



North Olmsted establishes zoning codes for wind energy structures

By Joe Noga, Sun News

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NORTH OLMSTED — Officials here hope a new set of zoning codes will position the city ahead of the curve when it comes to future wind energy proposals for homes and businesses.

On Tuesday, City Council was set to vote on legislation to establish a wind energy overlay district throughout the city.

The measure, which was under consideration for more than a year, would define where structures such as wind turbines, windmills and other related outlets would be permitted.

Planning Director Kim Wenger said while no businesses or individual homeowners came forward yet with proposals regarding wind energy structures, officials wanted to be prepared with regulations in place as the technology grows.

"We see wind energy systems in other communities and other states and we know that it is coming," Wenger said. "The goal is to be ahead of the curve and be able to address these before they arrive on our doorstep."

Wenger said the city has not conducted wind studies, or determined whether the microclimate in a certain area might make a wind energy conversion system cost-effective.

"But we realize that in some cases individuals might choose a sustainable option or a green option as something they want to pursue, and we don't want to stand in the way of that," she said.

Federal and state funds are also available as incentives for using "green" technologies for businesses and new development. Wenger said city leaders believe businesses and property owners here pursuing such grants will have a higher likelihood of receiving funding.

"We want to promote government, schools and residents' ability to pursue sustainable energy choices," she said.

But if residents are looking for windmill farms to start popping up all over North Olmsted, Wenger says that is "highly unlikely."

"At this point it's still a fairly costly investment," she said.

Meanwhile, companion legislation regarding solar energy technology was introduced earlier this month and is up for consideration by council.

Wenger said the solar measure is a "much simpler ordinance" because solar panels do not have the potential neighborhood impact that a freestanding wind turbine might.

Solar panels would be an accessory use in pretty much any district and would be regulated through the building department, Wenger said.

"We think it is more likely to have an immediate application in the city."

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