

Folks are right to be skeptical about the proposed wind power landing at Dowses and subsequent possible routing of the electric duct bank through Osterville up to the substation north of us.

And folks are right to press for greater detail and more accurate assurances about public safety, as well as, potential environmental and economic impacts.

As people around here know, the first round of these projects – Vineyard Wind – is nearing completion. That wind farm, making its landing at Covell's Beach, will start producing renewable electricity for the Cape and region this fall and be at capacity around the New Year.

That project has many similarities to the proposed Commonwealth Wind project that eyes a landing at Dowses. Many feel that that project passed through our local government with limited public scrutiny and comparably little outcry from the citizens of Barnstable or the neighbors in Centerville most directly affected.

And I agree with the folks from Save Dowses that that type of public scrutiny, like civility and transparency and engaged participation, are bedrock notions of good self-governance. Both here in Barnstable and, really, everywhere in America.

So, I applaud the effort of the Save Dowses group for their hard work and passion and valuable contributions to the eventual outcome of this proposal.

I too want to save Dowses. It's an extraordinary place; I take my mom there to walk frequently. I watch the osprey and plovers and bunnies build their spring families above the surf and below the beach rose, and I duck the jellies when they arrive in late summer. I stand on the end of

the jelly when winter weather approaches guessing at wind speeds. No local citizen has a monopoly on caring about Dowses.

But our two approaches for the extended care of Dowses don't appear to be in alignment.

The proposed Commonwealth Wind project is in limbo; they have cancelled recently completed agreements and are hoping to place a winning bid on the project a second one next year. And this, of course, should give the people pause and an opportunity to lean into their rights to express reservations and/or try and block Avangrid's plan.

We won't know until next summer who wins this effort. Avangrid could secure a second bid with the competitive advantage inherent in their advanced stage of the permitting process.

Or another one of the big European companies who sat out the last round, might now get involved in the bidding process as Massachusetts has dropped the price caps to encourage greater participation and to avoid some of the macro-economic issues that derailed Avangrid's first bite at this apple.

Although the prospects around this proposed project remain murky, what is clear is that the overall process can clearly be improved. All are in agreement that the citizens of Barnstable and people of Osterville need to retain a degree of local control. Many of us here feel put upon – no notice, no press, now seemingly, no recourse.

I too identify with all those legitimate concerns.

As well, I identify with many of the points that Save Dowses has contributed.

More than just complaints about potential public safety concerns, or construction impacts on the ecology of the Dowses area or the potential negative construction impacts on businesses and homeowners, the Save Dowses group has organized and mobilized to call attention to, amongst others: the fragility of the causeway out to Dowses; the appearance of closed-door negotiations between the Town and the project proponent for the Host Community Agreement (HCA) and the State's unplanned approach to these various project landings.

These are material concerns.

And they rub up against other concrete realities that our Village and the Town face as a whole.

I understand that some folks think that it is improper to conflate two related but separate projects – namely, this proposed wind project with the Town's continuing action in sewerage some neighborhoods over the next 20+ years.

And perhaps, if the Comprehensive Waste Water Management Plan (CWMP) and the recent changes by the State's DEP to Title 5 regulations were not part of the present regional conversation, then yes, I may be even more skeptical of partnering with Avangrid's plans.

But the CWMP is a costly, longterm reality. And we pay our Town officials to try and make it happen as safely and efficiently and as soon as possible.

To achieve those ends, elected Town officials agreed to talk with wind developers years ago to see if economies of scale could be achieved by coordinating these two potential projects and thereby save the town taxpayers real money. As well, the original point of partnering was to try and accelerate the sewerage of our Town's waters that are most nutrient

impacted by ineffective Title 5 septic systems. For various geologic and density reasons, many of the most adversely affected waters are right here in Osterville.

Why do these together? Because I believe there is consensus in this Village and the region as a whole, that water quality related issues pose the clearest immediate economic and ecological threats to our shared way of life.

Just because someone cannot see the complex web of critical interrelationships in this space, doesn't mean those interrelationships don't exist. Some things go well together, like Bird and Parish and McHale. Others don't, like oysters and red wine. I argue that big sub-surface infrastructure efforts are the former.

Effectively our collective human waste in this Town, particularly along the 28 corridor, has dramatically polluted and altered the delicate coastal and glacial pond ecosystem to the point that our Town's problems have appeared on the front page of many US newspapers this year alone.

It's not a good look for a region that relies heavily on tourism activity and rising property values to fund Town operations. If judicious steps are not taken to arrest and then reverse this trend of concentrating nitrogen and phosphorous through our septic systems, then the entire economic value proposition of Barnstable and Osterville in particular is seriously called into question.

That is a real, and I would argue near-term, existential threat to the region and our Town and Village. Property and retail taxes paid from Osterville are a substantial contribution to the good of our shared local community. I think we all understand that intimately. And if you think

that more is being asked of you, you might be right. It clearly feels to me like the citizens of Osterville can rise to this challenge.

So, if the nutrient issue drives the CWMP and the CWMP is the biggest infrastructure project ever undertaken by a town on the Cape, then innovative approaches to funding and expediting it are necessary.

It only makes sense to try and coordinate potential road construction projects to keep costs down by partnering with an external company to help pay down the increasing debt service the Town will take on for every new tranche of CWMP projects.

Effectively, why would we want to potentially rip open our streets twice in a relatively short period of time? Would it not make more sense if the two projects could be piggybacked on each other to achieve cost and time savings? If not, it is clear that the Town would be on a near-term trajectory to consider a Prop 2.5 override vote. Or to reduce services.

All the while, adverse nutrients would continue to leak into our waterways, and the costs for sewerage for the Town would only go up if the work started closer to 2035 than 2025. This, for me and many of our Village neighbors, makes partnering with off-shore wind companies somewhat appealing.

Yes, industrial-scale offshore wind is a nascent industry in the US and yes, one potential future partner has exhibited fiscal uncertainty. But there is another element in this mix which are the federated powers vested in our federal and state government.

The Commonwealth of MA has an entity called the Energy Facilities Siting Board (EFSB) which is entrusted with various authorities to override local concerns in pursuit of what the state deems is in the best

interest of our Commonwealth. They can even entertain easement allowances and Title 97 amendments for the project that originate in the State House not our Town Hall.

As Massachusetts already has a strong emissions reduction act on the books, signed under the Baker administration, and various benchmarks for progress written into it by 2030, then the EFSB will most likely interpret its mandate considering that law. In fact, it has an historic track record of deciding in that direction.

These elements – the undeniable eutrophication of our waters, the ongoing sewerage intended to meet that challenge, and the role of the EFSB in light of national efforts to steadily and responsibly decarbonize large elements of our economy, the known posture of both the Biden and Healey administrations - is why some people in our community had called this wind project a ‘done deal’ earlier in the process.

Otherwise, the reasoning went, that if our Town fought the proposed wind project and lost, at the end of the day, without an HCA, then the wind project landing would proceed, and the Town would get nothing out of the deal and that many of the key particulars of the project would then be left to nameless state bureaucrats in Boston.

That is why I voted for giving the authority to our Town Manager to pursue an HCA last year before Avangrid started to look to back out of their original power purchasing agreements (PPAs) with the utilities.

I wanted, and will continue to want, an HCA with Avangrid, or whoever wins the bid next June, to wrest certain benefits out of them while the door for such negotiations is open. Those negotiations are closed to the public and authority is placed in our Town Manager to aggressively pursue as much as possible for us with Avangrid, or with others.

Presently, advisably, the HCA process is on hold. If it were reauthorized, many ideas about what could be in an HCA have been floated. No doubt it would include the property tax payments and fees to the Town, as well as, the coordination of contractors like what we witnessed over at Covell's Beach with the Vineyard Wind project.

That beach went untouched, the parking lot and road are clearly now improved, electrons will be flowing under the road in October and the Town has already received the first of decades worth of payments from the Vineyard Wind operators. All of that with no need for increased Town services.

Osterville is different. The beach environment is different, and the concentration of businesses is too.

So, an HCA for a landing at Dowses would need to be different. Beyond the above requirements, an HCA might include business mitigation funds from Avangrid, some sewer construction costs paid by Avangrid, COMM waterline replacements paid by Avangrid and various other potential community benefits like bolstering the Dowses causeway, burying utilities, expanding sidewalks, dredging the navigable channel into East Bay, installing EV charging stations and direct support to our local nonprofits.

Will these community benefits collectively wipe away the sacrifices made by our homeowners and businesses and the environmental impacts and the general psychological fatigue of construction in the heart to the Village over multiple winters, maybe not for everyone.

And I am aware there are also Villagers who have concerns about the efficacy and negative impacts of offshore wind power as a whole and the advisability of implementing the entire decades long CWMP.

Some of these issues are purely hypothetical. Many, perhaps most, are hypothetical. Save Dowses Beach has a website that explores some of these hypotheticals, including a vivid description of the Dowses parking lot blowing up during a busy July 4th weekend.

These purposefully apocryphal hypotheticals can be entertained ad nauseum. However, in my role as Town Councilor for Precinct 5, I will hear these concerns but base my judgments and votes in what I think is best for the people of Precinct 5 and the town of Barnstable.

I will not be basing decisions on spurious arguments about the appropriateness of for-profits companies trying to make a profit, or inaccurate depictions of how the various lenses of our aquifer works or what will happen to the plovers who won't even be at Dowses when the work is being done.

I don't dismiss serious reservations lightly. But getting upset that a foreign-owned multinational energy conglomerate is trying to make a profit in the end is not likely to be one of them. I want to protect the ratepayers' interest at all costs. But complaining about a company's attempt to responsibly hold down expenses is akin to acting morose that there's gambling at Rick's Café in Casablanca.

I am not being naïve. The development of a new energy discipline in North America is a complex thing to achieve. The work of Save Dowses in part can contribute to making sure that if it happens, it happens with as few negative impacts as possible.

I believe that a potential wind landing at Dowses is the prudent thing to do in the right circumstances. It can do what renewables are designed to do and bring lower prices, create jobs and improve grid reliability. Not the opposite as Save Dowses argues.

Partnering with an offshore wind company can also help expedite the sewerage of Osterville and thereby protect our local waters from septic failures and bolster home values for the long-term.

The people of Save Dowses Beach treasure this place. I treasure this place.

What is being proposed can be scary and stressful. But fundamental change in long-established systems like our energy-intensive 21st century economy, involves tradeoffs. No one has ever suggested this is a win-win-win situation. There will be impacts but my sense is that those impacts will be limited in scope and duration.

And that the gains in eventual expedited nutrient removal from our bays and estuaries and ponds, as well as, CO2 emissions reductions from helping our state become a leader in offshore wind will be worth the substantial aggravation.

People might also note that these issues represent a local front in a larger struggle to arrest large scale CO2 pollution trends. And that struggle has repeatedly revealed that the legacy fossil fuel industry will take active steps to bolster their position and muddy the proverbial waters around alternatives.

Energy companies clearly have serious long-term investments that they hope will still payoff. To protect that position, some questionable science has been disseminated. I have seen this in the context of our local dialogue on these issues.

I have been forwarded any number of fallacious news stories and been quoted various disproven scientific studies in the past year. I don't attach malicious intent to those who traffic in those stories, but I think we all know that there is good data and bad. And that in today's

information ecosystem, one can easily find any scientific report or negative news article to bolster specious arguments.

I have been slow to share some of this as I have tried to move into this topic with fresh eyes and to have many conversations and do my research too.

I also want to be clear that 'renewable' does not mean zero impact on the environment. Wherever anyone stands on the suitability of renewables to counteract the exigencies of our fossil-fuel based economy, we all need to be aware that new uncharted problems will then rise up before us. That does not then negate the need to do it though. We just need to be smart.

To me and the very many Villagers of Osterville I have consulted with, including our extraordinarily professional and committed Town staff, local environmental organizations and passionate advocates, there is agreement that we are smart enough to not get in our own way.

The incomplete arguments captured here do not fit neatly on a bumper sticker. They represent the thinking of a great many people with whom I have interacted on this subject. It takes a team to not only tear something down but to build it up and make it better.

The question remains for many Villagers which team has a better sense of what is in our best interest. This is most likely not my final argument on this topic. All of us can take in new information and adverse opinions and adjust accordingly. Just as I know the Avangrid team continues their search for alternative landing locations that improve their project's outcomes.

Cape Cod has a long history with the oil and wind industries from the global pursuit of whales to the more recent attempt at Cape Wind. I

think actions taken in light of the lessons learned across those centuries, would suggest that support of the wind landing and the acceleration of sewer project in Osterville is the fiscally conservative approach. And that the collective voices of protest represent a shortsighted, anti-growth dead end of thought and community responsibility.

These voices will say they want renewable energy and the sewer benefits faster. They just want the wind to go elsewhere. Some place less attractive. The unintended consequences of this mindset very well could lead to more CO2 threatening us through oceanic rise and warming, with more expensive, less reliable energy coming from dirtier sources while facing the very real prospect of raising taxes or reducing Town services. These arguments then seem to me like the radical ones.

From where I stand, I support our Town's attempt to chew gum and walk at the same time. And I plan to continue to vote my conscience on what I think are hard, but manageable, changes to our Village.

They are changes that I believe will set us up for long-term success – exporting clean energy, stabilizing energy prices, reducing local sources of CO2 and eutrophication, bolstering home values, avoiding tax increases in the short term, maintaining Town service levels and participating in an enterprise larger than ourselves.

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