

**Wellfleet Energy Committee**  
**Minutes of the Meeting of May 21, 2013**  
**Mass Audubon Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary**  
**6:00 p.m.**

**Present:** Charles Cole, Richard Elkin, Lilli-Ann Green, Finance Committee Representative Thomas Reinhart

**Absent:** Chair Marcus Springer, Teresa Parker

**Excused Absence:** Edmond Doyle

**Guests:** Robert Prescott, Patricia Rogers, Howard Gostin, Josie Dornback, James Rogers, Dennis O'Connell

Secretary Lilli-Ann Green called the meeting to order at 6:10 p.m.

A request to tape record the meeting by Lilli-Ann Green was made and the request was granted.

**BUSINESS**

Robert Prescott, Director of the Mass Audubon Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary (MAS) handed out packets of information for members of the Wellfleet Energy Committee (WEC).<sup>1</sup>

Robert Prescott gave an overview of the Sanctuary and showing the location of the proposed wind turbine. He stated that MAS is in the process of doing a sound study with a map showing where the locations are of where the ambient measurements were taken. He stated that MAS does not have a report, yet but the report will be emailed to the Chair of the WEC once MAS receives it for distribution to the WEC members. MAS has the manufacturer's report, and Robert will email this to Marcus for distribution to the WEC members. MAS employees visited a turbines and they got to go online and listened to one in Michigan. Epsilon is the consulting firm that MAS is using. Robert showed the meeting attendees a map showing the location of where the photo simulations were conducted as well as the 6 different photo simulations. Robert said that MAS has already posted the information on their website. He stated, "It's under NEWS and as this information becomes public and as we get comments and people request information, it's going to be the venue we're going to use to make sure that people hear the answers." Robert announced that MAS is having an open house to let MAS members know about the proposed wind turbine. MAS selected a Gaia wind turbine. There is information online about the wind turbine.

Robert Prescott stated that the process starts with MAS submitting something to the Wellfleet Building inspector, and that's going to hinge on the next month of comments from people because MAS wants to listen to people to hear what everybody has to say about it.

Robert Prescott stated that MAS has not filed any paperwork with the town yet but their attorney, Mike Ford has met with the Wellfleet Building inspector. He stated that everything starts with the Building inspector and then he passes that along to the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). There are two variances that MAS needs; one is the height. The turbine that MAS is proposing is on a monopole and is 120 feet high at the hub, the blade is 43 feet long and that also needs a variance, because Wellfleet has a 33 or 35 foot turbine dimension. MAS was told that the ZBA will hear both variances simultaneously.

MAS is in the process of drafting a letter to the Cape Cod Commission (CCC) to see whether this has to go through the CCC as a District of Regional Impact (DRI) review with public hearings and expert witnesses. When asked to clarify, Robert stated that “we are a DRI; we’re either the second or third DRI when the Cape Cod Commission was founded. Our first building back in ’96 had to go through the process, and once you’re a DRI, you’re always a DRI [because we’re on the border between Eastham and Wellfleet, so it’s kind of hard to deny it, any project that impacts two towns is a DRI] So when we built this new addition, we had to meet with them again, and we have asked their opinion on [the wind turbine] and they’re going to look at it and once we get information together ...”

Robert Prescott was not sure how tall the wind turbine would be. He thought it was 163’ high but he would have to check on this and get back to the WEC.

Robert Prescott stated that the wind turbine is a two-bladed machine that “doesn’t make as much noise.”

Lilli-Ann Green stated that that she has observed two-bladed wind turbines that are much louder and irritating than three-bladed wind turbines.

Robert Prescott seemed surprised by this information.

Lilli-Ann Green stated that Robert might also be surprised that if independent acousticians measure the noise and because they are measuring the full spectrum of noise and measuring the noise using a more accurate dBC scale rather than the dBA scale that Epsilon is most likely using, the noise will be disturbing to the neighbors of the MAS sanctuary.

Robert Prescott stated “we want to hear [about] all of those things... Right now what we’re being told from both the manufacturer, and we’ll know better either tomorrow when the Epsilon report comes out or Thursday morning, that... this turbine won’t be heard off this site... We’ve had... the person that’s done the most installations in the east, Skylark Energy on Long Island and he’s put up a number of these turbines in New York, both down state and upstate, and he’s pretty convinced that this turbine is not going to be heard off site.”

Robert Prescott stated that if any person sends “an email to us, I’ll answer that so that...you’re going to get an answer. You may not like it, but I’ll give you an answer.”

Robert Prescott talked about the ambient noise monitoring and the noise measurements taken. This is important because wind turbine noise compliance in Massachusetts is based upon the ambient noise measurements. If a wind turbine is more than 10 dBA above the ambient noise, it is out of compliance.

Robert Prescott said that as “prescribed by Mass. Law; in order to do a sound study you have to leave it there 2 weeks , and it does a background read and there are prescribed months when you can do this. We could have done it in January, but we did it... over April school vacation...Because the law says that you can’t be 10 decibels higher than the background noise...I guess we should have done it in January, then it would be really quiet...The report will go online and we’ll make the report available to everybody.

Lilli-Ann Green asked if MAS was willing to redo the ambient noise study in January.

Robert Prescott said, “we’ll do whatever people ask. We know it’s going to be quieter in January, so we can pick a lower number, but we’ve got to see if it obviously comes in 10 decibels higher, you know we’re in big trouble. We don’t know what that’s going to do .You know, we’re not privy to that either. With 10 decibels higher, it would probably wipe the project out. As I said, we’re waiting for that report. We didn’t want to wait to time it; we wanted to get the process started. Again, we could have done this in January, when no one’s around. We wanted to make sure it’s open and public. We’ve got to go through the ZBA; that’ll be June, July, August, so people who are here only in summer time will have a chance to comment. It isn’t just an issue for those of us who live here year round. We have peoples on Lieutenant Island; we’ve got people all around and we want to make sure that everybody has a chance to have a say in it.”

Robert Prescott described the photo simulations. A member of the WEC stated that the Executive Director of the CCC has said that the average tree height on the Lower Cape is 30’. It was stated that in the photo simulations, the 142’ wind turbine looks just a little bit taller than the trees. It was also stated that the building code in Wellfleet only allows for two story buildings. This proposed wind turbine is as tall as a 14 story building. It was also stated that the photo simulations presented remind one of the photo simulation we saw of the wind turbine on Lecount Hollow Beach, where the turbine was 400 feet high, but the top of the sand cliff behind it which is around 80’ high was actually taller than the wind turbine.

Robert Prescott stated that “simulations are simulations, so we’ll have lots of questions around the simulations and height and what it looks like, and if these are not satisfactory, then we’ll have our people who do photo simulations...do something that is more satisfactory.”

Robert Prescott further stated that “the idea is that we don’t want to build a nuisance.”

Dennis O’Connell asked if MAS did a balloon test.

Robert Prescott said that MAS had not done so. He did say that “if the ZBA says to do a balloon test, we will do a balloon test.” He further stated that “we’re prepared to that, if that’s what people... have more faith in. And once it’s up there at 145 feet, then you could go to all these places and try and get pictures of all that, and then, at least you have something at that height, not a photo simulation, so, we’re perfectly willing to do that.”

He was asked if he needed to wait until winter, when the leaves are off the trees so we actually saw what it would look like, would he be willing to wait.

Robert Prescott said, “Sure, we’d be willing to wait.”

There was a discussion regarding the size of the wind turbine and how it is classified. Robert Prescott stated that he objected to the wind turbine being called an industrial machine. Lilli-Ann Green stated that for the record, this wind turbine is an industrial machine.

Robert Prescott talked about how MAS had looked at other wind turbines. He stated that there are no problems with wind turbines of the size that MAS proposes. He also stated that the wind turbine in Brewster everyone likes. Lilli-Ann Green asked, “Who says they like it?” Robert Prescott stated that it was the person who put it up. Lilli-Ann Green said that the neighbors in Brewster do not like it. It’s too noisy and it’s creating big problems.

Robert Prescott stated, “We don’t want to create a situation where we’re making noise for the motel, or people in the trailer park. Keep in mind that our own campground and our own staff are going to be the closest to this turbine. We’re not going to put it up if our maintenance person is not going to like it and our summer staff in the dormitories. Our maintenance person went to the one in New York, met with the owner, stood under it, was there for a while. I said to him, “ If you don’t like it, we’re not putting it up.” If there’s any noise issues, spent quite a bit of time with the owner, went around and around it; it’s not an issue to him.”

Richard Elkin asked about the quality of the noise measured and spoke about how wind turbine noise is more of an annoyance factor than other industrial noise. He said, “the turbine, as it spins around, only makes noise as it passes by on the pole. So, when you listen to a turbine, it goes thump, thump, thump at some level. ...What you need to ask your guys is how high, how noisy the thump , not the silence in between ‘til the blade comes around again. Because that’s what your mind is doing...So that’s what you need to know, is how noisy is the peak?”

It was also stated that there are people who are more noise sensitive than others. The property manager may not be noise sensitive, but others who work at the sanctuary or visit, or live nearby may be highly noise sensitive.

There was a discussion of infrasound and low frequency noise (ILFN).

Robert Prescott stated that the manufacturer told MAS that there is no Infrasound. He further stated that “if there infrasound connected to this [wind turbine] that would be a deal breaker for us.”

The mission statement of MAS was presented. “To protect the nature of Massachusetts for people and wild life and that Massachusetts Audubon looks to protect the nature of Massachusetts for people and wild life.” It was stated that there are responsible solutions that do not harm wildlife or people and that MAS could employ these other solutions such as a Bloom energy saver or buying ‘green power’.

Robert Prescott stated that MAS does buy ‘green power’.

Lilli-Ann Green stated that it was her hope that MAS won’t adversely impact Wellfleet with community fracture which is a tragic situation that can be seen dramatically as close as in the town of Falmouth, MA. She and her deceased husband have interviewed over 200 people in 15 countries around the world and community fracture is a huge issue. Wind turbines pit people who are long term friends against each other. She stated that it is very sad and it is a public health issue.

Charles Cole commended MAS for its efforts to construct a wind turbine.

Robert Prescott stated that MAS “did two years of bird monitoring, and a season of monitoring bats. And as part of the process we’re going to follow, if the turbine goes up, we’ll follow up with three years of bird and bat monitoring, and if there’s an adverse impact that was not predicted and there’s an extreme, then the turbine comes down. We’ll be setting up an escrow account so [in case it] comes down.”

Richard Elkins asked about the impact on birds. Robert Prescott said that “There’s so few wind turbines of this size that there’s no data or very little data.”

Howard Gostin asked, “Will these studies also tell you if there are birds that are avoiding the area because of the noise of the wind turbine?”

Robert Prescott said, “Well, we have a lot of data on local nesting birds, and, for instance, the Blue Birds, the Tree Swallows, we have a House Wren that nests right in that field. We have Barn Swallows, and so, we have all that data. And if the turbine goes up and all of a sudden within a circle around the turbine these birds are no longer nesting, then we’ll have to figure out why and maybe it is turbine.”

Lilli-Ann Green asked Robert Prescott to make a commitment that after the event on the twenty third, that he would come to the next WEC meeting to discuss the proposed project further. Robert Prescott agreed.

James Rogers asked about the finances of this project, how much it will cost. Robert Prescott stated that it will cost in excess of \$200,000.

Richard Elkin asked how much of this was for the actual wind turbine. Robert Prescott stated that it was around \$140,000.

Robert Prescott stated that MAS would get some funds from Mass Clean Energy Center. “That is the discount for putting it up. And it is, you don’t get the money right away; you get the money after the machine has been in operation, so they can tell what the efficiency is, and then you get a check for putting up the turbine.”

Robert Prescott stated that the nearest residents are in the trailer park and the closest home is 500’ from the proposed wind turbine.

He also stated that MAS planned to place the wind turbine in a location so that people could walk right up to it. Objections regarding public safety were raised regarding ice throws, blade throws, fire and lightening strikes.

It was stated that instead of performing an avian study after the fact to determine how many birds are killed, it makes sense to prove that the wind turbine does no harm to wildlife and to people.

It was also stated that an independent acoustics consultant would be important to employ. When Robert Prescott objected to the costs of this, Lilli-Ann Green and Thomas Reinhart said that they would pay for an independent acoustics expert.

**Motion:** Richard Elkin moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:50 p.m. Charles Cole seconded, and the motion carried 3-0.

Respectfully submitted,

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Lilli-Ann Green, Committee Secretary

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<sup>i</sup> Packer of information from MAS