



Falmouth turbine controversy could hinder the expansion of wind energy in the state

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tags: [Cape Cod Commission](#), [Cape Wind](#), [Falmouth](#), [wind energy](#)

by Jon Chesto



The wind turbine at Falmouth's wastewater treatment plant stood immobile as we drove by it on Route 28 last weekend, a silent sentinel guarding the main drag into town. But the windy weather would have made it a perfect day for the turbine, known locally as Wind 1, to be spinning and generating electricity.

That windy weather actually was the reason this turbine wasn't moving. The town's board of selectmen had just conceded, earlier in the week, to shut down the turbine when wind speeds reach the equivalent of 23 miles per hour. A group of neighbors has been fighting for months to still this giant beast, arguing that its whirring sounds make it all but impossible to leave peacefully nearby.

The future of wind turbines in Falmouth has become such a big local issue, it dominated the front page of The Falmouth Enterprise last week, with three separate stories addressing the matter.

The irony here is that Falmouth, by and large, embraced wind power more quickly than nearly every other town in the state. This turbine, which started spinning about a year ago at the town's wastewater treatment plant, didn't draw anywhere near the level of opposition that the 130-turbine Cape Wind project planned for Nantucket Sound has generated.

But many Falmouth residents are fired up now, that's for sure. The frustrations in Falmouth could have ripple effects elsewhere. They certainly helped to prompt the Cape Cod Commission to write tight limits on where wind turbines could go on Cape Cod. And Falmouth is viewed as a test case that will be watched closely by officials in other towns in Massachusetts who are considering their own windmills.

Outside of their respective towns, these one- and two-turbine projects don't tend to generate much interest. All eyes are on Cape Wind, and, to a lesser extent, some of the smaller land-based wind farms in the Berkshires.

But these municipal turbines remain a key part of the Patrick administration's agenda to get more of the state's electricity from renewable sources.

After all, they're not that expensive to put up, especially when compared to a massive offshore project like Cape Wind. There are none of the dreaded NOx and SOx to dirty up the air, or

carbon emissions to heat up the earth. The fuel, of course, is free. But as the residents of Falmouth have learned, there's still a price to pay.

Update on 3/21: I didn't mention "Wind 2," the newer turbine that also stands at Falmouth's wastewater treatment plant, but isn't running yet. Town officials hope to have Wind 2 connected to the grid and spinning sometime this spring. Meantime, several of the neighbors have filed a lawsuit in Barnstable Superior Court to shut Wind 1 down – or at least require that the town apply for a special permit under its own zoning rules to run the windmill.

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1.

Urban [permalink](#)
March 8, 2011, 4:33 PM

Sounds like wind pulling at sails on a ship. I'd have to try living by it to be sure, but I don't think it would bother me.

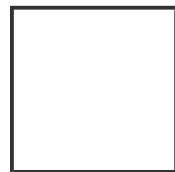
Technology Park was a good location choice. Nearest residence is 0.9 miles or something.



2.

Pauline Lim [permalink](#)
March 14, 2011, 9:22 AM

Very low-frequency, pulsing vibrations can cause nausea and vertigo, I've heard. Some people are more sensitive than others. I hate to think of some people's lives being ruined. I hope they work it out, because I love the idea of clean energy.



3.

Robbie Laird [permalink](#)
March 18, 2011, 12:16 AM

The nearest house is about 1300 feet, with many more within a half mile.