



**Wellfleet Board of Selectmen
Minutes of the Special Meeting of March 30, 2010
Wellfleet Public Library, 7:00 p.m.**

Present: Chairman Dale Donovan, Jerry Houk, Michael May, Jacqueline Wildes-Beebe, and Ira Wood; Town Administrator Paul Sieloff.

Chairman Dale Donovan called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Response to Seashore Plan for Selective Predator Control

Wood explained that he has done a great deal of research and has written a draft letter that he would like the Board of Selectmen to approve and send to George Price, Superintendent of the Cape Cod National Seashore. Wood read the draft letter aloud.

MOTION 10-0136: Houk moved to approve the draft letter and send it to George Price.

May seconded, and the motion carried 5-0.

Update on Wind Turbine Status from Energy Committee

Donovan explained that this is not a public hearing, but a regular public meeting to which the Energy Committee has been invited to provide an update on the wind turbine project.

Energy Committee Chair Geof Karlson, Vice Chair Peter Stewart, and Jim Sexton came forward to review the status and schedule overview of the project. Notably, according to the schedule, the turbine would be ordered in early 2011 and would be installed at the end of 2011 after the nesting season was over.

Karlson explained that the Energy Committee identified four categories of criteria to evaluate whether or not to go forward with the project:

1. Regulatory
2. Financial
3. Environmental
4. Human Health and Safety

These evaluations, along with the project status and schedule, were detailed in a handout provided by the Energy Committee for this meeting.

Karlson briefly addressed the issue of acoustic studies to be performed for the project and noted "Wind Turbine Syndrome," a condition identified by Dr. Nina Pierpont. Karlson explained that the scale of wind turbine farms identified by Pierpont as causing "Wind Turbine Syndrome" is much greater than the scale of the proposed Wellfleet wind turbine. Pierpont's studies were of projects that had a range from eight turbines up to 28 turbines versus the one turbine proposed in Wellfleet.

Karlson said that, regardless of the amount of testing and studying, the Energy Committee cannot guarantee that there would never be any acoustic impact that could be perceived as annoying from one or more residences near the wind turbine site. It is just not possible to say that the wind turbine will be 100% acoustically benign.

Houk asked about the amount of land that would be required for the project. Karlson said that a little more than five acres would be required.

Houk asked about the projected annual cost to operate the wind turbine after it was installed. Karlson estimated that it would cost approximately \$90K per year, including maintenance, repairs, and general operating costs.

Houk asked whether the Energy Committee was anticipating any grant money to help fund the project. Karlson said that, given the current environment for green energy technology, he believed that grant money is likely, but nothing is guaranteed at this moment.

Houk said that he has heard more comments from those opposed to the project than those that are in favor of it. Houk said that he is still fairly open-minded about the project, but he is leaning toward opposing it. Houk said that the many unanswered questions discussed by the Energy Committee tonight create more doubt about going forward. Houk acknowledged the hard work done by the Energy Committee on this project.

May reviewed the history of the Energy Committee and its work on the wind turbine project. May said that in the winter of 2005 a letter was presented to the Selectmen asking the board to form a group to study if the Town was agreeable to wind energy. Abby Franklin and Tim Hughes walked around Wellfleet and got over 300 signatures on their petition. In March of 2005 the board decided to form the Alternative Energy Committee in response to that petition. The charge was to evaluate the economic and practical feasibility of operating a wind powered generator on Town-owned property, primarily to offset the municipal energy demands.

May acknowledged the committee members, all volunteers who have worked tirelessly over the years: Paul Banner, Drew Brown, Mac Hay, Kathy Hubby, Jim Sexton, Peter Stewart, Paul Webber, Gooz Draz, Geof Karlson, Fred McGee, Bill Sullivan, and the newest member Dick Elkin, along with FinCom representative John Morrissey.

May explained that many possible sites were considered. Three were chosen – the White Crest Beach area, the Elementary School area, and the Town landfill. On November 10, 2006, a MET tower was erected by a team from UMASS and members of Alternative Energy Committee. The tower was 150 feet high and monitored wind speed and direction. All costs were incurred by the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative (MTC). In 2007, committee member Jim Sexton applied for a grant to study the economic feasibility of a wind turbine. A grant was awarded by the MTC to study the economic feasibility of a wind turbine in the White Crest Beach area.

May explained that, in early 2009, the Alternative Energy Committee's name was changed to the Energy Committee and the zoning bylaws were changed to allow wind turbines at the April 2009 Annual Town Meeting. At the October 2009 Special Town Meeting, the Energy Committee sought for money to move forward with the permitting and mapping of the proposed site. The voters approved \$290K for permitting and studies, but little of this money has been spent to date. May said that the Energy Committee now seeks the Board of Selectmen's guidance as to whether or not to proceed along this course.

May said that, as the Selectmen's liaison to the Energy Committee, he has tried to educate himself about wind energy. May said that many factors have brought him to his decision: He cannot support, nor will he vote for a commercial wind turbine to be built in the White Crest Beach area. May said the access routes to the site and to the power lines are in some of the most beautiful lands in Wellfleet and the weather-related risks and their consequences are real to him. He feels that the money parts of this project are extremely risky and spending this amount of money in this economic climate may not serve the best interests of the Town at this time.

May said that, of course, energy is a topic that needs to be addressed and he hopes that the Energy Committee continues to explore all its avenues such as installing solar panels on more Town-owned buildings.

Beebe said that this issue is very difficult, as the subject of wind energy is all so new to her. She said that she has tried to do research on the issue, but there is an enormous amount of information, much of it very technical. Beebe said that she has serious concerns about noise, the destruction of the environment, and the financial risk involved with the proposed wind turbine project. She said that a project of this size and scope in that location will permanently alter the landscape. Beebe acknowledged that the Town has a legal right to do this project, a right that she fully supports, but she feels that this project is simply too big and industrial in nature for Wellfleet.

Wood said that his research on wind turbines has brought him to the conclusion that wind turbines are massive, low-energy producing and environmentally destructive. He said that the economics are dubious and ill-suited for a small town like Wellfleet, and the site is not appropriate.

MOTION 10-0137: Wood moved that the Town not spend any more money on the wind turbine project, that the Town thank the Energy Committee for its hard work and to direct it to look for other forward-thinking technologies for the generation of electricity and the conservation of energy.

Beebe seconded.

Donovan noted that one of the downsides of the smaller organizations and municipalities is that they cannot afford an R&D team; thanked May for retelling of history of Energy Committee and its work; going to support the motion, despite all of the hard work and dedication of the Energy Committee; many reasons to have cause for concern about going forward with this project.

Donovan asked Sieloff how much of the \$290K has been spent. Sieloff said that roughly 10% of the money appropriated has been spent so far, and that another \$16K would be spent soon.

The motion carried 5-0.

Audience member Dennis O'Connell thanked the board for their vote and offered that many of the people in attendance tonight would be willing and available to work with the Town on developing alternative ideas for renewable energy in Wellfleet.

Audience member Peter Hall asked what would appear on the upcoming Annual Town Meeting Warrant. Donovan explained that Articles relating to the wind turbine project would appear on the Warrant, but the vote tonight effectively ends the appropriation of money for this project. The Town voted to appropriate money last October for permitting and studies, but new information has come to light and, given the changed circumstances, the board can vote to end the appropriation.

Adjournment

MOTION 10-0138: Wood moved to adjourn the meeting.

May seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:41pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Cox
Executive Assistant