

City could relax rules for wind turbines

Councilman says some changes still needed

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CORPUS CHRISTI — A new draft of the city's rules governing wind turbines eases the land requirement but still mandates that they be quieter than hushed whispers at a library.

The most recent changes will go before the City Council on Tuesday.

Under the current rules, a home needs to sit on at least 1.5 acres to be eligible to install a wind turbine. The proposed changes eliminate that requirement and instead require open land equal to the height of the turbine pole, known as the fall radius. A 35-foot turbine, the standard size for most homes, would need a clear 35-foot radius.

But that change isn't enough for Councilman Kevin Kieschnick, who said he wants the city to be a green energy leader.

The draft ordinance requires turbines to be less than 60 decibels during the day and quieter than 40 decibels at night in residential areas. That's unrealistic, Kieschnick said.

Tracy Long, owner of Alternative Renewable Energy, said previously that a 35-foot turbine emits about 54 decibels.

Kieschnick said he had a Corpus Christi police officer measure the sound emitted from his air conditioning unit, which was about 65 decibels. During a council meeting in May, a sound level of 45 decibels was measured when no one in the room was talking.

Turbines in industrial areas couldn't emit more than 90 decibels during the day and 70 decibels at night, under the proposed draft.

Long, who makes and sells wind turbines, submitted his own draft of the ordinance that's less restrictive and more technical. Since May, city leaders have been working to merge the two drafts.

But the city didn't incorporate all of Long's draft, which removed the fall radius requirement. He said the poles turbines are mounted on are built to withstand Category 5 hurricane winds.

The city's rules for other types of poles and towers, such as power poles, telephone poles and radio towers, don't have a fall radius requirement. Radio towers must be half their height from the adjoining property line and all other free-standing poles taller than 25 feet must be inspected by a professional.

Kieschnick said he thinks after changing sound requirements and a few other areas, the council could be near approving the changes.