?**

2

3 A. Everett Thurber. I have been a member of the Board of Selectmen in the Town of  
4 Lempster, New Hampshire, for twenty two years. I also serve as the ex officio member  
5 of the Town's Planning Board and as the Vice President of the Lempster Historical  
6 Society.

7

8

9 **Q. In what capacity do you offer this testimony?**

10

11 A. I offer this testimony based on my personal experience with the Lempster Wind project  
12 as a member of the Town's Board of Selectmen.

13

14 **Q. What is your involvement with the Lempster Wind Project?**

15

16 A. I have been actively involved in the Lempster Wind project as a member of the Town's  
17 Board of Selectmen since the project was first proposed to the Town and to the Site  
18 Evaluation Committee in 2006. I have remained involved with the project from the  
19 Town's perspective during permitting of the project, construction and now operation.

20

21 I have also attended meetings in many other communities in New England to discuss the  
22 Town of Lempster's experience.

23

24 **Q. What financial impact does the Lempster Wind project have on the Town?**

25

26 A. Today the impact is extremely positive. The Lempster Wind pays County, Town and  
27 local education property taxes based on a valuation of \$44,263,200. This helps the Town  
28 maintain a relatively low total tax rate of \$23.27 per \$1,000 that benefits all Town  
29 residents.

30

31 Without the Lempster Wind project, Lempster's total tax rate would be approximately  
32 \$31.76 per \$1,000. This tax rate would have an extremely negative impact on many  
33 Town residents who would be unable to their tax bills for the same services without  
34 considerable sacrifice. Without the Lempster Wind project, the Town and the School  
35 District would have to cut back on services in order to reduce taxes. As a result, the  
36 Lempster Wind project has an extremely positive impact on the provision of public  
37 education and municipal services.

38

39 **Q. Have the financial impacts always been positive?**

40

41 A. No. Prior to the passage of House Bill 1549 in 2014 (attached), the Department of  
42 Revenue Administration (DRA) independently determined the value of renewable energy  
43 projects for equalization purposes. This meant that if the Town assessed the project  
44 based on a value of \$45 million but the DRA determined the value to be \$60 million, the  
45 Town's taxpayers would have to make up the difference in the Town's proportionate  
46 share of County Taxes and School Taxes for the cooperative middle school.

1  
2 In 2014, the Legislature fixed this problem and the Lempster Wind project is now  
3 extremely beneficial to the State, the County, the Town and the School District. As noted  
4 above, the Town's 2015 tax rate set by the DRA was \$23.27 with the Lempster Wind  
5 project. Without the Lempster Wind project, the tax rate would be approximately \$31.76.  
6

7 **Q. What impact has the Lempster Wind project had on the orderly development of the**  
8 **Town?**  
9

10 A. The impact of the Lempster Wind project on the Town's orderly development has been  
11 positive. The project has increased tourism and reduced local taxes which helps local  
12 businesses and the local economy. There have been no negative or adverse impacts on  
13 the orderly development of the Town.  
14

15 **Q. What impact has the Lempster Wind project had on the Town's aesthetics, historic**  
16 **sites, air and water quality, the natural environment, and public health and safety?**  
17

18 A. Again, the impact of the Lempster Wind project has been positive. The Lempster Wind  
19 project has increased tourism and reduced tax rates which helps both the Town and  
20 residents maintain the Town roads, highways and both public and private facilities.  
21 There have been no significant adverse impacts on historic sites, air or water quality or  
22 the natural environment.  
23

24 As far as noise, the Lempster Wind project has not had a significant adverse effect.  
25 Residents do not hear or notice the project at all under normal circumstances. For  
26 example, my daughter lived 3,600 feet from three turbines. The project can be heard only  
27 on occasion by standing perfectly still. If you move you cannot hear the turbines at all.  
28 My residence is located around 2 miles from the project and it can only faintly be heard  
29 on rare occasions.  
30

31 As a selectman, I have been aware of only two instances where a resident complained of  
32 a noise impacts. One involved a project land owner who receives lease payments from  
33 the project. He requested a tax abatement which the Town granted despite his receiving  
34 lease payments. The second instance involved a resident who lives in close vicinity.  
35

36 These two instances are minor, isolated experiences and show that the noise impacts are  
37 far less than what would be expected from a State highway project or an industrial  
38 facility. From a Town perspective, the impact of the Lempster Wind project has been  
39 positive and the benefits greatly outweigh the impacts that have been isolated and minor.  
40  
41

42 **Q. Does this conclude your testimony?**  
43

44 A. Yes.



# Completed Public Tax Rates 2015

Municipality	Date	Valuation	Valuation w/ Utils	Municipal	County	State Ed.	Local Ed.	Total Rate
Lempster	11/05/15	\$102,682,890.00	\$152,214,790.00	\$5.34	\$2.60	\$2.57	\$12.76	\$23.27
Lempster w/o Wind*			\$107,951,590.00	\$7.53	\$3.67	\$2.57	\$17.99	\$31.76
Lempster Wind Taxes*			\$44,263,200.00	\$236,365.49	\$115,084.32	N/A	\$564,798.43	\$916,248.24

\*Net Assessed Value of Lempster Wind was \$44,263,200 in 2015.

CHAPTER 277  
HB 1549 – FINAL VERSION

19Mar2014... 0705h

2014 SESSION

14-2560  
10/06

HOUSE BILL            **1549**

AN ACT                relative to assessment of renewable generation facility property subject to a voluntary payment in lieu of taxes agreement.

SPONSORS:            Rep. Moffett, Merr 9; Rep. Grenier, Sull 7; Rep. Porter, Hills 1; Sen. Woodburn, Dist 1

COMMITTEE:          Municipal and County Government

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AMENDED ANALYSIS

This bill clarifies assessment of renewable generation facility property provided for in a voluntary payment in lieu of taxes agreement.

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Explanation:          Matter added to current law appears in ***bold italics***.  
Matter removed from current law appears [~~in brackets and struck through~~].  
Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.

CHAPTER 277  
 HB 1549 – FINAL VERSION

19Mar2014... 0705h

14-2560  
 10/06

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

*In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Fourteen*

AN ACT relative to assessment of renewable generation facility property subject to a voluntary payment in lieu of taxes agreement.

*Be it Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court convened:*

1 277:1 Commissioner of Revenue Administration; Equalization of Property. Amend RSA 21-J:3,  
 2 XIII to read as follows:

3 XIII. Equalize annually by May 1 the valuation of the property as assessed in the several  
 4 towns, cities, and unincorporated places in the state including the value of property exempt pursuant  
 5 to RSA 72:37, 72:37-b, 72:39-a, 72:62, 72:66, and 72:70, **and** property which is subject to tax relief  
 6 under RSA 79-E:4, [~~and property which is the subject of a payment in lieu of taxes under RSA 72:74~~]  
 7 by adding to or deducting from the aggregate valuation of the property in towns, cities, and  
 8 unincorporated places such sums as will bring such valuations to the true and market value of the  
 9 property, and by making such adjustments in the value of other property from which the towns,  
 10 cities, and unincorporated places receive taxes or payments in lieu of taxes, **including renewable**  
 11 **generation facility property subject to a payment in lieu of taxes agreement under**  
 12 **RSA 72:74**, as may be equitable and just, so that any public taxes that may be apportioned among  
 13 them shall be equal and just. In carrying out the duty to equalize the valuation of property, the  
 14 commissioner shall follow the procedures set forth in RSA 21-J:9-a.

15 277:2 Payment in Lieu of Taxes for Renewable Generation Facilities. Amend RSA 72:74, II to  
 16 read as follows:

17 II. A renewable generation facility subject to a voluntary agreement to make a payment in  
 18 lieu of taxes under this section shall be subject to the laws governing the utility property tax under  
 19 RSA 83-F. Payments made pursuant to such agreement shall satisfy any tax liability relative to the  
 20 renewable generation facility that otherwise exists under RSA 72. **The payment in lieu of taxes**  
 21 **shall be equalized under RSA 21-J:3, XIII in the same manner as other payments in lieu of**  
 22 **taxes**. In the absence of a payment in lieu of taxes agreement, the renewable generation facility  
 23 shall be subject to taxation under RSA 72.

24 277:3 Appraisal of Taxable Property; Renewable Generation Facility PILOT. Amend RSA 75:1  
 25 to read as follows:

26 75:1 How Appraised. The selectmen shall appraise open space land pursuant to RSA 79-A:5,  
 27 open space land with conservation restrictions pursuant to RSA 79-B:3, land with discretionary  
 28 easements pursuant to RSA 79-C:7, residences on commercial or industrial zoned land pursuant to  
 29 RSA 75:11, earth and excavations pursuant to RSA 72-B, land classified as land under qualifying

CHAPTER 277  
HB 1549 – FINAL VERSION  
- Page 2 -

1 farm structures pursuant to RSA 79-F, buildings and land appraised under RSA 79-G as qualifying  
2 historic buildings, residential rental property subject to a housing covenant under the low-income  
3 housing tax credit program pursuant to RSA 75:1-a, ***renewable generation facility property***  
4 ***subject to a voluntary payment in lieu of taxes agreement under RSA 72:74 as determined***  
5 ***under said agreement***, and all other taxable property at its market value. Market value means  
6 the property's full and true value as the same would be appraised in payment of a just debt due from  
7 a solvent debtor. The selectmen shall receive and consider all evidence that may be submitted to  
8 them relative to the value of property, the value of which cannot be determined by personal  
9 examination.

10 277:4 Applicability. The provisions of this act shall apply beginning with the property tax year  
11 ending March 31, 2015.

12 277:5 Effective Date. This act shall take effect upon its passage.

13 Approved: July 28, 2014

14 Effective Date: July 28, 2014

Can you give me some background about the Wind Farm, how and why it came to be, etc.?

Sullivan County Economic Development contacted Mr. Onnela in 2003, lease option agreements signed in 2003 and 2004. Two test towers were erected, one in 2003 and one in the fall of 2004. Community Energy contacted the Selectmen and Planning Board in 2004 and permits were filed in 2005. I will direct you to our website lempsternh.org. It has the SEC findings and other information that may be helpful.

What do you think some of the positive results from this initiative are?

Green Energy. Decrease in power outages in our town , I don't know if this is from the windmills or the new poles, wires and branches cut back from the wires ( a result from the wind farm) Revenue from taxation.

Have you had any noise complaints by area residents? People being sick?

Two abatements were received. One from a landowner who leases his land to the wind farm and who has a windmill right next to his house, the other party on Guilford Rd whose property abuts the wind farm and is very close to a windmill. Abatement findings attached. The town has a sound level meter. If someone complains about the noise the Town will send an officer out with it to test the noise level. I am only aware of one reading requested and that was the resident on Guilford Road who filed an abatement.

I have never heard anyone complain about being sick from the wind mills or their animals going crazy. Also we still have plenty of deer, moose, birds, bats and other critters. A study was done regarding the wind farm impact on our wildlife.

Has there been evidence of property values going down?

Town property values overall have not gone down due to the wind farm. The only adjustment I am aware of are the two abatements that are very close to an actual wind mill. (Less than 800 feet)?

Have you received comments pro or con about the hillsides being altered by the presence of the Wind Farm?

Yes. Some residents did not want to see any change to the Mountain. The road to the project however is the best road in town. We are a very rural community and many people hike, snowmobile, hunt etc. on the mountain. They continue to do so. Others say the windmills appear graceful on the mountain top. Lempster has no zoning and many residents do not want to put restrictions on the use of their land. You may not like what your neighbor is doing on his land but if you take away his right you take away your own.

Is there anyone who lives in town you would recommend I talk with?

Norm or Cathy Sturgeon, Sturgeons General Store [REDACTED] - NO LONGER OWNS THE STORE.



Selectman Everett Thurber - Been involved with the project from the beginning. His daughter lives next to the wind farm and has animals. [REDACTED]

Kevin Onnela – Land owner who has majority of the windmills on his property and one right next to his house. [REDACTED]

Please add anything you think is relevant about this project?

I live approximately a mile from the windmills and when the air is thick I can hear them but it is a sound you have to stop and listen for. If there is other noise, wind through the trees, walking on snow, talking, traffic, you will not hear them. I encourage people to visit the town and make their own decision. I will be taking several rides to South Road with the purpose of listening for the wind mills. This is an area Mr. Lindholm from VEC said he could hear them, he was a speaker in Grafton, VT against the wind farm. Mr. Lindholm owns property without buildings in Lempster, he does not live here. He said that people are abandoning their homes because of the noise and that is not true. I made a list of all properties for sale in the area and Selectman Thurber researched the properties. Being a small town and living here all his life Selectman Thurber knows many of the owners of the properties for sale and their reason for selling. His daughter is also a real estate agent who lives in town and I have asked her personally if she was aware of any properties for sale or could not be sold because of the wind farm and she said no. I have attached a file on information previously requested from others regarding the wind farm including the abatement findings.