

# Bethlehem Authority moving forward with plans to produce wind energy on watershed lands

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BETHLEHEM | After almost two years of research, the Bethlehem Authority has selected a wind energy production partner.

The authority has selected Call Mountain Wind, a joint venture between Delsea Energy, of Toms River, N.J., and Citizens Energy Corp., of Boston, because of Citizens Energy's charity work, said Stephen Repasch, the authority's executive director.

The nonprofit organization puts its proceeds toward projects such as providing heat for the poor and elderly, discounting prescription drugs and building solar heating arrays in Third World countries.

"Most of the profits they would gain from the wind energy projects they are developing go back into that charity," Repasch said.

Authority board member Mark Jobes said the board's selection of Call Mountain Wind was unanimous.

"They're a good community partner," he said.

The authority stands to receive \$200,000 to \$400,000 a year to lease its land for a wind energy farm, an amount that will be determined once Call Mountain Wind calculates the land's wind energy production capabilities, Repasch said. That process also may take up to two years, he said.

"Hopefully, in two years, we can start construction and in anywhere from three to four years have an active project operating," Repasch said.

In addition to annual revenue, the authority is interested in pursuing a wind energy farm on its land to help produce green energy, Repasch said.

"It's something from an energy perspective this country needs to do," he said.

The authority took its time researching companies because protecting the authority's 22,000 acres of watershed land in Carbon and Monroe counties is the authority's top priority, authority board Chairman John Tallarico said.

Some companies proposed building wind farms on the authority's land in both counties, but in the end, the authority plans only to pursue wind energy production in Carbon County because the authority's Monroe land is more environmentally sensitive, Tallarico said.

While Call Mountain Wind researches the land wind energy producing potential, the company also will research any environmental obstacles to building a wind energy farm on the authority's property, officials said. Any red flags could terminate the agreement, Tallarico said.

"The board is very conscientious about the whole environment and the watershed. Our primary goal is to produce water," he said.

While Call Mountain Wind offered the authority the highest potential lease price of the three companies it interviewed, the authority found the company also was most in line with the authority's conservation goals, Tallarico said.

"It didn't involve finances as much as it involved the mission," he said. "It's all in how they build it and how they respect our land and environment up there."

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