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**RULES AND
DETAILS ON
PAGE 6**

People	Page 30
Editorial.....	Page 31
Obituaries	Page 32
Puzzles	Page 33
Classifieds	Page 35
Sports.....	Page 41

The Coast Star

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Area municipalities concerned about wind turbine plans

Sea Girt, Manasquan officials and residents gather and share their worries

BY SAMANTHA SMITH
AND ELLIOTT NGUYEN
THE COAST STAR

SEA GIRT/MANASQUAN — As a proposal to develop and erect wind turbines off the coast from South Jersey up through Long Island, New York, spins along, local municipalities, like Sea Girt, are issuing resolutions opposing the turbines, citing concerns about fish

habitats and the installation of cable banks and transmission cables throughout area towns.

A resolution opposing offshore wind turbines was approved in front of a large audience during the June 12 Sea Girt council meeting, with attendees from all over the state sharing similar concerns on the potential effects of the proposed project. A

similar discussion took place on Monday at Manasquan's June 17 council meeting.

The turbine proposal is part of a larger statewide effort regulated through the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) federal agency and the New Jersey Department of Environmental

SEE **WIND TURBINE** PAGE 4

Murphy signs OPRA bill as town officials clash over public comment protocol

Council holds hour-long workshop to discuss how to shorten meetings

BY KIERAN SULLIVAN
THE COAST STAR

Proposed wind turbines have some locals spinning

WIND TURBINE FROM PAGE 1

Protection (NIDEP) in waters three miles offshore.

Atlantic Shores Offshore Wind LLC, a partnership between Shell New Energies US LLC and EDF Renewables North America, has proposed to develop and erect wind turbines within a 183,353 acre lease area, approximately 10 to 20 miles off the coast between Atlantic City and Barnegat Light. The turbines are expected to be approximately 900 to 1,000 feet tall, have 300-foot-long blades and are anticipated to last a maximum of 20 years, according to Sea Girt's Mayor Donald Fetzer.

"We have taken an active interest in this project, mainly because it's coming on our land," said Mayor Fetzer. "It's coming onto the Army Camp, coming onto Sea Girt Avenue. There's a direct impact whether you're a pro or a con alternative energy."

Transmission cables from the turbines off South Jersey are anticipated to run through the National Guard Training Center Army base, down Sea Girt Avenue, before heading into Manasquan, a portion of Wall and out to a substation in Howell Township, according to the mayor.

CLEAN ENERGY

According to a statement from Atlantic Shores Offshore Wind, "New Jersey has established the goal to achieve 100% clean energy by 2035, with offshore wind projected to create 11,000 megawatts of power by 2040. The statement added that, "Atlantic Shores Project 1 is planned to generate 1,510 MW of offshore wind energy, enough to power over 700,000 homes. Combined with Project 2, the entire lease area will produce enough clean energy to power more than one million New Jersey homes."

The proposal was recently accepted by the Board of Public Utilities (BPU) in April of this year. Although

there isn't an exact formal timeline, the state expects to award a contract for the land portion of the project by the end of the year, at the latest.

"There is a two-year program for the turbines to be constructed, and if the project officially goes through, energy will begin transmitting in 2028, 2029."

"We are encouraged to see forward progress and getting another step closer to delivering New Jersey's first offshore wind projects," said Joris Veldhoven, chief executive officer of Atlantic Shores Offshore Wind, in a May 23 press release. "We appreciate BOEM's thorough environmental evaluation and recognize the significance of this milestone in reaching the Garden State's goal of 100% clean energy by 2035."

TURBINE OPPOSITION

Sea Girt's resolution 126-2024 states that the borough opposes the proposed placement of offshore wind turbine clusters, the running of transmission cables through essential fish habitat and the installation of cable banks and transmission cables throughout the borough.

"I just want to emphasize that the council has worked on this for a long time. I've been in meetings with the mayor, as well as the administration, as well as (Councilman Alan Zakin) in which they have been far more aggressive than the understated statements they have given before," said Borough Attorney Ray Bogan.

The resolution also details the borough's desire for more detailed information on the economic feasibility, what costs would look like and how it will affect the borough's streets and town as a whole, calling for clearer "transparency and collaborative discussion with community" prior to finalizing decisions and making bids.

"The way the government goes, this is a massive effort. They already pushed the ball down the hill. They already

got it up there, it's going down the hill and we're having a hard time catching it," said Mayor Fetzer.

"We are aware of it, we are looking at it in every avenue possible and it's not just to say we don't like alternative energy, it's saying we don't like the way it's being done..." he added.

PUBLIC COMMENT

During the public comment portion of the meeting, the Sea Girt council and audience heard from many individuals sharing their own perspectives on what this project would look like, with many calling upon the borough to join lawsuits against the state that are already in motion in South Jersey.

Bob Stern - head of non-profit organization Save LBI (Long Beach Island), Beach Haven resident and an engineer - said that he and his coalition are actively working to protect the shore and encourage federal entities to not just be transparent, but to consider public input.

"What we're doing, what we're prepared to do and what we've been preparing for, for about two years, is a substantial litigation effort against both the federal government and the state government," he said.

"On the federal side, we're prepared to file lawsuits in about two months regarding the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)...the Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA) to protect the whales, and other statutes we feel are being berated..." said Stern.

A majority of others from the public shared similar sentiments, expressing their dismay for the project, also asking for transparency and more detailed information from the DEP and the state to better understand the entire scope of the project, including cable voltage strengths and its effects, and safety concerns, for both humans and ocean life.

Capt. Edward Baxter of the Fishermen's Dock Cooperative in Point Pleasant Beach, said "The cables operation that they plan to run into Sea Girt is going to be catastrophic for the seafood industry - just the scale alone of the industrialization size...what fishing and offshore wind is going to create food insecurity for our nation, the socio-economics that fishing brings to the state of New Jersey and to coastal communities is in grave danger."

MANASQUAN COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Toward the end of the June 17 Manasquan mayor and council meeting, Mayor Michael Mangan commented on the ongoing issue before opening up the floor to council members and members of the public.

He noted that both facets of the project, the wind turbines themselves and the power transmission cable, are out for bid.

"Know that Manasquan has been working very diligently behind the scenes and in the public to try and do what we can to oppose this project," he said.

He claimed that the borough has limited resources to pursue any legal action on its own, but said that borough officials have been "in active communication" with officials from Sea Girt, Wall Township and Howell Township, members of the Monmouth County government and state Assemblyman Paul Kanitra's office.

In addition, the Manasquan council has made multiple official objections to the project.

"Our focus has been, and we do not as of tonight have the best answer, how do we channel public sentiment, which is clearly opposed to this issue?" said Mayor Mangan, who urged citizens to spread awareness about the planned project. "Through our experience, what we've seen is that...the system itself is designed to discourage such feedback."

Aside from pursuing more channels to voice both governmental and public concerns, he said that the other option is to pursue legal action, an endeavor that Manasquan has looked to the county for help with.

"They have a much larger force of lawyers and deeper pockets in terms of budget," said Mayor Mangan. "All of this is happening behind the scenes."

Councilman Brian Holly echoed the mayor's comments about getting the county involved and criticized the governor and other proponents of the wind project for what he said was a lack of transparency.

"This has not been given to local or county officials. This has been crammed down our throats," said Councilman Holly. "One of the reasons I got involved in politics was...transparency. We do not hide anything from anybody, nothing. But they are. From Murphy all the way down, big power, big money is involved in this."

He continued, "Do not trust your government, protest it, because they are cramming this thing down our throats."

Councilman Jay Bryant, a history teacher at Manasquan High School, urged members of the public to research the legislative history that he said dates back to the late 1900s and has led in part to the current project proposal.

"To some degree, I think we all know that the horse has already left the starting line, so there's a lot of work to do," said Councilman Bryant. "It's great to go out and get...lawyers to try to stop this, but I think that everybody should be really educated and take a quick look and a deep dive into where all of the players are and all of the money is for this (project)."

Councilmembers Bruce Bresnahan, Lori Triggiano, Gregg Olivera and Sheila Vidreiro did not offer comments related to the offshore wind project.

Following the council comments, many members of the public, some from Manasquan and others from elsewhere, stood before the council to share research, offer suggestions and make other comments related to resisting the project.

PROPOSAL HISTORY

The Sea Girt mayor said that the wind project has morphed over the past 15 years.

In 2009, the state considered selling the Army camp lands, which the borough took "an aggressive stance" against, and the plan did not follow through. The following year, the borough also rejected the state's request to build a 400-foot turbine on the camp's grounds.

"That was really the beginning of our awareness of this wind turbine project, and the magnitude that it has grown to now, is unbelievable," said Mayor Fetzer.

"Between 2009 and 2023, we probably had about 10... interactions, they might have been letters proposing things, resolutions, attending public hearings," he said. So far this year in 2024, we've been to over 20 involvements - expressing basically our disappointment in the way it's being handled, we feel left out."

"Whether it's economics or just the sheer magnitude of trying to do what we're trying to do here...that's a lot of wire, and 'where are we going to put this and how's it coming in?' and we're worried what's it's going to do to our streets and our town, predominantly - but we're also afraid what it's going to do to the offshore environment as well."

SITE PLANS

For virtual site plans, the full resolution and for more information regarding Sea Girt involvement in this proposal, visit seagirt-nj.gov, or the dep.nj.gov for more information on the state's other proposed project locations.