

11/21/2011 - Westport Energy Committee Public Hearing Minutes

On 11/21/11 at 6:00 PM in the Westport Town Hall Board of Selectmen's office, Chairman Antone Vieira called the meeting of the Energy Committee to order and then adjourned the meeting to reconvene at the Town Hall Annex Community Room at 6:12 PM. Other members present from the Energy Committee were Walter Barnes, James Bartlett, Kathleen Cummings, Karl Daxland, Jack Deveau, and Edward Goldberg. Absent was Max Kohlenberg.

The Public Hearing/Meeting assembled approximately 100 attendees. Postcards had been sent out from the BOS office to approximately 1100 real estate tax payers in the proximity of the proposed site identified as "regarding the feasibility study of the wind turbine located behind Fire Station #1 54 Hix Bridge Road."

Chairman Vieira announced that the agenda was to focus on reviewing the proposed wind turbine. He stated that representatives of the MA Clean Energy Center in Boston, MA would be joining the meeting, Martha Broad, Senior Project Manager, and Leigh Cameron, Program Coordinator. He introduced Simon Thomas of Atlantic Design Engineers, LLC of Sandwich, MA, who prepared the Draft Westport Community Wind Project Feasibility Study.

Simon Thomas presented a power point overview of the Wind Turbine Feasibility Study, including findings, issues, and concerns along with a statement about "coming off fossil fuels as much as possible." He showed a conceptual site plan; the scope of work with noise, flicker, and interconnections; the wind resources of the Town Forest; proactive public outreach efforts; photo simulations of 750 kw and 2.5 mw units; flicker butterfly assessments; acoustic analysis; direct drive designs; and revenue projections comparing 750 kw through 2 mw wind turbines. He introduced Greg O'Brien, the outreach consultant who in turn referred to Liz Argo of Wind Info Network, a consultant, for a random neighbor interview study of other sites such as the wind turbines in Portsmouth, RI and Hull, MA.

Martha Broad of CEC spoke of providing partial funding for the Feasibility Study and Pre-Feasibility Study and the application from the Town of Westport to study this particular site and explore its viability. The community wind grant process has 29 projects throughout the State. It was pointed out that the Simon Thomas now has input from the CEC regarding the Draft Wind Turbine Feasibility Study for Westport. A copy of the Draft Study has been flagged with comments from the CEC.

Wayne Sunderland, an engineer and former Planning Board member, questioned where the study was on the subjects of a wind turbine foundation and wetlands. Thomas responded that there are different designs.

Father Leonard Hindsley, representing St. John the Baptist Church on Main Road an abutter to the proposed project, presented a petition signed by 155 parish members who

requested that the Members of the Energy Committee and the Board of Selectmen "abandon plans to erect a wind turbine in the vicinity of Beech Grove Cemetery, the Friends' Meeting House and Fire Station #1...concerned about the negative impact" on the Parish..."

Anne Barnes, a Friend of the Westport Cemeteries, presented a petition signed by 380 opposing the wind turbine for its esthetic drawback, its desecration of an historic cemetery; its dereliction of the Town's responsibilities to preserve and protect past and future burials of relatives, friends, and loved ones in Beech Grove Cemetery; and its community liability by putting the public's safety and health at undue risk and possibly damaging property and interred remains.

Dan Michaels, an abuttor on Main Road and the northern property owner to the proposed wind turbine site, presented the above petition with 250 more signatures.

Tom Shaughnessy wanted to know more about other options and alternatives to the proposed wind turbine.

Tony Connors stated that he and his wife have lots in Beech Grove Cemetery for use in their burials and he supports the project.

Scott Faxton was concerned about the time line of the Energy Committee and when did the recommendation become specific.. Chairman Vieira stated the Energy Committee was "on the home stretch" and wanted to "build some consensus."

Richard Stang focused on financial aspects and wanted more specifics. He detailed for the 750 kw and 1.5 mw wind turbines the returns per year, financing percentages, debt costs, and net revenues. Chairman Vieira added that the Town of Westport budget is 30 million dollars per year, the wind turbine would be 1 % of the budget and "push the needle to make it financial."

James Bartlett spoke of the financial analysis with Ed Goldberg of the Energy Committee for a 750 kw wind turbine model factoring in several important factors not presented in the engineered analysis. The conclusion was that it would be "very risky to the Town of Westport" and a negative cash flow for nine out of the 20 years of lifespan.

Bill Reed wanted to know the "other alternatives" and wanted Chairman Vieira to talk about them. Vieira said that they would be brought out at another meeting.

David Dionne, past Chairman of the Energy Committee, aka Alternative Energy Committee, spoke of the need to talk about other sites. He said "everyone is in favor of renewable energy but just not here."

Ed Goldberg said that "collectively we all support alternative energy" and 'we want public input because at the end of the day you (the public) own it."

Elaine Ostroff spoke of "too much information," too many different models, and the need to break down the report.

Brenda Burke wanted the CEC to answer the issues regarding health. Martha Broad of CEC referenced to the health issues on the internet, eg Falmouth, and the panel of experts formed by DEP and DPH to generate a report by the end of the year.

Martha Broad of CEC went on to say that the acoustics on the 750 kw wind turbine in the Feasibility Study appear more acceptable than those for a larger (1.5 mw) turbine. However, the economics do not work for the 750 kw turbine as they do for a large (1.5 mw) wind turbine. And, the site will not work for the larger wind turbine.

Paula Dooley, an abuttor to the proposed project, appealed to the Energy Committee that it "needs a site not invasive to the quality of our lives."

Wilfred St. Michel said he was at the cemetery "all the time" to relight candles and look at the vision of his grandson. He pleaded that the Town "leave the cemetery as it is" and "please (wind turbine) not there." Several members of his family have cemetery lots.

John ? wanted data from Simon Thomas.

Frank Quinn, a consulting engineer and wind turbine design analyst for over 25 years, cautioned the Town not to backup the wrong design and identify who is to maintain many moving parts.

Walter Barnes spoke of the inadequacy of the proposed wind turbine site size, the presence of occupied buildings and a public roadway, blade fragments and turbine collapses.

Neil Van Sloun advised the meeting that he owned three wind turbines (for his nursery) and they gave 1/3rd the amount of electricity output than was purported. He cautioned the Town that they are "machines of numerous moving parts which break down." And, he said that they were told they would not be struck by lightening and one was very quickly struck.

Jon Alden could see more wind for a 1.5 mw turbine on Gooseberry Island. He said "protect the image of Town in Central Village," move the proposed wind turbine, make money for the Town, and for this proposed project analyze the real estate property impacts and the costs of suitable land for a new cemetery.

Public Hearing/Meeting attendees disassembled at 7:56 PM The Energy Committee Members voted for a next meeting on November 29 at 6:00 PM in the Town Hall for a committee recommendation. The Public Hearing adjourned at 8:30 PM

Respectfully submitted by the office of Walter Barnes