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To get the turbine turning

Do Southolders support it?

by Alex Papanicolaou

With recent talk in Southold Town about the possibility of permitting wind turbines, residents have mixed emotions.

The idea of wind power on Long Island is not new, but every time the topic arises, it almost assuredly stirs up a beehive of opinions. But the problem is, while this is a well-traversed topic of discussion, more than 25 residents who were questioned in front of post offices and on the street felt they did not have enough information to make up their minds.

While the consensus seems to be that windmills would be an eyesore, most residents declined to comment on the situation until it became more of an issue or until they had a more informed opinion. Carol Nuccio of Mattituck summed up the majority opinion when she said, "I would be in favor of anything that leads us away from LIPA and their outrageous charges, but I don't really have a strong opinion yet because I just don't know enough about it."

There are those, however, who are more definite. Paul Szpara of Southold said, "I am not really in favor of wind farms as an alternative power source because I just don't think there is enough space for them. I think we'd be better off looking into other ideas such as tidal generators or solar towers."

One woman who did not wish to be identified said, "While I am very much in favor of the idea of moving towards alternative power sources, I have heard a lot of negatives about windmills in regards to their size and the space they take up. I am not sure I would be in favor of them in this area."

How big, and what it costs

by Eileen Duffy

The logistics of building a wind turbine are getting simpler as technology improves.

According to preliminary language, Southold Town would permit turbines up to 150 feet tall only on lots of seven acres or more.

How tall they need to be depends are where you site them, said Roy Rakobitsch, a wind consultant for Go Solar of Aquebogue.

Turbines with lattice poles were once the standard, but were found to create problems because birds would build nests in the framework.

Today, turbines are steel monopoles made to last 15 to 20 years even in the salt-water air of coastal lands. Most are sunk nine feet deep with a base 30 by 30 feet, and need minimal annual maintenance.

To get a turbine going, a 12-mile-per-hour wind has to blow for at least three minutes. Turbines built with tails are more able to capture the prevailing winds.

The existing turbine on Windy Acres farm in Calverton is an old design, said representatives from LIPA when asked why it never seems to spin. "We learned what not to do in Calverton," said Mark Dougherty, manager of distributed generation and renewable programs at LIPA.

The five turbines on Long Island operated by LIPA were demo projects, said Michael Lowndes, director of media relations at LIPA.

A 150-foot turbine by a good manufacturer would cost \$45,000 installed, said Gary Minnick, owner of Go Solar. Unlike for solar, however, LIPA does not provide rebates for wind power, which may soon change, said Mr. Lowndes.

In other parts of the state, privately owned utility companies contribute to New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, which does provide incentive for wind power. Residences, businesses, institutional and government entities can receive 50% off the cost of the system, commercial farms 60%, and educational institutions that include wind power as a part of their curriculum are eligible for a 70% incentive, according to the NYSERDA website.

Wind energy pays off the initial investment much faster than solar, said Mr. Rakobitsch.

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