## MINUTES OF THE SOLANO COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

## Meeting of December 15, 2011

The regular meeting of the Solano County Planning Commission was called to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Board of Supervisors' Chambers, Fairfield, California.

PRESENT: Commissioners Boschee, Rhoads-Poston, Karah, Cayler

and Chairman Mahoney

EXCUSED:

STAFF PRESENT: Mike Yankovich, Planning Program Manager; Jim Laughlin,

Deputy County Counsel; Ken Solomon, Contract Planner;

and Kristine Letterman, Planning Commission Clerk

Items from the floor - none

**The Minutes** of the regular meeting of November 3, 2011 were approved as prepared.

1. **PUBLIC HEARING** to Use Permit Application No. U-10-10 and Final Environmental Impact Report for the **Shiloh IV Wind Energy Project**, as sponsored by Shiloh Wind Partners, LLC (enXco), and to certify the Final Environmental Impact Report, adopt the Statement of Overriding Considerations and to approve the Use Permit and Mitigation Monitoring & Reporting Program to construct a 100-megawatt (MW) wind power project with 50 wind turbines on approximately 3,012 acres of land in the Montezuma Hills area. The project area is designated Agriculture by the Solano County General Plan and is zoned Exclusive Agricultural (A-160). (Project Planner: Ken Solomon) **Staff Recommendation:** Approval

Chairman Mahoney recused himself from the meeting due to a conflict of interest with regard to this item.

Ken Solomon gave a brief introduction to the project. He introduced Mr. Stu Russell of Point Impact Consulting who provided a detailed overview of the proposal which included review of the CEQA process, the environmental impacts, and mitigation measures.

Hansen Wood, Shiloh IV project manager, provided the commission with highlights of the proposed wind project.

Vice-Chairman Boschee opened the public hearing.

Jim Bard, 982 Virginia Drive, Rio Vista, spoke in favor of the project. He stated that he teaches Industrial Arts at Rio Vista High School and this is his first year in teaching renewable energy. He explained that he was approached by enXco last year about offering the class and since then enXco has helped him in putting together a curriculum for the course. He stated that enXco has also shared some of their training courses and have introduced him to professors in the

industry so that he can sustain the program. Mr. Bard noted that he has 30 students in the class and it has been a popular new elective at the high school. He said that it builds a lot of excitement when the students get to go on field trips to the Shiloh project sites. Mr. Bard noted that enXco contributed \$150,000 in helping get the class started.

Leslie Fay, President of the Fairfield-Suisun Chamber of Commerce, spoke on behalf of the chamber membership by saying that they fully support the project. She stated that this would mean the immediate creation of jobs and the immediate impact would be very beneficial. She said that the project meeting the greenhouse reduction goals and improving air quality for the region and their contribution to Rio Vista High School says a lot about enXco that they really want to invest in the future of our youth. Ms. Fay stated that enXco have been outstanding community players and are active on the fronts with local vendors, non-profits, Travis AFB, and most importantly sponsors of the chamber of commerce. Ms. Fay asked the commission to support the project.

Wes Stewart, 2245 Collinsville Road, Suisun, stated that his family has farmed in the area for many years and the economic benefits from this project is good for the farmers and for the county, and he encouraged the commission to vote in favor of the project.

Mary Peinado, Executive Director, Rio Vista Chamber of Commerce, 6 North Front Street, Rio Vista, stated that enXco has been an excellent community partner in terms of communication with the chamber of commerce, city council, as well as community members. In addition, she said that they are probably the top member that gives back economically to the community. She said that the new green program that they funded at the Rio Vista High School is a huge benefit. Ms. Peinado stated that enXco has given back to Rio Vista Care and have also sponsored the entertainment at the annual Bass Festival. She commented that local businesses benefit because their employees shop locally and some of the larger contractors are getting business. She said that they have made efforts to hire locally.

Sandy Person, President, Solano EDC, 360 Campus Lane, Suite 102, Fairfield, stated that their agency promotes and fosters economic leadership and do so by recruiting new businesses, encouraging job development investment, and working on key issues that impact the local business and economy. She stated that her organization supports this project. She said the wind industry is one of our best local success stories and it continues to flourish despite a prolific economic recession. Ms. Person stated that this project will generate some 130 million dollars in benefits to the local economy and bring some immediate jobs to the county. Ms. Person stated that she is also a member of the Travis Regional Armed Forces Committee and stated that enXco has been a tremendous supporter and a big player within that committee. They have been a leader on working with the base on the effort known as the CRADA which is the Cooperative Research and Development Agreement. She stated that this agreement helps make wind energy and air force operations compatible and allows the county to continue to work on something so ideally suited to harness. Ms. Person stated that enXco supports many of the Travis AFB community initiatives. She said that they are a valued member of the Travis community, Solano EDC, and the community in its entirety.

Dan Broadwater, Business Manager, IBW Local 180, 320 Saybrook Avenue, Vacaville, stated that he represents 700 electricians from Solano and Napa counties. He stated that he is also a

trustee on the Napa-Solano building trades and have 17 affiliates. He commented that quite a few of his men have been employed on these wind projects. He said that without these wind energy companies being here he would have 80 men that would not have a job this year. Mr. Broadwater said that he will probably have 60 guys working on this project next year and those are folks that will have gone all winter without a job. He stated that enXco is a fantastic partner.

Tom Raycraft, 6969 Robben Road, Dixon, stated that he operates a water truck and in the past years he has always had to travel outside the county for his business. He stated that this year he was lucky enough to be hired for an enXco project. He commented that he spent over \$50,000 this year in this area compared to the previous years because he has always had to travel out of state. Mr. Raycraft urged the commission to support the project.

Jim McPherson, McPherson Crane and Rigging, 3065 Cattey Lane, Rio Vista, stated that since 2002 his company has been involved in the maintenance of the wind turbines that were installed by SMUD and also with the maintenance of the NextEra wind turbines in the Montezuma Hills. He stated that his company invested a large sum of money two years ago to purchase two larger cranes that do much of the service work in the hills. He stated that they are committed and are proponents of wind power. With that said, Mr. McPherson stated that when enXco proposed the Shiloh III project they made a commitment to the City of Rio Vista to use local contractors to do their work and the city council supported the project in support of that intention. Mr. McPherson stated that an executive from enXco told him that they would hire local businesses but it has been a year and still his company has not received any work. He said that they were then told they would have the opportunity to work on the Shiloh IV project but the project is now up for approval and they have received no promises to secure work. Mr. McPherson stated that they are proponents of the project and want to see the project move forward, but commented that enXco is not the partner that they have been made out to be. He said he has heard a lot of good things about enXco and how the larger businesses have benefited, but there have been no Rio Vista contractors benefitting from work. Mr. McPherson stated that he wanted the project to succeed because it is good for the area and for the economy, but he urged the planning commission when looking at these types of projects that it could be encouraged for these companies to use the local work force to help keep the monies within the community.

Commissioner Karah asked the applicant to reply to the issue with regard to using the local workforce.

Mark Tholke, Vice-President, enXco Southwest Region, stated that he was the executive that approached Mr. McPherson and told him that it was their intention to use his services. He stated that it did not work out, but was not for the lack of effort. He recalled speaking with Mr. McPherson midway through the project. He stated that what happens in this industry is they hire someone else to actually build the turbines. A general contractor is hired who in turn hires the companies to build the turbines. He stated that although they do contract out the work it is still their project and so presumably they should direct what those contractors do. He stated that in this case it just got away from him. Mr. Tholke said that he has talked with his contractor to make sure this does not happen again. He noted that he is prepared to discuss this at more length with Mr. McPherson.

Ian Anderson, 6269 Birds Landing Road, Birds Landing, stated that he farms property in the Montezuma Hills. He said that he supports the project and believes that it is compatible with agriculture. He spoke about the removal of the old turbines stating that the company did an exceptional job in removing the machines. He noted that one small hiccup was the issue of getting the land back to the way it was pre wind farm, but he believed that the issue has been addressed in this project. Mr. Anderson spoke with regard to solar power and asked that when the time comes and the commission is asked to look at large scale solar projects that they only choose land that is not farmable ground. He stated that enXco is a large donor to the local Montezuma fire station. Mr. Anderson commented with regard to the red blinking lights on the top of the turbines. He said that the lights are an annoyance and a blight. He said that he believes the turbines for this project will have a cone underneath the lights so that they are only visible from above. He said that he would like to see the commission consider a unified look at this issue because he believed that there could be improvements made from the ground.

Vice-Chairman Boschee stated that if the cones work for this project he wanted to know if staff could encourage others to do a similar type of installation on their projects to reduce the impact. Mr. Yankovich stated that it is something that can be explored. He said that the county would also have to work with the FAA.

John Mooney, 501 Birch Ridge Drive, Rio Vista, stated that he is a member of the Rio Vista Airport Commission and has a background in aviation. He stated that by the views that have been expressed it is obvious that these are truly marvelous projects. He stated that in his contacts with enXco personnel he was met with a great deal of professionalism. He stated that aviation is a very serious business and safety is aspect number one. He said that enXco has brought in extraordinarily knowledgeable people with regard to aviation to address any issues. He said that this project bodes well for all of us and aviation has benefitted. Mr. Mooney stated that this is an excellent project and has been approached properly and enXco deserves to be operating their wind farm.

Since there were no further speakers, Vice-chairman Boschee closed the public hearing.

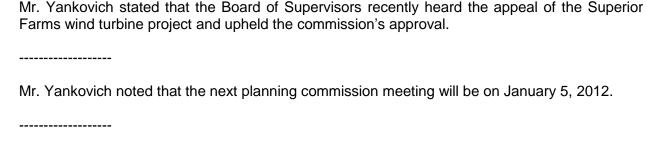
Commissioner Cayler wanted to acknowledge that she has met with the folks from enXco and have also worked with them on the Travis Regional Armed Forces Committee.

Commissioner Rhoads-Poston commented with regard to the issue of using local contractors and stated that she would like to see enXco work with the local businesses. She commented that her spouse is in construction and she understands the process of how a general contractor is hired and how they go out and hire the project workers. She said that it would be desirable if in moving forward there is a way enXco could incorporate a clause into their contract with the general contractor that a percentage of the fields be used from the local district.

A motion was made by Commissioner Rhoads-Poston and seconded by Commissioner Cayler to certify the Final Environmental Impact Report for the Shiloh IV Wind Energy Project and approve Use Permit Application No. U-10-10, based on the recommended findings and subject to the recommended revised conditions of approval, adopt the Statement of Overriding Considerations and adopt the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program (MMRP) as recommended by staff. The motion passed unanimously. (Resolution Nos. 4562 & 4563)

Chairman Mahoney re-approached the dais.

## 2. ANNOUNCEMENTS and REPORTS



Chairman Mahoney stated that at some point he would like to know when Solano County becomes an exporter of electricity or if the county is consuming everything that is being produced.

Mr. Yankovich stated that the county would need to work with PG&E to gather data. He said that some of that information was obtained when the Climate Action Plan was prepared and hopefully staff can follow up on that. He said that given the generation that is being produced out in the Montezuma hills as result of wind energy, some type of assumptions with regards to import and export of energy can be made.

Chairman Mahoney stated that he would think as we continue to expand wind power in Solano County that it would be one of those figures that would have to be reported to the state. Mr. Yankovich said that the state updates their figures on a regular basis because they have their own goals with regard to renewable generation and the targets they have to meet. He noted that he has a conference call scheduled once a month with a state contact with regards to where the county is regarding renewables

3. Since there was no further business, the meeting was **adjourned**.