

Comments for WNTAG from Fairhaven  
by Louise Barteau

*Construction of two industrial wind turbines in Fairhaven, owned by a private developer, Fairhaven Wind, began on Veteran's Day, November 2011. The turbines began operation April, May 2012 despite vociferous public opposition. The turbines are in a densely populated area with 701 homes located within 3000 feet of the turbines. One hundred noise complaints were submitted to the Fairhaven Board of Health within 6 weeks.*

I remain deeply troubled by this lengthy and expensive WNTAG process that refused to include in any meaningful way the voices of Fairhaven citizens who are forced to live near Fairhaven Wind's Industrial Wind Turbines. This follows a pattern by the MA DEP, the developers, and town officials to exclude these citizens from meaningful participation in decisions that significantly impacted their health and their quality of living.

These citizens of Fairhaven, who expected and deserved, a robust investigation by MA DEP into the sound impact of industrial turbines located dangerously closely to their homes, were instead the victims of a testing process that overlooked misconduct by the developers as well as minimized and mischaracterized multiple exceedances of the state noise regulations. They were further subjected to a meaningless mitigation plan that was arrived at behind closed doors by the collaboration of Fairhaven Town officials, the MA DEP, the MA CEC, and the owners of the turbines, Fairhaven Wind.

Listed below are a few of the many occurrences where the MA DEP and town officials excluded and minimized any input by the citizens of Fairhaven who were impacted by the Fairhaven Wind turbines, while working with the developers – frequently behind closed doors.

- Prior to construction no abutter notification, no public hearing, no special permit in spite of KNOWN opposition by abutters. “No notice was required and none was given” Jeffrey Osuch, Fairhaven Executive Secretary November 15, 2011 Article by Curt Brown, New Bedford Standard Times
- Planning for construction occurred behind closed doors between town officials and private developers in the year leading up to construction. This was at the same time that a crucial vote for a new school was taking place – a new school that was ultimately constructed within 2400 feet of the turbines. Construction of the turbines began 10 days after the election.
- After the turbines were turned on in April, one hundred noise complaints were submitted to the Fairhaven Board of Health within 6 weeks. (The number is now over 850.) In June of 2012 the Fairhaven Board of Health requested that the MA DEP test the levels of sound.
- There were no impacted neighbors present when testing protocols were developed at the MA DEP Lakeville office in June and July of 2012 in a meeting that included the private developer.
- Laurel Carlson of the MA DEP promised the abutters that the turbines would be shut down if violations were found during testing. (Fairhaven Advocate newspaper article from July 26, 2012.) I was present at the meeting. (This promise was not kept by the MA DEP.)
- The MA DEP allowed the firm Tech Environmental who worked for the lawyers of Fairhaven Wind to attend all testing events to complete their own measurements. On October 15, this firm shut off the power to the turbines while continuing to allow them to spin after reading high noise levels at the first testing location of Peirce's Point. I was there and later informed the MA DEP of this malfeasance. This was dismissed as “operator error” by the developers after being privately notified by MA DEP.

- The MA DEP chose not to inform the town or the residents of multiple exceedances of state noise limits in November 2012 until the following May. More exceedances were found in June and August.
- The MA DEP refused to act instead leaving it up to the local Board of Health who had to this date refused to act despite 577 noise complaints by November of 2013. (Now over 850) An initial night-time shut down order was revoked after pressure from the private developer.
- Especially egregious to me was the fact that impacted neighbors were excluded when mitigation meetings were held behind closed doors. Representatives of the MA DEP, MA CEC, Fairhaven Wind, met with three pro-turbine representatives of the town – the town attorney, the town executive secretary and one member of the Board of Health, thus avoiding the open meeting laws. No citizens were present or privy to the discussion.

The WNTAG process organized by the MA DEP is a further extension of the exclusion of any real care or concern for the citizens of this state who have raised real and honest questions for their health based on their proximity of their homes to the sound energy emitted by turbines.

These neighbors, those citizens who are most impacted have been systematically left out of the process. No public hearing, no response to their complaints from the Board of Health, no effort to correlate testing to complaints, no action by the MA DEP. Not one bit of effort by the MA DEP has gone into asking any of the many human beings around the state what it is actually like for them to live near turbines that operate seven days a week, 24 hours a day, much less including them in the WNTAG process.

The WNTAG panel was overwhelmingly stacked in favor of the industry, seating only one citizen who has lived in proximity to wind turbines, Todd Drummey of Falmouth, (Interestingly enough, the citizens of Falmouth working tirelessly and at great expense have been doing the work that the MA DEP has failed to do.)

Moreover, the WNTAG discussion has been largely limited to a discussion of technicalities. It contains a mysterious turbine study costing hundreds of thousands of dollars that cannot be vetted due to the cloaking of the turbine locations - again to protect the industry. Despite the measurement of infrasound in Falmouth at several locations (and Wisconsin, and Australia), infrasound and other low-frequency sound energy has been and will continue to be excluded from any future testing.

At a WNTAG meeting that I attended, Martin Suuberg identifies actionable violations as “multiple measured exceedances”, and yet there is no action on behalf of the citizen’s of Fairhaven by the MA DEP. At the same WNTAG meeting Mr. Suuberg further stated that they want no “new” problems, while offering no relief for those who live in the towns of Kingston, Florida, Monroe, Falmouth, Scituate, and Fairhaven. From my perspective, the problem isn’t limited to the testing, it includes the lack of enforcement of the testing results.

The WNTAG process has been an egregious and dangerous example of the bias of the state government when it chose to favor the wind industry over the lives of individual citizens of the state of Massachusetts many whose health has been sacrificed, whose properties have been taken without compensation, and whose faith in their government has been destroyed.