



Photo by Ralph Stewart

Aquinnah hopes fourth meeting try succeeds

By Nelson Sigelman
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The 2008 fiscal year ends on June 30 and Aquinnah has yet to conclude its annual town meeting. On Thursday, June 19, town leaders, stymied once by a lengthy warrant and three times by a failure to reach a quorum, will try for the fourth time to wrap up town business.

There is important business to conclude. Because voters have yet to take action on proposed regulations for a town-wide energy District of Critical Planning Concern (DCPC), a development moratorium that was expected to be short-lived remains in place. Until voters approve or reject the proposed regulations, under most circumstances the town may not issue development permits of any kind.

A failure to reach a quorum Thursday night could result in the loss of funds to restore the Aquinnah Library building. The town faces a June 30 deadline to maintain eligibility for a \$50,000 state grant awarded the Aquinnah library.

Mindful of past efforts to reach a quorum, selectmen have placed an article on the warrant that would reduce the number of voters needed for a quorum from ten percent to five percent of the electorate. If approved, based on current registration, as few as 20 voters would be needed to hold a town meeting. Similar measures have failed in the past.

[A copy of the town meeting warrant is available [here](#).]

The annual town meeting began on Tuesday, May 13, when a total of 69 voters, or 17 percent, of the town's 396 registered voters, attended. Just after 10:30 pm, with considerable work unfinished, town moderator Walter Delaney adjourned the meeting and asked voters to reconvene two days later on May 15, at 7 pm.

On the second try the town fell 11 voters short of the 39 needed for a quorum. Mr. Delaney decided to postpone.

He asked voters to return to the old town hall at 7 pm on May 20. The third edition of the meeting was 10 voters short of the 39 needed.

The form for the fourth edition of the annual town meeting is the outgrowth of discussions between Mr. Delaney, selectmen, town lawyer Ron Rappaport, and state officials about the steps the town must follow to conclude town business before the start of the 2009 fiscal year on July 1.

Jim Newman, chairman of the Aquinnah board of selectmen, said it is important that town voters take a few hours out of their week to attend the Thursday town meeting and take action on issues that are of some importance. "I find it frustrating," said Mr. Newman, "when there is a lot of complaining but minimal positive input or participation in the form of people showing up for a selectmen's meeting or town meeting."

The annual town meeting begins at 7 pm in the old Town Hall. The special town meeting begins at 7:15 pm.

Mr. Delaney will reconvene the annual town meeting and take up articles 17 and 18,

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- ◆ Editorial
- ◆ At Large
- ◆ Soundings
- ◆ Briefs
- ◆ Sports
- ◆ Court Report
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requests to set up revolving funds for town inspection services, the only articles that must be handled at an annual meeting.

Mr. Delaney will then call a recess and open a special town meeting for the purpose of taking up the articles not attended to by voters on the annual warrant. The 15-article warrant will include the lengthy article made up of the proposed energy DCPC regulations that includes revisions that reflect the changes made by the Martha's Vineyard Commission, when it approved the regulations at a meeting on May 8.

The regulations that will be presented to voters focus on wind turbines. However, in the future, town leaders expect to present amendments to the DCPC regulations that would govern any new construction.

The stated purposes of the proposed DCPC include reducing the overall consumption of fossil fuels through energy conservation and the local generation of energy from renewable sources, while protecting the cultural and natural environment of the town.

The new regulations include requirements for a professional energy audit before the issuance of a building or special permit and a call for solar or geothermal heating of pools and hot tubs.

The regulations restrict wind facilities in specific areas of town, including the Moshup Trail and Cliffs DCPCs, but allow for placement, depending on the public benefit of the facility.

The last step in the DCPC approval process is town meeting approval.

Provided everything works out smoothly Mr. Delaney plans to conclude the special town meeting and reopen the annual town meeting. He would then ask for a vote to indefinitely postpone or table indefinitely all of the articles taken up at the special. He would then conclude the annual town meeting.

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