

# Critics: Wind farm shutdown eased health issues

[Doug Schneider](#), USA TODAY NETWORK-Wisconsin 7:02 p.m. CDT September 16, 2016



Photo

(Photo: File/Gannett Wisconsin Media)

SHIRLEY - Eleven people living near the Shirley Wind Farm say their health improved when the turbines were off for several days this summer.

The people, who live near the site in southern Brown County, have prepared notarized statements saying that sleep problems, headaches, nausea and other symptoms subsided or disappeared for almost four days in late July. They claim the symptoms result from low-frequency sound produced by the windmills.

"I could finally sleep in my own bed," wrote Pamela Schauer of Glenmore. "I slept less and woke up earlier with more energy ... it was as if a great weight was lifted off my shoulders."

The question now is how much significance the July observations have in the long-running debate about whether the turbines pose a potential health hazard to people in the area. A leader of a citizens' group says the statements from neighbors are evidence of a connection between the turbines and illnesses. The wind farm's operator, Duke Energy Renewables of North Carolina, and the county's former health director are on record as saying there is not scientific proof to link the two.

"Action is needed to protect these adversely affected Brown County residents," Barbara Vanden Boogart, vice president of the Brown County Citizens for Responsible Wind Energy. Her group compiled the testimonials from the 11 area residents, who live at seven addresses.

The group says the county should overturn a December ruling by then Health Director Chua Xiong that found that there is not scientific evidence to link health problems reported by area residents to the wind farms. Xiong has since resigned.

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Vanden Boogart's group has long pushed for Brown County to arrange for independent testing to determine the wind farm's impact on people who live near one or more of the eight turbines. They want testing that compares impacts from when the turbines are operating versus times they are not. But the county says it can't force Duke to cooperate with such a study or force the company to turn the turbines off.

Others have said testing would only waste time. Board of Health member Jim Crawford in July tried unsuccessfully to have the board overturn the panel's 2014 ruling that low-frequency noise from the turbines can endanger health.

Two board members interviewed Friday had differing views of the testimonials from the 11 neighbors. Richard Schadewald of Howard, the group's representative on the county board, said the information "constitutes another piece in the puzzle" in the county's efforts to resolve the issue.

"I wouldn't want to rank it any higher than that," he said.

But Jay Tibbetts, who chairs the Board of Health, said he believes the statements are an indicator of a connection between turbines and health.

"I can't speak for the whole board, but I think in the grand scheme of things that this is really significant," said Tibbetts, a retired physician. "I think it's as close to causality as we're going to get right now."

A board majority has agreed that a study is needed. But they also agree that one won't happen without funding. The county so far has not agreed to fund such a study, nor has it been able to determine exactly how much a study would cost. Some officials have cited cost concerns and the potential difficulty of finding a business or agency to conduct an adequate test.

The Board of Health next meets in mid-November. Until then, neighbors wait for answers.

"It sure was nice to have the wind turbines off toward the end of July," wrote Rita Gagnon, who lives on County X near the wind farm. "Since the turbines were turned back on, I have not had a good, well-rested night."

Read the original article here:

<http://www.greenbaypressgazette.com/story/news/local/2015/12/15/county-cant-tie-shirley-wind-farm-health/77324070/>