



May 8, 2008

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## Selectboard updated on local wind farm

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Plans for a wind farm on the ridge of Georgia Mountain appear to be picking up steam and it could be a reality as early as 2010, according to representatives from the Georgia Mountain Community Wind Project.

Having just entered the design phase, current specs call for two or three 400-foot-high wind turbines on the mountaintop, said project consultant Martha Staskus in an update to the Milton Selectboard on May 5.

While details may change during environmental and wildlife permitting, she said recent results of a year-long feasibility study have sparked interest from both the proponents and renewable energy boosters.

"We think that it would produce enough power to serve approximately 60 percent of Milton's residential...usage, based on the last census" she said.



*The Georgia Mountain Community Wind Project, as it could well look from the intersection of Westford Road and Hunting Ridge Lane. This photo illustration, which shows three 400-foot towers in the distance, was distributed by proponents of the project at the May 5 Selectboard meeting.*

The update was largely informative and was treated as a courtesy by the Selectboard; as a utility project regulated by the state public service board, the project is expected to be exempt from local review

If things become operational, the electricity would be distributed through existing vendors---and Staskus claimed strong demand for that output, noting the state's recently legislated goal of producing 25% of Vermont's energy through renewable and in-state resources by 2025.

Given the circumstance, Staskus said the project is likely to be viewed favorably at the state level, and could reap some tax benefits for the town, though no specifics were mentioned.

In any event, consultants projected that 18 state and federal permits would be required, and that process is expected to run through 2009.

The wind farm is being sought by the Georgia-based Harrison family. They contacted town when they began monitoring wind conditions on the mountain in late 2006, and were returning now as part of an outreach effort for the undertaking, said family patriarch Jim Harrison.

. Having met with neighbors of the project in recent weeks, Harrison said they're looking to engage the community, adding they plan to visit the Georgia and Fairfax Selectboards as well. To date, most neighbors were concerned about upgrades to the cell phone access road, said his consultants.

From a visual standpoint, Staskus presented several models of what the flat white turbines could look like from around town. The photo illustrations assumed turbine "hubs" some 262 feet high, with rotors 231 feet in diameter, though Staskus cautioned those figures and illustrations were still subject to change.

"These are very early assessments," she said. "We're just trying to get a handle on what a 400 foot high turbine would look like from the landscape of Milton."

The consultants ended by asking the Selectboard to pass along public feedback about the project, and they got some immediate comments from Selectwoman Diana Hoyt Palm. She acknowledged the wind power is an often controversial issue, and thanked the group for visiting when it wasn't required of them.

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group for visiting when it wasn't required of them.

"Personally I want to say this is a fantastic idea," she said. "I support wind power, despite what some people say is a 'view' issue."

Afterwards, Harrison said it's too early to tell if neighbors will take objection to the project, but added renewable energy is the right way to go, given depletion of fossil fuels, pollution, and a host of related issues.

"It's the right thing to do, given the nature of the world and where things are going," he said. "I really think that, if people can do things that matter, they should."



*The Georgia Mountain Community Wind Project is being pursued by the Harrison family, which owns the Georgia-based companies Harrison Concrete Construction and Redi-Mix Corp. Pictured are Jim Harrison, Janet Harrison, Kathy Harrison Rabtoy, and Kevin Harrison.*

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