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Tribe discusses meteorological tower

 By *Aubrey Gibavic* - May 25, 2006

After a delay of two weeks, the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) land-use held a public hearing on plans to erect a meteorological data gathering tower on triba

The tower is designed to measure the wind and collect other relevant scientific data c to-12-month period as part of a wind turbine feasibility study funded with a \$50,000 g the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative.

The commission will reconvene June 8, at 5:30 pm, to decide whether to erect the to

Paul Reeves, an off-Island wind developer with One World Energy, and his associate Turnbull, explained the proposed feasibility study for which the town will gather data. conclusive data from this study, details of a wind turbine could not be addressed, Mr. said.

"We're doing a wind feasibility project here so we can determine what we can ultimati on tribal lands," Mr. Reeves said.

Meeting participants raised no objections, but Clare and Peter Ives, who are the closi neighbors to the proposed site at 26 Old South Road, said that while the appearance tower did not bother them, they were concerned about noise.

"If you can hear the wind, you can't hear the turbine," Mr. Reeves said.

Durwood "Woody" Vanderhoop, the tribe's grantsman and planner, said the commiss have voted at Friday's meeting, but decided wait in order to discuss some specific iss

If approved, the tower, a straight, skinny pole standing more than 160 feet, will be on tribe from the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL).

Mr. Turnbull explained that although "it seems obvious that it is windy enough," inves a nine- to 12-month study before building a wind turbine.

Two sites were originally proposed for the tower, but at Friday's meeting, Mr. Turnbul Reeves said they were formally recommending the former LORAN site.

The old LORAN (Long Range Aid to Navigation) station may require clearing a quarte more of trees and undergrowth to accommodate the 150-by-150-foot space needed f of the tower. Town regulations call for the base of the tower to be 300 feet from any c structures.

Once assembled on the ground and raised by a vertical winch, four sets of six guy wi attached to ground anchors will secure the tower in place. No heavy equipment or co

are required for erection, the plan said.

Mr. Vanderhoop said the commission postponed its vote in order to discuss issues with the LORAN site.

The site is currently home to stagnant cars. Bret Stearns, director of natural resource for the tribe, said the tribe is in the process of removing the cars, and the goal is to have the site clear in one month. He said the removal depends in part on ferry schedules.

The site was once used as a holding station for a tow company, and the tribe does not have zoning laws that would control the multitude of cars parked in that lot, Mr. Stearns said.

The LORAN site was previously reviewed by Sally Wright of the UMass Renewable Energy Research Laboratory, and determined to be suitable for the test tower.

Mr. Turnbull said the site was also chosen because of its interior location, and sites near Menemsha or the Gay Head Cliffs were never considered.

Data collected by the meteorological tower will include average wind speed, direction and frequency, as well as other meteorological conditions, the consultants said. The data will be transmitted to ground computers and collected for analysis.

In response to questions about whether the tower will be used for any other purpose, such as cellular phone towers or television stations, Mr. Turnbull said at this time they are only for this project to measure the feasibility for the wind tower. It is not in his power to propose any additional uses.

The hearing, postponed from May 4, nearly had to be delayed for the second time due to a lack of a quorum. But after a 45-minute wait and a series of telephone calls, David Vanderhoop tardily sauntered in. Mr. Vanderhoop, a former Gay Head selectman, apologized, said opening remarks, and spent the remainder of the hearing picking at his nails with a pocketknife.

If the commission votes to install the tower, it would be delivered within three weeks.

Woody Vanderhoop said the commission now has to go through the town's regular permitting process, which takes additional time.



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