

Local officials express support for Foxconn deal, seek some changes

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Local officials appearing at today's hearing expressed support for the Foxconn bill, but asked for a few changes to address local impacts.

Kenosha Mayor John Antaramian asked for several changes to language regarding TIFs to allow for investment in the water utility and to allow police and fire personnel hired with TIF funds can be moved to the regular property tax roll over time without having to boost taxes on residents.

He also asked the state to include locals as part of clawback provisions if Foxconn doesn't live up to its commitments, saying the city wouldn't be able to go up against a corporation as large as Foxconn by itself.

Kenosha County Exec. Jim Kreuser asked legislators to reinstate a county sales tax and for the state to help provide additional funding for transportation and planning in the bill.

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Racine County Exec. Jonathan Delagrave said he supports the bill and that the county is "fully committed" to ensuring Foxconn is successful in the state.

While several citizens appearing at today's hearing expressed support for the project, others raised concerns about the environmental impacts of the Foxconn project, the level of state tax credits involved and labor issues with Foxconn.

Others were wary if Foxconn would stay in Wisconsin long term, while some sought to ensure diverse populations benefited from the plant coming to the state.

Denny Smith, of Baraboo, expressed several concerns with the project. Among them

was whether Foxconn would stick around if technology evolves. He agreed that Foxconn is an innovative company, but asked what has happened to plants that made the TV knobs and joysticks Foxconn used to produce.

“Just because a company is innovative doesn’t make this a long-term investment in Wisconsin,” Smith said.

Alfonso Gardner of Mt. Pleasant said diversity provisions need to be included in the bill. He called for 25 percent minority and women participation during construction and working at the plant, along with outreach and apprenticeship efforts.

“If you’re going to take money from everybody, everybody needs to be included,” Gardner said.