

W. T. PLANNING BOARD MEETING, DECEMBER 1, 2008, 7:30 P.M.

PRESENT: David Douglas, Ginny Jones, Susan Silva, Leah Smith

ABSENT: Eileen Maley

ALSO PRESENT FOR ALL OR PART OF THE MEETING: Donald Sibley, Shelton Bank, Sander Shapiro, John Flender, Paul Adler, Glenn Hearn, Kate Warner, Tony Higgins, Bob Schwier, Tucker Hubbell, Eric Whitman, Peter Rodegast, Nancy Cole, Phil Forest, Bill Veno, Simone DeSorcy

MINUTES

Minutes of the 11/17/08 meeting were approved as written.

CORRESPONDENCE

In: Jim Feiner re. affordable housing project;
Kristina West re. Geo training.

Public Hearing, Zoning Bylaw Amendment, Regulating Wind Turbines: David opened the public hearing, stating that the Board was proposing special permit review by the ZBA for all proposed wind turbines, and that the purpose of tonight's meeting was to hear from other Boards, energy experts, and Townspeople re. their opinions on parameters and the review process itself. A memo was distributed outlining discussion items. Copies of Chilmark's draft bylaw and Nantucket's approved bylaw were distributed.

It was noted that Nantucket's bylaw differentiates between turbines that are residential accessory uses and those that are commercial, for-profit projects. Nancy Cole, ZBA member, asked how a neighborhood cooperative wind turbine would be viewed. Don Sibley said that the size of the turbine is more important than the residential/commercial distinction. Leah said that re. impacts, size seems to be the larger impact. Kate Warner agreed. Paul Adler, in favor of wind power, said that noise is the issue, not setbacks. He said we never mind our own noise. David said that he can hear vibratory sounds from the turbine near his home; he said he can hear it above the noise of the trees blowing. Shelton Bank, Energy Committee, said that State noise standards control this. Paul Adler said that different designs have different vibrations and noise levels. Ginny noted that setbacks address turbines falling over, not noise. Paul Adler said it is rare for them to fall. David agreed that setbacks are not the biggest issue.

David said he had found many studies on the internet discussing the ill-health effects of wind turbines on people.

Differentiating between small and large turbines was discussed. Paul Adler said that turbines need to be high enough to work; if you're going to allow them, they need to be able to work. Leah said they should be differentiated in terms of height and capacity. Kate Warner suggested differentiating by category of use: 1) for residential use, no larger than the demand of the house (10 kW); 2) turbines to serve a single purpose (e.g. a single entity like a school); 3) large-scale for town/island use (600 kW, 300 feet). They would be differentiated by purpose. She said the layers of permitting may be different. David

noted that the turbine's purpose is not what will bother or concern neighbors. Shelton Bank said that large turbines had greater impact on a larger area due to flicker, etc.

Gary Harcourt spoke to keeping turbines by right, as the bylaw is currently written. The MVC will now review all turbines over 100 feet. Bill Veno, MVC staff, said that turbines were put on the DRI checklist because some towns have no provisions in place.

David said that at some point we have to decide what kW output triggers what kind of permitting. Sander Shapiro, Energy Committee, said that no more small turbines should be allowed unless they are proven to be cost-effective, otherwise they are just sound and visual nuisances. Small systems are not cost effective. Large turbines will do the most for the island and the world. What are our objectives here? Laws have been passed to allow large turbines. We need to look at the motives of minimally effective, non-economically viable small machines.

David asked what the life is of the small turbines; Gary Harcourt said 20 years. Ginny said she hoped that in 20 years wave turbine technology will have been worked out.

Don Sibley said he has a new 5 kW machine on his property. There have been a few start-up issues, but in the first six weeks it has made 200 kW hours, half of his household monthly bill. It is economic because he believes the cost of electricity will continue to rise. He believes it will pay for itself within 20 years.

Kate Warner said that Sander Shapiro raises a good point. The larger issue is what do we want for the town (preserving vistas, energy efficiency, economics). Small turbines are the early adopters. The Planning Board has the task of siting them. We don't need to think about regulating the largest turbines today.

Shelton Bank said that the Cape Light Compact demands a 7-year payback when evaluating projects. He said the cost of electricity is going up, but who knows when and by how much. Gary Harcourt said you can argue investments either way, like stocks vs. bonds. These are early adopters. Turbines won't get better if none are put up.

Paul Adler said that there needs to be a discussion about energy. He said that building a 20,000 sq. ft. home has a bigger impact on the Town than a small turbine. He said he would no doubt upset his neighbors if he put a turbine in his yard, due to sound and visual impacts. He would also have to view it, with or without a great payback. The benefits and detriments need to be weighed, and also weighed against solar.

Don Sibley said that he thought the Nantucket Sound proposal would be beautiful technology, like pinwheels. In time, with more built, more people will have a more positive reaction to them. He invited the Board to see his new turbine, along with its flickering.

Gary Harcourt said he had brought Edgartown Planning Board members on a tour of his turbines, and would be happy to do the same for W.T. He said the State sound bylaws are very stringent. David asked how the Town would enforce them. Kate Warner said the Town would need to buy a decibel reader.

David said that especially with the large turbines it is important to consider how close they are to people. Regarding zones, Ginny said that some parts of Town are more visible than others. Location also depends on optimal winds for turbines. Community turbines should be in the best winds. She said that FAA requirements also affect a lot of W.T. Kate Warner discussed the Roads District; she said she would prefer to see turbines farther away from roads. Paul Adler said that a neighborhood's interest is more important than that of drivers. Neighbors will be living with the sound impacts. Bill Venno said that setbacks help somewhat with sound buffering.

Glenn Hearn said he heard that when towers fall, they break in half, so maybe setbacks should be half the height of the tower. There was a discussion that many factors are involved in the way a turbine might fall, especially if guy wires stay intact.

Different types of towers were discussed. Paul Adler said that you don't tend to see the tower; sound is more of the issue. David asked how much of the noise is from the cables humming. Gary Harcourt said he couldn't answer that; the noise from his towers is mostly from generation. Ginny said she would think that the lattice type towers would be noisier. Don Sibley said he was pleasantly surprised with the quality of the noise from his turbine. He said sound travels strangely in his neighborhood. The sound from his turbine is more of a "whish, wish, wish" than a drone or hum. Gary Harcourt said that different machines make different noises. Don Sibley said that the white color of his monopole with guy wires is beautiful. Sander Shapiro said that the diameter of the pole being proposed at the W.T. school is 16 feet. Kate Warner said that the lattice type towers should be discouraged. Phil Forest said that there is more to consider in pole type than aesthetics. The turbine at the high school is a lattice; it has less of a footprint, is self-supporting, and less clearing is required. The advantage of a guyed tower is that it can be lowered for maintenance. Shelton Bank said that it is good for large towers to be white so there's no need for lights (unless required by FAA).

Increasing the abutter notification from 300 feet was discussed. Ginny said that many people don't read the notices. Gary Harcourt said that the more people that know about a proposal, the better. Don Sibley thought properties within 500 feet of the applicant should be notified. Kate Warner said that 2000 feet is too far. Tucker Hubbel, ZBA member, said that he would not like to see notification beyond 500 feet. Don Sibley said it is very subjective. Tucker Hubbel said that word gets out when a neighborhood gets notified.

Eric Whitman, ZBA Chairman, said that when reviewing cell tower applicants they've had the applicant put up balloons the height of the tower to analyze visual impacts. It

was discussed that the success of this depends on the height, FAA requirements, and wind. Leah said that the Planning Board asks applicants to erect poles; Ginny noted that these are never higher than 30 feet. Paul Adler said that height impacts can be simulated by lighting crews with lasers. Tony Higgins, ZBA member, said that visibility is impossible to regulate. By the nature of the beast you're going to see the turbine, it will be visible by someone. We already have to deal with utility poles and lines.

Paul Adler said there should be a clause for irregularly shaped lots.

Don Sibley said the bylaw should bend toward permissiveness.

Gary Harcourt said re. flying a balloon, and the increased notification: if we're worried about the economics, this is adding more cost. Tucker Hubbel said that personally he thought the bylaw should allow some by right, depending on the size of the lot and the height of the turbine.

Don Sibley asked what would happen if a turbine went up and then noise requirements were not met. David said that people downwind are more impacted noise-wise than other people right below the structure. Susan said that the State regulations cover noise impacts. David said it puts the onus on a neighborhood to enforce.

Nancy Dole spoke against requiring special permits for turbines, as it takes the ZBA's and the applicant's time. Often times, when the ZBA holds special permit hearings, none of the abutters care. Too many uses are by special permit. Turbines should be allowed by right.

Reid Silva noted that the bylaw requires special permits and notifies abutters for swimming pools and tennis courts, which have much less impact on neighbors' quality of life than a turbine potentially has. A turbine in someone's face would be bothersome. It is important to people in different neighborhoods to be notified. Neighborhood input is important.

David said that each turbine should be judged on a case-by-case basis; he said he thought the Town would end up wanting them reviewed.

Glenn Hearn said that John Keene had to go through a noise measurement process for grinding at his pit. He had to pay consultants a lot of money. Ginny said that machines should be rated for noise.

Tony Higgins asked whether it isn't better to go with fewer, big machines than for everyone to have their own individual towers. Bill Veno said there doesn't seem to be a consensus of which examples in town should be emulated. David said it depends on who you ask. Kate Warner said it was telling that there were no abutters to existing turbines

present at this meeting to complain. Don Sibley said he didn't think there will be a huge rush of households applying to install turbines.

NEW BUSINESS

Reid Silva for Jack Reed, Possible Form C, M30 L4: Reid Silva said that the Reed family is doing some estate planning and is looking at dividing their property on Edgartown Road. He showed a conceptual plan with 4 lots (including one lot with the existing house) plus a homesite lot. The field is the big issue; they are looking to preserve it. The road shown is not the same location for which they received a special permit; the special permit would need to be amended. Reid Silva said he was seeking the Board's initial reactions before spending more money planning the concept.

Susan said that on paper it seems like a good plan. Ginny said she wouldn't mind seeing the access road, if it is just a little dirt road, running along the edge of the field. David said it would become a problem when the road gets rutted and people start driving within the field.

The homesite lot location was discussed. Leah noted that the house would be visible from the road. Reid said it would be somewhat visible, and suggested a no-cut zone along the road.

David said that the plan shows reasonable building sites, even if there are frost bottoms present. He said he would need to see topographical maps, and perhaps building envelopes.

OLD BUSINESS

Martha's Vineyard Savings Bank: Board members reviewed the revised plans and ZBA decision for the new bank building. They said they were not happy with the faux-barn design with fake barn doors, and that the original design was preferable. Ginny said it defeats the intent of the zoning bylaw design guidelines, as there still is not an articulated entrance on the street side, and is aesthetically unattractive. Leah said she dislikes the fake hayloft door and the half windows. Susan said there are nice, real barns in Town, and that we don't need fake ones. There was general agreement that the design has a suburban mall feel.

FY 2010 Budget: Board members voted unanimously to submit the budget as presented.

Vacation Carryover: Board members voted unanimously to allow Simone to carry over unused vacation time.

Geo Training: Board members voted unanimously to allow Simone to travel to Franklin, MA to receive training for the Geo computer program.

Noah's Ark Bed and Breakfast: Ginny read from an ad she received with a mailing stating that Noah's Ark Bed and Breakfast could accommodate significantly more people than she thought the septic system was approved for; this should be forwarded to the Health Agent.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Simone DeSorcy, administrator

Approved 12/08/08