

Wind tops list of renewable energy resources

By Michaela Kennedy

Conanicut Island lays front and center in an aerial picture of Narragansett Bay. The photograph opens a recently published report for Gov. Don Carcieri about a wind siting study related to a state project to develop wind energy.

Maps in the state report show Jamestown as a strong wind location. Areas pinpointed as high wind sites include state-owned land near the Newport Bridge, Fort Wetherill, Beavertail, and waters surrounding the island.

Last week, Andrew Dzykewicz, the governor's top energy advisor, brought stakeholders, various community representatives, agencies and organizations together for a discussion about the project. Noticeably absent from the invitation list was Jamestown, but Dzykewicz quickly acknowledged that it was merely an oversight. He noted that other communities had been more vocal in pursuing their interest, and the state would welcome Jamestown to become involved.

The scope of the state study was to look at the entire state, including offshore waters, to find workable spots to erect wind turbines and consider their potential energy generation. The study evaluated projects using utility-sized wind turbines, 1.5 megawatts or

larger, for customer connected and small community installations. The study also surveyed areas for large, wholesale installations where all of the power is fed into the New England electric transmission system.

The Jamestown Wind Energy Committee is pursuing its own feasibility study, and is preparing to ask the town council for monetary support. Committee Chairman Don Wineberg noted the assessment would choose three to six sites to evaluate the cost involved in locating wind turbines, and how much revenue a site could generate. The study is not designed to tell if the island has enough wind to make it work. "We already know there's viable wind here," he added. The committee request is on the upcoming council agenda for Monday, Sept. 10.

Dzykewicz said loans for renewable energy studies were available as a direct result of the Comprehensive Energy Act of 2006. Feasibility studies for projects such as wind power typically cost up to \$25,000, according to the energy advisor. Funding for the feasibility studies was formerly provided as a grant, when the state's Renewable Energy Standard (RES) was enacted in June 2004.

Since the new state policy

was enacted last year, however, the state money has been relabeled as a loan instead of a grant, and "eventually needs to be paid back," according to the energy advisor. Dzykewicz noted that he is scheduled for a meeting in Jamestown on Monday, Sept. 24, to offer assistance in the exploration process.

The energy standard of 2004 requires the state's retail electricity providers -- including nonregulated power producers and distribution companies -- to supply 16 percent of their retail electricity sales from renewable resources by the end of 2019. The requirement begins at 3 percent by the end of 2007.

Eligible renewable-energy resources include:

- wind
- direct solar radiation
- movement or the latent heat of the ocean
- the heat of the earth
- hydroelectric facilities not greater than 30 megawatts (MW) in capacity
- biomass facilities using eligible biomass fuels
- fuel cells using renewable resources

The town council appointed the wind committee last spring and charged its members with researching wind energy generation possibilities on the island. The directive comes as a local response to the energy standard adopted three years ago.

Town council President David Long noted that renewable energy resources should be sought out for the town. Nevertheless, approaching multiple resources at once would be more than one committee could handle at a time. "Wind energy is a good start," he added.

Wind committee member Wil-

liam Smith has been a proponent of harnessing wind energy since 1976, when he put up a private, two and a half kilowatt turbine on his property. He notes that wind power is big in Jamestown history, starting with the historic windmill at the top of the hill on North Main Road, and a farm type wind turbine on the town farm. "It's finally getting into people's mind sets," he said. Smith also put up solar panels, "an excellent combination."

Since the accident a few years back when a cruise ship cut the electrical lines to the island and left residents with no power, Smith has said. it is time to look for alternative energy resources. "Not to mention you can make money with these things," he added.

Committee chairman Don Wineberg agreed that wind energy generation is the foremost resource to pursue at the moment, and residents on the island see it. He opines that global energy demands are growing, and the geopolitics of an oil-based economy need to be addressed. "The only way to change it is for everyone to make a contribution," he says. "We as individuals have a responsibility to reduce our dependency on oil, and wind power is one step towards that goal." Wineberg called wind a perfect fit.

"It's what we can do."

The wind committee's "very conscious agenda" is to keep people informed, Wineberg said. He noted that with every conversation about wind within the community, he has felt "nothing but support."

Wind energy generation can be used "behind the meter," to serve the island's needs or be put into the larger electrical grid. Behind-the-meter usage would allow residents to buy much cheaper electricity. "Without going to the electric grid, then you can use the energy for the cost, paying wholesale," Wineberg explains. "Once you put it into the grid, then everyone is still buying at retail."

Committee member Michael Larkin stressed the committee's desire to make people in the town aware and inspire them to get more involved. Larkin is a marine scientist who has worked with the Nature Conservancy to assess renewable energy resources on a national level, as well as various projects through the University of Rhode Island. He noted after much research, the most potential problems are relatively low significance. "Navigational issues, hazards to wildlife, with careful siting, can be mitigated," he said.

Farms buyback plans discussed by town council in closed session

By Tom Shevlin

In a special meeting of the Jamestown Town Council last Thursday, members heard an update from Town Administrator Bruce Keiser on a planned upcoming Sept. 18 Special Financial Town Meeting on the island's proposed farmland buyback effort.

Keiser reported to the council that the town was not prepared to issue a warrant to hold the FTM at this time, but was confident that requirements to secure the Sept. 18 date would be met.

The town meeting will be at 7 p.m. in the Lawn Avenue school gym.

The council then adjourned to Executive Session for further discussion.

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