

Wind Energy Committee considers feasibility of town-owned wind turbine

By Phil Zahodiakin

Ft. Getty and Taylor Point have emerged as the "finalists" in Jamestown's search for potential wind turbine sites. During a Nov. 10 workshop on a newly released feasibility study, the Jamestown Wind Energy Committee announced that the other front-runner, Beavertail Point, had been eliminated from consideration.

The committee was formed at the request of the 2007 Town Council, which asked the panel to determine if it would be financially beneficial for Jamestown to put up a wind turbine. The feasibility study, performed by South Kingstown-based Applied Science Associates, presented 146 pages' worth of answers.

However, before selecting a "finalist," and formally recommending that site to the council, the committee wanted to be sure that there weren't any issues that the study had missed. So, the public was encouraged to ask questions during a presentation on the study, the \$55,000 cost of which was shared by the town and the R.I. Economic Development Corp.

Although such proposals are sometimes controversial, no one from the audience of 50-plus people spoke out against the idea of a wind turbine. There were

numerous questions, however, about the economics of the options evaluated by the study – and many of those questions involved the concept of "net metering."

Under a state law enacted last June, any surplus of renewable energy generated by municipalities on municipally owned sites may now be sold to the utility serving the area. Previously, the surplus in Rhode Island and other states was eligible only for conversion into "renewable electricity" credits, which could then be bought by electric utilities seeking to comply with federal mandates requiring a percentage of their output to be "green."

The legislation enabling municipalities to earn cash rebates for their surplus renewable energy was co-sponsored by State Rep. Deborah Ruggiero of Jamestown, who attended the workshop, and who told the *Press*, "I am excited and encouraged by the work of this committee, and I commend them for their efforts. Jamestown could lead the way in this area for other Rhode Island towns and cities."

If Jamestown built enough wind turbines, "we might make so much money that we won't have to pay property taxes," Committee Chairman Don Wineberg said, adding, "Or, at least, that's

my dream."

For now, however, the council must still decide if a turbine will be built, and how it will be funded.

The study evaluated many factors affecting turbine costs, including location, expected wind energy at each location, expected output from the available wind energy and expected profit or loss over a 20-year period, including maintenance and de-commissioning costs.

The cost scenarios in the study were built around 0.8-megawatt turbines, which would generate only enough power to offset all the electricity purchased for town-owned buildings and infrastructure, such as streetlights; and 2.0-megawatt turbines, which would allow the town to produce a saleable surplus.

Examples of the cost scenarios included a single 0.8-megawatt turbine at Ft. Getty, which was projected to cost \$2.8 million; a single 2.0-megawatt turbine at Taylor Point, which would cost \$6.1 million; and three 0.8-megawatt turbines at Beavertail Point, which would cost \$20.5 million – and operate at a loss.

The experts advising the committee determined that there would have to be three turbines at Beavertail to overcome the energy transmission losses that result whenever generators are sited far from the nearest substation. There would be also be major costs to upgrade existing power lines and, as Applied Science consultant Daniel Mendelsohn pointed out, one of the Beavertail sites is federally owned, which means the power from that site wouldn't be eligible for net-metering.

When asked to explain how the town would pay for a turbine, Wineberg said that likely or potential funding sources include the Economic Development Corp., which could be counted on for at least \$500,000. A town-issued municipal bond is another potential source of financing, with surplus energy sales providing the income to pay the debt service and pay off the loan. The town also has the option of financing a turbine with a federally backed, tax-free Clean Renewable Energy Bond, although it would have to be paid off in 15 years.

The Wind Energy Committee will meet Tuesday, Nov. 17 to discuss the workshop proceed-

ings, and possibly select a final site for recommendation to the Town Council. Besides its future debate on a turbine, which will include multiple public hearings, the council will face the task of selecting a financing strategy.

If the council approves a wind turbine project, town voters would be asked to approve the financing. That could occur at a special financial meeting during the winter or early spring, be put to voters during the regular budget meeting in June or be put before the voters as a ballot question in November.

The feasibility study is available at the Jamestown Philomenian Library or online at www.jamestownri.net.

Lutheran church to host country bazaar

St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Newport will host its annual old-fashioned country bazaar at 10 a.m. this Saturday, Nov. 14.

All are invited to this popular autumn event, which includes a silent auction of theme baskets, a selection of handmade crafts, a sale of home-baked delights and a giant white elephant sale. Come early for the best deals.

St. Peter's is located at 525 Broadway in Newport.

Estes/Twombly designs featured in new book

The work of Jamestown architects Jim Estes and Peter Twombly of Estes/Twombly Architects is featured in *Yankee Modern: The Houses of Estes/Twombly*, a new book by Princeton Architectural Press.

The book, written by Providence architectural critic Will Morgan, includes an introductory essay and descriptions of the 10 houses shown in the book, nine of which are in Rhode Island and three of which are in Jamestown.



**Finn says:
As Father
Gallagher
used to say,
"Non-illigitimi
carborundum."**

Yeah,
I know the more correct
phrase would be,
**"Noli nothi permittere
te terere."**

But really, my older brother, Phalen, and I just want to say thank you to those who took the time to come to the meetings, to read the *Press* and the *Daily News*, to debate the issues, and most of all to VOTE.

Yesterday was Veterans Day and one of the rights our soldiers and sailors and airmen defend is our right to vote . . . with that also comes a responsibility.

I hope that more of you will come forward and participate in local government.



Thanks to Finn and Phalen.

I agree with Finn's statements and thank each and everyone of you for your support in the past and future. Help keep Jamestown a good place to live. Get involved!

**The Committee to Elect
Mike Smith to Town Council**

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This advertisement paid for by the Committee to Elect Mike Smith, Ed Holland, chairman

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