

Straight from the Horse's Mouth on Rutland Radio Tower

This is in response to Mr. Lueders' article, "Locals Lose their tower power", which appeared in many publications throughout Wisconsin, this past March.

My brother, David Soldwedel, and I own Stoughton Farms. We've been farming in Rutland since 1960. Do the math. We are older. Farming is our business, Rutland our place of residence. Our commute is short. We no longer raise livestock but continue to farm the tillable acres. We've always been good stewards of the land, good neighbors and positively engaged in Rutland Township.

Needless to say, my brother and I were quite taken aback and frustrated after reading Mr. Lueders' column. First, with Mr. Lueders himself. His credentials state that he is a director at the Wisconsin Center for Investigative Journalism. Our land, still owned by my brother and me, was the very subject of his article, yet he never even contacted us. Second, with Rutland Town Chairman, Dale Beske, who was quoted referring to the tower approval process as "a game". We have never considered the government approval process a game, nor should any land owner, statewide, facing challenges to our constitutional property rights. 'Straight from the Horse's Mouth' is our story.

In early 2010, we were approached by Dave Magnum of Magnum Communications. After several months of reviewing his radio tower project and the related Rutland and Dane County ordinances, we agreed to sell him land behind a 60 acre field adjacent to a quarry and Conservation Reserve Program acres. Clearly, towers are lawful; Rutland has three cell towers – all closer to roads and environmental areas than Magnum's would be. The most recent was erected on Town property. Dane County's consulting engineer, wrote that this radio tower is "in the public interest." As for lights, a Rutland resident said during a town meeting he can see seven lighted towers from Rutland and didn't want to see another. He didn't realize he made the point that lighted towers aren't a new concept. Five towers between 400'-500' are in the region just south of Madison.

My understanding is that land owners still have property rights. There's much my brother and I like about using this site for a tower. Of the 15.5 acres Magnum would buy, 8.8 are fallow. Of the 6.7 that's tillable, the skinny tower (only 48 inches wide), transmitter shed and anchors take up just .04% of the tillable land. No trees would need to be removed and the land would remain mostly in its natural state, in essence, a permanent "green space". UW-Madison endured a similar

ordeal before building their WSUM radio tower. Dane County Executive, Joe Parisi, stated he wants to create “green” jobs. What’s more “green” than a tower for a radio station? No smoke comes out; you apply electricity to it and create jobs. Businesses will sponsor radio coverage of high school athletics.

As for Ms. Polakowski, a Madison lawyer, she and her husband had resided in Rutland, approximately two miles further east of their present residence. Prior to closing on the 50 acres to build their dream home, Magnum could be seen driving Rutland roads in a van displaying large station logos. He talked with many land owners, the Town Clerk (one of the three Rutland towers is on her farm land and neighbors also battled her), walked our land with Town Chairman Dale Beske, and even appeared before the Rutland Planning Commission. The Dane County Board had not even voted on Magnum's original tower application, yet, the Polakowskis started building their house. Apparently, like all the people who built houses next to the two WIBA towers on Fish Hatchery Road, they realized a tower isn't a reason **not** to build.

Constitutional property rights are all too often ignored. Land owners need to be heard.