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The Champaign County Prosecutor's Office has agreed to facilitate community group discussion regarding wind energy development in Champaign County. The Wind Turbine Study Group (WTSG) will meet every Tuesday morning from 7 a.m. - 8 a.m. on the first floor of the Champaign County Courthouse to examine the local impact of the wind energy industry on Champaign County community residents.

"We wanted to provide the forum for a balanced set of interested community groups to share information, exchange ideas and explore areas of mutual agreement regarding the potential placement of wind turbines on the Champaign County landscape," said Prosecutor Nick Selvaggio.

Selvaggio added that "The WTSG enables us to convene five different perspectives from industry, government, and local citizenry to critically debate the merits and consequences of wind energy development at the local level."

Selvaggio asked the Champaign County Township Trustees Association, Champaign County Farm Bureau, Union Neighbors United, Everpower Renewables, and the Champaign County Engineer's Office to select individuals to send to the study group. Those entities selected the following individuals:

1. Jim Virts, Champaign County Township Trustees Association
2. Jon Berry, Champaign County Farm Bureau
3. Julie Johnson, Union Neighbors United
4. Fereidoun Shokouhi, Champaign County Engineer's Office
5. Mike Speerschneider, Everpower Renewables

Selvaggio and Christopher Walker, an attorney representing several members of Union Neighbors United, have agreed to provide legal consultation to the WTSG as it considers the different perspectives of its membership. "It is our hope that this process will provide a better mutual understanding of the interests and requirements of the various parties in the hope of identifying reasonable and acceptable approaches to wind power regulation," said Walker.

"We aren't opposed to wind energy development," said Union Neighbors United member Julie Johnson. "We are just looking to find ways where development would have the least amount of impact on people and habitat. This is more of a land use issue."

County Farm Bureau representative Jon Berry appreciates the opportunity to participate in the dialogue. “The WTSG will give farmers and other property owners who may have initially felt underrepresented in prior wind energy discussions a voice in expressing support for wind turbine placement,” said Berry.

Members of the general public are welcome to attend and observe the meetings. “We felt that transparency is critical to making sure that everyone feels that they have equal input into the evaluation process” said Johnson.

Selvaggio indicated that the group will begin its work by identifying “areas of concern” and “differences of opinion” currently held by proponents and opponents of wind turbine placement.

**END**