

To: Jonesfield Township Zoning Board of Appeals

From: Lee and Beverlee Glazier
Township Residents and Participating Property Owners

Date: October 27, 2020

Subject: DTE request for setback variance dated October 12, 2020

As participating property owners of the DTE Meridian Wind Park, We received a copy of DTE's variance request. After careful review of this request, we feel obligated to offer our opinion. We strongly support your approval of this request for the following reasons.

We have reviewed the DTE request and found that the turbines which require a variance generally fall into three categories. These being:

- A. Turbines that are placed on or near a property line where one owner owns the property on both sides of the property line.
- B. Turbines that are placed on the property line of two different participating owners.
- C. Turbines that are placed near a property line of two different participating owners.

Comments relative to all three categories – We believe DTE's variance request does a good job of explaining the need for this variance and how it is extremely important in terms of minimizing damage to and loss of farmland from the implementation of this project. The ability for DTE to utilize the land on or near property lines is extremely important, primarily to the owners of this land and to those who farm it. In addition, the ability to implement the project with minimal damage to field drainage systems is also very important. Simply by observing other local wind projects we can easily see that property lines are commonly used for the placement of access roads and turbines. It simply makes good sense to place access roads and turbines around the perimeter of a field rather than in the middle. Clearly, this variance facilitates the preservation of farmland and minimizes damage to valuable farmland drainage systems.

Relative to Category A situations – We have many instances in the township where one individual/family owns adjoining parcels of land while maintaining the legal property lines of the individual parcels. This happens for many different reasons and there are many reasons why these individuals desire to keep the parcels separate from a legal standpoint. However, it creates a situation where zoning ordinance setbacks from these “internal” property line become rather meaningless. Therefore, we believe setbacks from these property lines are unnecessary and provide another reason a variance in these cases is clearly warranted.

Category B – In numerous cases, turbines are to be placed on the shared property line of two different participating landowners. This results in the sharing of a portion of the wind turbine revenue. The revenue brought into the community from this wind project will be important. We feel it is only fair that it be shared with as many residents as possible. As a participating property owner, we were clearly informed by DTE that this was a common practice, and one that we agree with. This is just another reason we support the variance requested.

Category C – In some cases, turbines were sited near the property lines of two participating property owners. This generally allows for the placement of access roads on the property line. In some of these instances, one of the property owners requested that no turbine be placed on their land. Therefore, the wishes of both property owners were accommodated. In this case, we believe the variance is warranted.

One additional comment we have relates to the need for this Board to even deal with this variance. As you all know, we are working with a less than perfect wind ordinance which was implemented in 2004, long before we had any local experience with wind energy. Despite the recent best efforts of the Township Board and Planning Commission to implement a more comprehensive wind ordinance, the voters decided that this is our ordinance. So be it. However, you must consider that the planning commission in 2004 was working with limited knowledge of wind energy and wind projects. Much has changed since 2004. We now know that one of the most important guiding principles of wind projects in Michigan is “farmland preservation” and a key enabler to this is to maximize the use of property line areas for roads, turbines, and other infrastructure.

Simply stated, it benefits all township residents if DTE can site access roads and turbines in a manner that preserves farmland, minimizes field drainage impact, provides financial equity to property owners, and applies common sense and best industry practices. Therefore, we feel this variance is clearly appropriate, warranted, and necessary for a “common sense” wind project site plan for Jonesfield Township.

Lee and Beverlee Glazier