

Beach Haven Taxpayers' Associations Provides Response to Wind Energy Impacts to Tourism

Letter to the Editor

The 2-page Sandpaper Article in the June 30th edition entitled "Wind Energy Impact Could Cost Billions in Tourism Dollars" described the supposed impact in lost Tourism dollars and jobs due to the implementation of the Offshore Wind Project by Atlantic Shores in partnership with Shell New Energies US LLC and EDF Renewables North America. Unfortunately, the conclusions reached have no basis of fact based upon scientific peer review. Beach Haven Taxpayers Association (BHTA) held an offshore wind energy forum via Zoom on April 9 and then interviewed Karen Conover, a Beach Haven taxpayer who has 35 years of expert experience in implementing Offshore wind projects in Europe and the Americas.

BHTA was instrumental in hosting a balanced representation of the impact of the offshore wind project based upon facts and not opinion and innuendos. We moderated a series of questions pertaining to local interest including but not limited to impacts on tourism, business and commercial and recreational fishing industries, environment and the ecological systems. The conclusions reached by these experts is that while perception may create reality, when opinion and hysteria is intermixed with fact, there is no current peer review study that would definitively conclude there would be a negative financial impact of tourism in New Jersey especially in light of the fact that the Federal Government will be implementing off shore wind projects up and down the east coast. Another conclusion drawn was that the public should not entertain a myopic view of this issue at the expense of such issues as climate change and flooding.

A North Carolina State University Study in 2017 was cited in the Sandpaper article. It indicated that the economic impact on tourism would be in the billions and that over half would choose to rent elsewhere. The facts are that the study is over 4 years old and it was based upon a survey of 484 people who had recently rented homes and not a scientific peer review study. The Study was completed based upon that opinion that if the turbines were visible 8 miles or closer from shore (based upon photo simulations), they would be asking for a type of rental "nuisance" discount. The study never addressed negative economic impacts to the magnitude addressed in the article. As indicated above, our experts did not conclude that visitors would leave LBI for other shore resorts. As part of a forum conducted by the LBI Coalition for Wind Without Impact, the source quoted in the article was a Ship Bottom resident and founder of Vacation Rentals of LBI who also concluded 300,000 jobs would be lost. Any survey that extrapolates to LBI in terms of negative economic impact and lost jobs is subjective and not based upon NJ scientific fact. The forum as reflected in the article further explored the negative economic impact from Boston-based Beacon Hill Institute from 2017-2036 based upon data from other states in terms of higher residential and commercial electricity costs. What makes such conclusions dangerous is that

electricity costs are regulated by the NJ Board of Public Utilities for all rate payers based upon the economic benefit and to date, there is only one offshore wind project implemented on the East Coast-Block Island, Rhode Island. In fact, it was only on June 30th that the NJBPU approved the power level agreement or the amount of energy the rate payers will purchase as part of the Atlantic Shores Project.

The article concluded that the Ship Bottom Borough Council noted off shore wind projects have resulted in “significant growing concerns due to potential negative environmental impacts as well as detrimental impact on tourism, recreational and commercial fishing industries and property values”. It should be noted that the Federal Agency responsible for issuing Environmental Impact Statements, the Bureau of Ocean Management, has yet to issue said statements as part of the Site Assessment and Commercial Operational Plans. This should occur in the later part of 2021. Atlantic Shores will be having an Open House July 20-22 to entertain FAQ.

BHTA requests that articles such as these report responsibly a balanced approach to a very complicated issue. Video and the audio recording of our interviews with subject matter experts is available via the Beach Haven Taxpayers Association web site at <http://www.bhtaxpayers.org>.

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