

ORANGEVILLE CITIZEN

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OMB turbine hearing nears end

By WES KELLER Freelance Reporter

Although Amaranth council has agreed in principle to Canadian Hydro Developers' proposed 22 wind turbines in the Melancthon II wind farm project, it will seek input from the public on individual site plans and a transmission line next Tuesday evening, Oct. 16.

Then, on Wednesday, the council will make its decision for the Ontario Municipal Board hearing at 10 a.m. Oct. 18.

Meantime, Paul Thompson is expected to conclude his evidence with respect to the transformer siting and noise levels. Final arguments are scheduled to commence on Thursday afternoon, Oct. 18 - possibly to end on Oct. 19, which would mean that the hearing would have taken more than the recently hoped-for eight days but still well short of the originally scheduled six weeks.

The Board did not sit last Friday or on Tuesday, and the hearing was to resume yesterday afternoon.

As of last Thursday, Mr. Thompson had presented evidence of what the transformer noise had been like before the CHD sound barrier and berm were built. Cheryl Whitworth, also a neighbour, said the noise had disrupted the family's lifestyle. She opined that a second transformer would generate much of the same.

CHD, meantime, had offered to place the second transformer deeper into the ground. But Hearing Officer Norm Jackson warned that he felt empathy for Mrs. Whitworth. "Something will have to be done," he said.

In other issues, the matter of aerodrome setbacks gets complicated. As Transport Canada does not regulate these, anyone may create an airstrip anywhere outside urban areas where they would be prohibited for other reasons.

Amaranth has 18 or 19 "airstrips," of which two are registered with Transport Canada, and have certain features and functions required by their registration.

Orangeville resident Ian Reed, a former commercial pilot who now uses one of the unregistered Amaranth aerodromes (airstrips), is arguing as a party to the

hearing that the township's Official Plan - - specifying a 10-km setback of commercial wind turbines from airstrips - should not be changed.

CHD has voluntarily offered to follow Transport Canada's recommendations for setbacks from aerodromes (2,500 metres from each end of an airstrip), and to increase that to 4,000 for the two registered aerodromes. The Board is hoping to hear evidence from a Transport Canada official, who thus far has not been able to attend.

Last Thursday, Mr. Jackson asked Mr. Reed, perhaps rhetorically, how he should weigh the evidence of a nonexpert professional pilot against that of an expert on the same issues.

Mr. Reed said he (and his group) had expected help from the Board. Mr. Jackson responded that he is not there to "help" anyone, but in effect to rule in an unbiased fashion.

Referring to aerodrome setbacks Thursday, township lawyer Jeff Wilker said the registered ones have greater "colour of right" than the unregistered. The statement drew no response from Mr. Reed but Grant Swift, a retired elementary school principal, shook his head and whispered "no, no, no."

As Thursday's meeting drew to a close, the airstrip group gathered around Mr. Wilker, apparently to discuss their singular issue.

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