

# VINEYARD GAZETTE

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## **Aquinnah's Alternative Energy Plans Dominate Town Warrant**

By JACK SHEA

Alternative energy looms large on the warrant for the May 13 Aquinnah annual town meeting.

The 31-warrant article, unveiled by Aquinnah selectmen at their meeting this week, is dominated by four energy-related articles, including a proposed new wind energy bylaw.

Voters will be asked to support efforts to site a wind turbine at the West Tisbury school and to join the Cape and Vineyard Electric Cooperative, designed to help manage and sell excess alternative energy that members generate.

The language in the wind energy bylaw must be approved both by the Martha's Vineyard Commission and by voters next month.

In December 2007, the commission voted to designate the town as an energy district critical of planning concern, the first such district of its kind on the Island.

The town and the commission then began the process of drafting special townwide regulations for Aquinnah to promote alternative energy in new construction and establish guidelines for placing wind turbines, solar panels and geothermal systems.

A limited moratorium now in place for any structure over 32 feet in height, essentially wind turbines, will be lifted if the commission and voters approve the bylaw.

In other developments at the selectmen's meeting this week, town administrator Jeff Burgoyne confirmed that a request for proposals to bid construction of an antennae system to improve up-Island cellular phone service will be published by May 1.

Mr. Burgoyne said later that six potential bidders have expressed interest in installing between 35 and 41 distributed antennae on power poles in Aquinnah, Chilmark and West Tisbury. The three towns recently signed a memorandum of understanding to act as a single entity to develop the system.

The first phase of the project would cover the area between the Gay Head Cliffs in Aquinnah down State Road and South Road to Alley's General Store in West Tisbury. The estimated \$3 million cost will be borne by the successful bidder at no cost to the towns, Mr. Burgoyne said. The system contractor will lease lines to cellular service companies.

The three towns hope to complete the first phase by year end 2008. Phases two and three will focus on Middle and North Roads.

In other news, demand to rent the newly renovated old town hall had selectmen scrambling to develop rental rates and policies this week.

Selectmen agreed to provide the hall and its updated kitchen for resident use at a nominal deposit fee that would be returned based on the post-event condition of the premises. They tabled discussion of nonresident fees until use policies and rates are developed.

Aquinnah will celebrate the renovation of the old town hall with a community potluck dinner, including music, on May 22 beginning at 6:30 p.m., the first of nine monthly off-season potlucks proposed by John Walsh, a member of the renovation committee.

Selectmen approved a resident graduation party, a birthday party and the possible use of the town hall by community radio station WVVY as a venue in case of rain for a fund-raiser this summer.