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N.J. Municipal Coalition Warns NJBPU of Atlantic Shores Offshore Wind Project

Letter copied to lawmakers and corporate execs warns of rate increases, excessive profit margin, and possible violations of State energy law

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LONG BEACH TOWNSHIP, NJ — A newly-formed, growing coalition of more than 40 municipalities and organizations opposing New Jersey’s fast-tracked massive offshore wind undertaking joined together today asking the State to reject bids from Atlantic Shores Offshore Wind LLC (Atlantic Shores) for new contracts funded with higher ratepayer costs.

The Jersey Strong Coastal Coalition (JSCC) is a not-for-profit alliance formed in response to an outpouring of concern from across the state. The coalition authored a letter to the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities (BPU) this week, detailing ratepayer impacts and applicable State laws that would be violated should the projects move forward as planned.

In the letter, the coalition asks for the BPU to withhold new contract approvals for large-scale wind turbine installations involving two projects being developed along the coast by Atlantic Shores, a partnership between Shell Oil and Électricité de France. The projects are less than 9 miles off the New Jersey coast.

“The State needs to recognize that the voices in the room are getting louder. Our numbers are growing because folks are finding out about rate hikes across the board, about the risk of broken blades washing ashore,” **said Mayor Joseph Mancini of Long Beach Township.** “The voices are getting louder and the State is silent at this point. We need answers before they begin the widespread industrialization of our shores.”

“If we stand by and allow the industrialization of our coastline, the next generation is going to ask why we did not act when there was still time. Heck, the ratepayers currently living in New Jersey are going to want to know the same thing,” **said Mayor Vincent J. Sera of Brigantine.** “The time to act is now and we need a movement of people to stand up with us. Our beaches serve the entire state, so we need everyone including State legislators to stand with us.”

More than 40 governing bodies and local organizations from across the state joined the coalition as signatories on the letter, stressing the importance of the coastal communities to the State's overall economy. (*Coalition letter to BPU*)

The letter and accompanying economic analysis indicate that New Jersey ratepayers will see an increase in energy costs of 24% for residential users, 28% for commercial users, and 32% for industrial users in total with tax subsidies and project costs accounted for.

"These added costs amount to direct rate-payer subsidies of \$65 billion over the lifetime of the projects," the JSCC letter to the BPU states. "As a result, the ratepayer subsidies and increases in retail customer bills will exceed levels that are reasonable and just under NJ law. Should the Board persist in making such awards under this Fourth Solicitation, the orders will be appealed to ensure that any resultant contract is challenged and overturned in accordance with applicable state law."

The coalition letter was forwarded to the heads of the parent companies, Shell Oil and Électricité de France, with a note containing a closing statement, "Rest assured, we will defend at all costs our local, state and national treasure – the New Jersey Shore." (*Corporate note*)

The coalition letter was also forwarded to State legislators, with a note from the coalition asking for their attention in the matter. (*Legislative note*)

"It is unfortunate that, in its headlong rush to fulfill the Governor's ill-conceived plan to install 11,000 MW of wind projects off our beaches, the BPU continues to ignore its clear statutory obligations to protect NJ ratepayers from unjust and unreasonable rates by imposing enormous above market subsidies on residents and businesses in the state," the coalition wrote to the legislators.

"In the Offshore Wind Economic Development Act (OWEDA) the legislature set clear guardrails meant to protect ratepayers from unjust and unreasonable rates for offshore wind. As detailed in the attached documents, the BPU has smashed through these guardrails and set ratepayers and the entire NJ economy hurtling along a path into an economic ditch," the legislative note states.

The Atlantic Shores project received State approval this year to build 200 wind turbines and are moving fast to gain approvals for another 100 turbines, as part of the State's plan to industrialize the coastline with over 2,000 wind turbines.

But in the past year, more than 50 mayors and governing bodies from across the state have passed resolutions asking for a review of the projects before moving forward.

The coalition previously called for the State to pause all offshore wind projects pending review of environmental hazards, technological feasibility, and the various avoidable harms these projects are expected to have on the state and local economies.

The proposed wind turbines for this project stand over 1,000 feet in height (nearly the size of the Empire State Building) and as wide as a city block beginning 8.4 miles off of the coast of Ocean and Atlantic counties. Similar projects along the eastern seaboard are more than 35 miles off the coast.

Signatories on the coalition letter include Atlantic County Commissioners, Barnegat Township, Barnegat Light, Bay Head, Beach Haven, Beachwood, Berkeley Township, Brick Township, Brigantine, Brielle, Clark, Defend Our Beaches NJ, Elk Township, Florence, Florham Park, Hainesport, Harvey Cedars, Howell, Jackson, Lavalette, LBT10 Taxpayers Association, Long Beach Township, Mahwah, Manasquan, Mantoloking, Margate, North Arlington, North Hanover, Plumsted, Point Pleasant Borough, Raritan Township, Save the East Coast, Sea Girt, Seaside Heights, Seaside Park, Ship Bottom, Stafford Township, Stop the High Risk Cables, Surf City, Wall Township, and Wyckoff.

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The Jersey Strong Coalition is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization focused on the impact of wind projects on New Jersey's state ecology and economy, specifically tourism, fishing, and hospitality. We encourage smart energy solutions that do not cause irreversible harm to the environment. For more information, visit JerseyStrong.org.