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Wind farm to hire locally

By Sarah K. Winn

Staff writer

The Beech Ridge Wind Farm has agreed to use local union workers to construct and maintain the proposed \$300 million wind farm project in Greenbrier County, the company and union officials announced on Thursday.

“As this project moves forward, we will begin using local businesses and workers to build, operate and maintain the turbines, as well as maintain the property surrounding them,” said David Groberg, project director of Beech Ridge Energy LLC. “People have said that these projects don’t get built with local labor ...that’s just absolutely wrong.”

Beech Ridge Energy and the West Virginia Building and Construction Trades Council, AFL-CIO, signed an agreement Thursday that will result in the hiring of more than 200 construction workers for the six - to eight-month construction phase at the wind farm near Rupert.

Earlier this week, Beech Ridge received an order from the Public Service Commission that set a schedule for public hearings, recognized interveners and laid out timelines for procedural hearings concerning the proposed wind farm. The public hearings are set for April 25 in Lewisburg and May 10 in Charleston.

The farm will have between 50 and 133 towers with an average height of 260 feet and will supply enough energy for 50,000 households.

It will be built along 15 miles of isolated ridgelines north of U.S. 60 that have been timbered or mined and that are largely uninhabited. Most of the turbines will be more than one mile away from any occupied dwelling.

Once completed, the farm will have 20 full-time employees and an average payroll of \$700,000.

Mike Mathews, business manager of the Charleston Building and Construction Trades Council, said his organization represents “a lot of workers in Greenbrier County that will help support the manpower of the project” and is pleased with the agreement.

“West Virginia’s union construction workers have the experience and skills to handle this type of work,” he said in a press release.

AFL-CIO members attended the signing Thursday, which followed the group’s annual legislative conference.

“West Virginia is known as an energy state and this is just part of our portfolio,” said Roy Smith, secretary of the West Virginia Building and Construction Trades Council. “We believe that we have formed ...a great partnership.”

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