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# The Globe

## NOT IN MY BACKYARD, FRONT YARD OR WITHIN A HALF-MILE

Rural landowners air opposition to industrial wind farms



Tom Behrends stands outside his rural Brewster home, not far from a wind turbine across the road.  
Tim Middagh / The Globe

By Julie Buntjer  
jbuntjer@dglobe.com

### Worthington

When Tom Behrends purchased his farm east of Brewster in 1993, he envisioned peace and solitude on the prairie.

That's no longer the case. The serenity Behrends once enjoyed was invaded by steel behemoths, or noise generators as he calls them. They interrupt his view, the "whooshing" of the blades delivers a constant noise and shadow flicker is more than an occasional disruption.

Behrends was serving his country in Afghanistan when the turbines were permitted. He was told they were going up, but at the time he envisioned the towers would be placed in the middle of the section — not 1,100 feet from his home.

Behrends has complained about the turbines since 2010, more recently writing letters to each commissioner in Jackson and Nobles counties. He's placed ads in newspapers about the 800-pound gorilla he calls Big Wind. He also took to social media earlier this month to oppose Budweiser's advocacy for wind energy.

Behrends said he's lost sleep over the turbines — the noise either wakes him or keeps him from falling asleep — and believes he's a prisoner in his own home.

"You're just aggravated by the noise," he said, and the shadow flicker that's cast across his home certain times of the year.

"My office is on the east side of my house and when I'm trying to do taxes for the farm, I've got this blade flashing across my computer screen," Behrends said. "I call it torture — it drives you nuts."

Behrends said standards for wind towers say up to 30 hours of shadow flicker is allowable per year, and that turbine noise up to 50 decibels is OK, but he disagrees.

"There should be none of that," he said, but he believes money talks, and no one will buck big wind.

"The commissioners, it's almost like they don't care about their residents — they need the tax money," Behrends said.

He has connected with anti-industrial wind energy groups like the Coalition of Rural Property Rights in Iowa and Wind Locked LLC, which has formed in Faribault and Martin counties.

"I didn't fight for this country to have crap like this go on," Behrends said. "That's why I'm fighting this now. All I want is for people not to have to go through what I've gone through."

### Desperation and division

Eugene "Pucky" Sandager's rural Hills farm has been in his family for six generations, but he wishes he could pick up his land and move it across the state line to South Dakota, where wind farms are much more regulated.

"There will not be a windmill put up on any of our land down here; my brothers all agree," Sandager said.

It has become clear, however, that not all of his neighbors agree.

"Things the way they are with the farm economy, it's very enticing to sign up," Sandager said. "Some farmers are desperate."

An investor in MinWind, a wind energy project built years ago near Beaver Creek, Sandager soured on wind energy after the company went bankrupt. He was among many investors who never saw a dime. MinWind was bought by RES, the same company that now wants to build a 100-megawatt wind farm in Martin and Beaver Creek townships.

Sandager said he is all for the use of renewable energy, but he'll stick with ethanol and biodiesel — and the antique windmill that efficiently pumps water on his farm. His beef with industrial wind is that he believes the federal tax credit offered for developing wind energy is a scam.

He also believes the ones who will get hurt are the farmers — the landowners who sign contracts for wind turbines to be built on their property.

"When you give them a windmill, you give up rights on that land for the rest of your life," Sandager said. "They can declare bankruptcy and you're stuck with a pedestal and windmill that has no value. When you want to spray with an aerial or spray rig, you have to get their permission. If you want to hunt on your ground, you have to

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## Green energy is golden for counties

By Julie Buntjer  
jbuntjer@dglobe.com

WORTHINGTON — While opponents of industrial wind farms list many reasons why they don't like wind turbines, supporters of the green energy projects can just as easily refute their claims.

Larkin Township farmer Gene Metz is an investor in Community Wind South and hosts a wind turbine on land he and his son, Mike, own in Summit Lake Township. They also farm around two other wind turbines.

Like many landowners, Metz signed on to host a turbine

because of the financial benefit. Most developers want land leases of 20 to 30 years, with the option to extend it another 20 years. The most common arrangement has landowners receiving an annual payment in exchange for putting a turbine on their property. Contracts prohibit landowners from revealing how much they are paid.

Metz did say, however, that landowners with wind turbines share in nearly as much money as what the county collects each year in wind energy production tax.

"It gets to be a big deal," Metz said, noting that more than \$12

million in wind energy production tax was paid in 2018 in Minnesota. When you double that amount, knowing it's going to landowners, it's a huge economic benefit.

The wind energy generated by Community Wind South currently goes onto the grid, but a new Nobles Cooperative Electric substation near Lismore will soon be pulling from the grid to serve local homes, farms and businesses. That is exciting news for Metz, a Nobles County commissioner and member of the Minnesota Rural Energy Board.

GOLDEN: Page A2

### Wind energy production tax revenues a boost for counties

TAX PAYABLE					
County	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Cottonwood	\$235,765	\$257,400	\$251,029	\$533,487	\$748,116
Jackson	\$1,449,498	\$1,634,531	\$1,710,985	\$1,991,885	\$2,202,936
Murray	\$1,250,705	\$1,348,927	\$1,358,327	\$1,382,798	\$1,323,936
Nobles	\$1,041,222	\$1,250,092	\$1,165,437	\$1,149,262	\$1,113,006
Pipestone	\$511,593	\$570,031	\$571,247	\$592,809	\$572,715
Rock	\$767,271	\$896,430	\$825,689	\$847,949	\$825,431

Note: 20 percent of Wind Energy Production Tax paid to counties is distributed to the townships in which wind turbines are located. The above data shows the total allocation.

Forum News Service

## The bus must go on

Drivers remain dedicated, diligent following record snowfall; today marks Bus Driver Appreciation Day

By Alyssa Sobotka  
asobotka@dglobe.com

WORTHINGTON — As the work day is just beginning for many, the first shift is ending for a group of men and women dedicated to making sure children arrive safely to school in the morning and to their after-school destination later in the afternoon.



Tim Middagh / The Globe

A Bud's Bus Service school bus stops to drop off students on Clary Street Tuesday afternoon.

And for about half a dozen of Bud's Bus Service bus drivers, parking the bus at the shop after dropping kids off at school is a time to sit back and banter with one another over coffee before heading off to their next destination.

A group of drivers stuck around after their Tuesday morning route and marveled about the record-amount of snow to fall on the area this month. Along with the snow

BUS: Page A5

## Erwin pioneers new city position

By Leah Ward  
lward@dglobe.com

WORTHINGTON — Josh Erwin describes his new role as Worthington's Community Service Officer/Animal Control Specialist as "a whole new world."

And it is. Erwin's newly created position began on Feb. 4 and is still being defined as he learns his responsibilities.

Erwin's primary role is animal control, which he says is a good fit for him because he loves dogs. When he got his first call, he realized a major concern every time will be, "Is this a friendly dog?" Sometimes the dog is just lost, sometimes it is barking, and sometimes it is dangerous and/or intimidating.



Erwin

Erwin recognizes that many people feel compassion for lost dogs. However, he says it's important that "If you see a dog, don't try to be a Good Samaritan and grab

it." By pursuing a stray dog, a well-meaning person might end up scaring it or stressing it out.

Instead, Erwin encourages people to call the police department's non-emergency line to report a dog that needs help.

His secondary role is to enforce residential ordinances such as

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\$1.50 SINGLE COPY

WEATHER

PARTLY CLOUDY

HIGH 7°  
LOW -2°



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GOOD MORNING

Daryl Brun

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## THE FARM BLEAT

### 'Hoarder' is such an unkind word

I would guess many people are becoming a bit stir-crazy with multiple snowstorms and ground blizzards interrupting our plans and



**JULIE BUNTJER**  
Reporter

keeping us at home this month. My mom, however, might be the exception. Ever since she's been back on her feet following knee replacement surgery, she's been busy cleaning out closets and sorting through drawers. It started with some of Dad's things — socks and shirts, gloves and hats — and has progressed to some of her keepsakes, like the collection of recipes she's clipped out or jotted down and stuffed in recipe books and boxes.

As we chatted during Sunday's blizzard, she admitted with an uneasy laugh that her stash of weeded-out recipes — the ones she's decided to toss — was far too small compared to the stack she intended to keep.

Her love for recipes is the equivalent to my love for needlework patterns. We can never have too many, and asking us to part with them is, well, just not right.

Why is it so difficult to eliminate the clutter in our lives? Or perhaps the better question is, why do we stockpile?

Oh, have I learned to stockpile!

It's clearly evident every time I look at my two bookshelves crammed

with books and the needlework stash that is so overwhelming it makes me feel a little sick. Yet, I still buy books at the library book sale and perle cotton and fabrics when I find a deal too good to pass up.

I call it retail therapy. It makes me feel good after a rough week to spend a few dollars on something I enjoy, whether it's a used book or a needlework project I may, or may not, ever have time to stitch.

It's time, though, for me to do away with my needlework retail therapy. I need to just open up my storage system, pick out a new project and get to stitching on these snow days. It will save me money and, eventually, reduce my stash.

Oh, who am I kidding? There are deals to be had and an addiction to placate.

I've thought of a possible solution to the pack rat tendencies afflicting both me and my mom.

Perhaps I should sort through Mom's recipe collection and pitch everything that sounds icky, and allow her to weed out all of the "she'll never stitch this" projects from my needlework stash.

No, never mind, that won't work. She'll probably end up keeping all of her recipes and my stash will be about a third of its current size. That hardly sounds fair to me.

Here's hoping the rest of the winter allows you time to enjoy whatever hobby supplies you hoard makes you happy.

### Creativity is valued in District 518 schools

By Kelly Knips  
District 518

#### Worthington

The creativity continues to flow throughout the art classrooms in District 518. Students are working hard to "think like an artist" with our new curriculum standards this year that explore more in depth thinking while creating art. They are encouraged to include personal meaning into their art.

In October, Mrs. Knips and other teachers took around 60 Prairie Elementary students to Marshall to the Young Artists Conference. Students were able to sign up to go to this conference and hear from keynote speaker Derek Anderson, an author and illustrator in Minneapolis. He read a few of his books, and demonstrated how he started drawing his characters and how they changed throughout the revision process. Students were also able to sign up for three break-out sessions, during which they got to create their own art to take home. It was a great day, and the students had a blast creating art in their sessions.

In November, students at

Prairie Elementary took part in an art contest for Veteran's Day. They learned many facts about the American flag. In second and third grade, students had to create a flag using any medium. They were judged on neatness and accuracy. Third-grader Mara Thier's project was chosen as a winner for the local level and went on to compete at the district level, where she placed second. In fourth grade, the students had to create a collage of places where they would see the flag. Wai Lin Htwee was chosen as the winner for fourth grade and went on to compete at the district level as well. We are so proud of all of the students and their great work.

During conferences in December, Prairie Elementary had "family art night" and families could stop by the cafeteria and create art. There were six stations set up for the make-and-take style event. It was awesome to see so many families take advantage of this opportunity to make art with each other and see the creativity in action.

The art department is looking forward to this Friday, March 1, as it's the opening for our district art show. This year, there will

be art featured from the middle school, ALC and high school. The open house will run from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Nobles County Art Center, which is located in the basement of the Nobles County Library. Snacks and refreshments will be provided as well as opportunities for conversations with artists of all ages. It is always a fun night, and we encourage you all to come and see the wonderful work our students do. If you are unable to make it to the open house, the show will run throughout the month of March. The Nobles County Art Center is open weekdays from noon to 3 p.m., or you can call 372-8245 to make an appointment.

It is wonderful to work where creativity is valued and we are able to reach kids in different ways. We will continue to provide ways for students to be involved with art outside of our classrooms with the hopes that they will also see a future with art outside of school. As always, the District 518 art department is thankful for all of the support from our administration and from the community.

Kelly Knips is an art teacher at Prairie Elementary.

#### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

#### Donations sought for food pantry fundraising campaign

It is that time of the year again when the Manna Food Pantry has begun their largest fundraiser of the year. Starting Feb. 25 and going until April 7, our goal is to raise funds (monetary and product

donations) in excess of \$75,000.

We will accept any donation, large or small. *Everything* counts. If you or your organization would be willing to raise some funds for our Families in Need in Nobles County, please do give us a call at 329-1951 for more information.

Manna has been blessed with a grant from the Worthington Regional Health Care Foundation in which they are going to match us dollar for dollar up to \$30,000. This is a great help for our fundraiser. Can we count on you for some support during this, our March Food Campaign? If you

are making out checks, be sure and make them out to the "WRHCF" with "Manna" written in the memo line. Thanks so much in advance for your donations!

**Linda Sanchez**  
Coordinator, Manna Food Pantry  
Worthington

#### WRITE TO US

The Globe invites letters from readers that express a point of view or an opinion.

Submissions are preferred by e-mail to [rmcgaughey@dglobe.com](mailto:rmcgaughey@dglobe.com). All submissions must include the

writer's name, address and phone numbers (work and home). All letters are subject to editing by The Globe.

### OPPOSITION

From Page A1

get permission. If you want to go four-wheeling on your farm, you have to get permission."

For signing the contract, Sandager said the farmer is promised 40 years of land lease payments. However, if the company files for bankruptcy, those leases become void and the promised payments end.

"If they file for bankruptcy, they're no longer going to pay on that lease, but the lease remains intact," Sandager said. "They still hold the lease and it gets sold to the next company."

In the scam, Sandager said the federal government wins by appearing to be green, and counties in southwest Minnesota win because they collect a wind energy production tax on every turbine.

Sandager said the problem with the federal incentives paid for wind energy is that the government factored wind turbines at the same longevity as hydroelectric projects or coal generation, when that is far from accurate. After two to five years, Sandager said wind turbines "start going downhill really fast."

In addition to what he calls the tax credit scam, Sandager has other reasons for not signing a land lease with a developer.

"I don't want to live by a windmill," he said. "I don't know anyone that wants to live by a windmill. The city of Hills does not want windmills in our area. It's an ugly eyesore."

He also will not farm land

with wind turbines on it, saying the structures not only impede his efficiency to farm but take some of the world's highest valued farmland out of production.

Sandager said the wind turbines will reduce property values, and the construction and eventual repairs and retrofitting them takes a toll on rural roads. Those costs will burden townships and counties.

"I don't blame our commissioners — they're looking at ways to build revenue," Sandager said. "The state isn't ponying up with revenues for putting in a mile of tar."

Second only to farmers, Sandager said townships will also be hurt by industrial wind projects.

"It's so sad because in the end the farmers are going to get bitten, the township is going to get bitten, and the county and the state — which don't have any skin in the game — it doesn't matter to them," Sandager said. "And the federal government doesn't care."

Meanwhile, the wind energy developer creates division among residents. Sandager sees it, hears it and feels it from those "desperate for the promise of money."

"I have neighbors who go to my church who have supposedly signed up," he said. "You go to church with these people and you have to share the peace. How do I shake hands with a guy who doesn't care if a windmill is in my backyard, devaluing my property? He thinks this is going to save us, and it's not."

### Wind farms a 'no-win' for rural residents

Dennis Hartman, also of Hills, stands with Sandager in opposition to the RES plans for an industrial wind farm in his neighborhood. His home is within three miles of wind turbines — far enough away that he doesn't hear them or get shadow flicker. He wants to keep it that way.

RES installed a wind measurement tower last fall within a mile of Hartman's acreage, and if it erects a turbine there, he's convinced he will sell his home — likely for a lot less than what he could get if there wasn't a turbine nearby, he said.

"It's a no-win for anyone that lives in the county," said Hartman of wind farms. "It's a big win for the county commissioners who have all this money to play with."

"If (counties) need more money to keep up the roads, all they've got to do is ask," he said. "People would much rather pony up a little more money than have these big behemoths in their backyard."

Hartman learned most of what he knows about wind turbines from the book, "Paradise Destroyed, The Destruction of Rural Living by the Wind Energy Scam," by rural Avon, S.D. farmer Gregg Hubner. He said wind energy companies are scamming Americans.

"They don't pay for themselves. You and I pay for them," Hartman said of the tax dollars that fund tax credits for wind energy companies.

#### Turbines disrupt TV

Connie and Merle Janssen

have two wind turbines within a half-mile of their rural Jackson County farm that are part of the six turbine, 13.8-megawatt South Fork Wind Farm, developed by Geronimo Energy and now owned by Aspenall Energies LLC.

Operating since December 2016, the turbines spread shadow flicker on the Janssen home and interfere with both cell phone and television reception. Their TV, which operates through an antenna, broadcasts pixelated pictures and interrupted sound.

"It depends which direction the wind is from," said Connie. If there's a northwesterly wind, the signal for channels that come from the west don't work properly. When the wind is from the northeast, it affects channels they get from the east.

The Janssens brought it to the attention of Aspenall immediately.

"At first they didn't believe that — they'd never heard of such a thing," Connie said. But, after trying a new antenna and doing a study, Aspenall has now offered to pay the Janssens. Connie said the agreement is based not on the lifetime loss, but on just five years.

"They think this money will make us whole again," she said. "It's just not an adequate amount."

"If what they offer as mitigation is not fair, who do you turn to?" she asked.

They talked to their commissioners, but were told if the wind farm offered mitigation, there was nothing more they could do.

"(Aspenall) has been cordial,

it's just that we can't come to an agreement," said Merle. "I can see their point, but it's not my point."

"The company said they didn't want to be thought of in bad terms, and I said I think of them every time I turn on my TV, every time I'm on the cell phone," Connie added. "We were just fine before they came in and disrupted our lives."

#### 'No one wants to live under them'

Verlon Ponto has lived on his family's rural Sioux Valley farm for 80 years and he doesn't like that so many productive acres of farmland are being lost to wind turbines and solar panels.

"The biggest thing that gets my goat is it's a big rip off to the American taxpayers," Ponto said of wind farms. "The tax credits, they wouldn't be able to survive without them. But that's your tax dollars and my tax dollars."

Earlier this month, Scout Energy invited landowners from four townships in southwest Jackson County to hear more about an 85-turbine project it proposes.

"Clipper couldn't find enough willing landowners to put turbines up, but that was back when corn was \$7," Ponto said. "Now that prices are down, (developers) are going after them like vultures."

There will never be a turbine on the Ponto farm, he said.

"Anyone who signs a lease, (the developer) basically owns you," he said. "I told them to get out of here; I want my view."

"No one wants to live under them," he said.

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**Joni Harms**, publisher  
376-7308, [jharms@dglobe.com](mailto:jharms@dglobe.com)  
**Ryan McGaughey**, editor  
376-7320, [rmcgaughey@dglobe.com](mailto:rmcgaughey@dglobe.com)  
**Rick Fey**, circulation manager  
376-7306, [rfey@dglobe.com](mailto:rfey@dglobe.com)  
**Jessica Pass**, graphics manager  
376-7333, [jholinka@dglobe.com](mailto:jholinka@dglobe.com)  
**Roberta Fultz**, advertising manager  
376-7313, [rfultz@dglobe.com](mailto:rfultz@dglobe.com)

**Doug Wolter**, sports editor  
376-7328, [dwolter@dglobe.com](mailto:dwolter@dglobe.com)  
**Julie Buntjer**, reporter  
376-7330, [jbuntjer@dglobe.com](mailto:jbuntjer@dglobe.com)  
**Alyssa Sobotka**, reporter  
376-7323, [asobotka@dglobe.com](mailto:asobotka@dglobe.com)  
**Leah Ward**, reporter  
376-7322, [lward@dglobe.com](mailto:lward@dglobe.com)  
**Requests for news coverage**  
email to [dgnews@dglobe.com](mailto:dgnews@dglobe.com).  
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