

## Bill Cundiff

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**From:** Robert Anders  
**Sent:** Thursday, August 25, 2011 5:30 AM  
**To:** Bill Cundiff; SZisk@douglasma.org; Mlajoie@douglasma.org  
**Subject:** people waking up

[Wind Watch: Turbine bylaw will be group effort](#)



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Massachusetts

## Turbine bylaw will be group effort

By Conor Powers-Smith, Falmouth Patch, [patch.com](http://patch.com) 23 August 2011

*When a new bylaw spelling out regulations on future wind turbine construction in Falmouth is written, it will likely be the result of a consensus-building process among town officials, developers, and abutters of the controversial Wind 1 turbine.*

At a joint meeting Monday night, Selectmen and the Planning Board moved closer to a new bylaw governing the construction of wind turbines in Falmouth. Edith Netter, the consultant hired by the town to assist with a consensus-building approach to the controversial issue, said her preliminary interviews with residents, developers, and others had revealed much division, but also “a fair amount of common ground.”

Neighbors of the already functioning Wind 1 turbine have made no secret of their frustration with the machine, reporting health and quality-of-life issues including headaches, insomnia, and anxiety, as well as concerns over diminished property values. Netter reported that her initial research showed that the feasibility study conducted prior to Wind 1’s construction had focused on economic and environmental issues, and had made no attempt to account for the impact on the health of abutters.

Also, Netter said, many of the residents felt victimized by “a bait and switch, namely, we thought the turbines were going to be 660 kilowatts, but in fact they were twice that large.”

Netter said developers were no less frustrated. Some even declined to be interviewed, insisting that any further regulations would mean they would be unable to construct any future turbines in Falmouth. Those who did speak to Netter told her that “neighbors were less than civil,” and that no health issues could be linked to wind turbines, although “there might be annoyance.”

Despite the divide, Netter said, most parties she interviewed expressed interest in the consensus-building process, which would involve continuous, informal input from all concerned, and likely a compromise solution in the drafting of the new bylaw. The process itself, she said, was a powerful tool in reaching agreements between conflicting interests.

“There’s something that occurs in a consensus-building process,” she said. “People role up their sleeves and start to work together.”

To illustrate her point, Netter told the boards about a mediation she conducted early in her career, in which the simple act of bringing a box of muffins helped loosen a tense and adversarial atmosphere, eventually leading to a compromise.

“Something just started to work,” she said. “I don’t know, I didn’t put anything in the muffins.”

With Netter’s recommendation in hand, the Planning Board will decide, at a meeting August 30, whether to place an article on the fall town meeting warrant requesting approval of, and funding for, the consensus-building program. The report of a special commission assembled by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection to study the issue of wind turbines is expected to be released in late fall, and may set state guidelines on the technology, or at least provide towns like Falmouth with guidance in establishing their own bylaws.

Ralph Herbst, chairman of the Planning Board, stressed the importance of public feedback at all stages of the process.

“We are soliciting public input as we go through it, because this is a work in progress,” Herbst said. “If there’s ever been a work in progress, this is going to be it.”



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