



GrassRoots Organizing Western Wisconsin

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS CONTACT

Danny Akenson

Phone: 715-418-0827

Email: danny@gro-ww.org

Ridge Breeze Public Financing Up In the Air after Backlash

Ridge Breeze executive couldn't explain what money was for

Pierce County, Wis. — Ridge Breeze's application for \$18 million in public financing through the Public Finance Authority is up in the air following public backlash and questions about what the money would be used for.

The application was virtually unknown to members of the public until mere weeks ago. The town board's public hearing for the financing had been scheduled for Wednesday, March 12, but was postponed indefinitely after the town decided to discuss their options with their town attorney before making a decision.

Brad Gerrits is the Director of Operations for the Appleton-based corporation that owns Ridge Breeze, a factory farm that is attempting to expand to become a 6,500-cow mega-dairy. When asked what the money would be used for, Gerrits was adamant that it wouldn't be used for a factory farm gas digester, but he was unable to say where the money would go.

This lack of transparency could go against PFA policy which, [according to their website](#), states that, "PFA's governance structure and local government oversight and approval requirements for each financing **ensure accountability and transparency.**"

Mega-dairy developers like Ridge Breeze use public financing to sell tax-exempt bonds to wealthy investors who then give them low-interest loans. Many developers use these loans to expand their operations and build digesters that process waste to make methane gas and millions off of credits. However, PFA's policy requires projects to ["demonstrate tangible public benefits to the community in which it resides."](#)

"Small operators can't get low interest deals like this," said Danny Akenson, "These mega-dairies leave communities with all the negative impacts. Ridge Breeze and their wealthy investors get the positive economic impacts of profits, fees, tax-free income, construction contracts and production. This application should be pulled and the plans to expand should be stopped altogether."

Gerrits waffled on whether Breeze's application for the public financing would go forward after the town board meeting, claiming it had been blown out of proportion. Several concerned Pierce County residents came forward at the town board meeting with their disagreement over the application.

XXX

About GROWW

GROWW is a grassroots organization based in Western Wisconsin. We build power in our communities and create the change we need for all of us, no matter the color of our skin, how much money we have, or who we love. Together, we work toward a future where we all make ends meet, live with dignity, and have a voice in shaping the decisions that impact us. We began our work in 2019 as Pierce County GrassRoots Organizing, and grew out of the name as we began to organize with communities in seven Western Wisconsin counties: Barron, Buffalo, Dunn, Pepin, Pierce, Polk, and St. Croix. To get connected or learn more about GROWW, visit us at GRO-WW.org, on Instagram at [@GrowWisconsin](https://www.instagram.com/GrowWisconsin), or on Facebook at [Facebook.com/GROWWisconsin](https://www.facebook.com/GROWWisconsin)