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Energy to Build on in Your Township

When a township is presented with the development of new energy sources on their land, many things need to happen before the groundwork can begin. It is the township official's duty to weigh the pros and cons of the development in their area. Can coexistence occur? Development planning must be science-based and include opportunities for public engagement. Steps need to be taken to ensure that the health and safety of its community are considered and that it makes sense economically and environmentally. Communities with proper government infrastructure, land use planning, and financial tools to deal with the change will best make the transition.

A township will need to work hand-in-hand with all pertaining agencies to consider whether it is viable. Planning should assess ecological and social impacts, biological scales, linkage between inhabitants, and human health impacts. Research needs to include the risks, impacts and solutions. Renewable energy resources can bring huge benefits to an area such as create many jobs and can decrease greenhouse gas emissions. But, some can also have adverse effects on the ecosystems and wildlife.

The Department of Energy is responsible for most renewable research, development, demonstration, and deployment of energy resources. (Many states have Renewable Portfolio Standards or State Goals.) However, there are many other departments that should be consulted as well, including, but not limited to, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, the Minnesota State Legislature, and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture.

Once all information and facts are compiled, the township will call a meeting for all residents to attend. The attendees can then express any concerns and ask any questions they may have. This may also be a time when residents bring up something that wasn't previously thought of. What the officials need to show the townspeople, after they have learned the new energy source is something to consider, is that, yes, there may be some adverse effects of new energy development, but there are far greater benefits. When we look at energy sources, they all have some sort of impact on the environment. Fossil fuels do substantially more harm than renewable energy resources by most measures. If we power with solar panels instead, we do far less damage to our health and land. They may be an eyesore yet they run cleaner. This is important in the grand scheme of things. We need to think of the long-term effects on the environment and the health of the earth's inhabitants. What the residents may gain as well would be the payments for use of the land. At this point the townspeople can then vote. This is where the true plus to being a member of a township is. The people have a say and majority rules.

In conclusion, transition is inevitable, but so is conflict. For those that feel firmly about the land they call home, inclusion in decision-making is a big deal. Having a voice is a big factor to being a resident of a township. Not everyone will be pleased with the outcome, but the majority will prevail.