

## Incivilities: What Would Mr. Rogers Do?

By Richard Holt  
Contributing Writer

Things aren't so pretty in the neighborhood these days.

Battle lines have been drawn. Contentious debates have been raging. And it's neighbor vs. neighbor in the fight over the proposed 32-story industrial wind turbine for the Madaket landfill.

We can only imagine how Fred Rogers (of PBS's "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood") would have reacted from the cozy vantage point of his Crooked House cottage in Madaket.

"It's very dramatic," he once said, "when two people come together to work something out. It's easy to take a gun and annihilate your opposition, but what is really exciting to me is to see people with differing views come to-

gether and finally respect each other."

Mr. Rogers surely would have recognized that a lot of good people, for a lot of good reasons, are committed to the idea of harnessing all that wind. All that "free energy" with no pollution. One step forward in the march toward making Nantucket more energy-independent. Sounds like a great idea.

But he also would have been sympathetic with all those homeowners who have real concerns — real fears — over the negative impact of a huge, 325-foot structure. It could disturb the peace and quiet for miles. It could destroy the zealously protected vistas on the entire west end of the island. And it could decrease the value of people's homes.

We can only guess how he would have responded to the fi-

nancial discussions around the issue. Would he be persuaded by the fact that the Finance Committee voted 6-0 (with two abstentions) against the proposal? Frugal man that he was, would he have felt that the town should first get its financial house in order, before getting involved with an energy approach that is being roundly rejected by town after town, from Duxbury and Plymouth, to Falmouth and Bourne?

No doubt he would have been dismayed by the rancor and vitriol of people screaming at town meetings, and writing snarky posts on their Facebook pages.

He actually may have liked the design of some modern wind turbines, and might have been in favor of them, in the right context. But he definitely would have been sensitive to siting issues. Not too close to houses or schools, or

where people work all day (i.e., the landfill). In the middle of a National Historic Landmark like Nantucket? We can only guess.

Actually, it's easy to envision a segment on his program which would have presented a calm, reasonable, balanced view of all the issues. Including a discussion of other renewable-energy options such as solar, gasification and maybe even newer technologies that will one day be even better.

"In times of stress," he wrote, "the best thing we can do for each other is to listen with our ears and our hearts and to be assured that our questions are just as important as our answers."

So many questions have been raised. And there are so few easy answers. But we have to try.

We can all agree that we want green solutions to our energy problems. We all want Nantucket

to be a model of how things get done.

But, please, let's all agree to be good neighbors to one another. Listen — really listen — to one another. Pay attention to real concerns — and fears. Consider all the alternatives, before rushing to make a decision with all kinds of unintended consequences.

There are lots of options out there. And, right here on Nantucket, lots of good minds working on it.

What would Mr. Rogers do? Well, one thing we can be sure of: with a chill still in the air, he'd keep the thermostat down and put on that cardigan.

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## Letters: Weighing in on Madaket wind turbine, Sconset erosion plan

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tions around the world.

Conclusion: Nantucket has the opportunity to help continue the transition away from fossil-fuel burning for electricity production, therefore reducing carbon-dioxide emissions. The Madaket turbine will make a lot of money for the town's coffers and in doing so will reduce the future tax burden on taxpayers. The wind resource at the landfill site is the best in the state, producing a capacity factor for the machine that would approach 45 percent. Please vote yes on Article 13 at Town Meeting on Saturday, March 31 at Nantucket High School. Thank you.

CARL BORCHERT

### Turbine no money-saver

To the Editor:

The proposed Madaket wind turbine will increase our taxes. Regardless of whether there is a net savings to the town, we taxpayers will never see it because the town will just spend the savings on other things. I urge voters to defeat it.

Proposition 2 1/2 controls town spending. If electricity costs go down, the town will just spend up to the 2 1/2 cap in other areas of the budget. There is no way to pass the savings back to us. So we will pay over \$7 million, when you include interest payments, for this project for 20 years and then some, when the turbine has to be replaced (do you really think it will last 20 years)? Also, there will be other unanticipated costs for any number of things that a first-time project brings with it. Those of us not living near the turbine will have the town's overall tax burden shift disproportionately toward us, as the property values in the Madaket area are lowered or rise more slowly than ours.

For those concerned about renewable energy and climate control, as I am, I have a simple option for you. Enroll in National Grid's renewable-energy option, as I have, which requires them, for a surcharge on your bill, to purchase the equivalent energy you use only from renewable sources. The town could do this too. And don't forget, we are all doing our part through the Cape Wind project. Virtually all our electricity will come from the wind power in the sound once that project is up and running.

This is a bad deal economically for us taxpayers. It is unfair to the people living near the turbine. We won't see any real economic benefit in terms of tax relief. Costs will go up. Please vote no at Town Meeting and the town election.

GREG ROSS

### Sea-level rise a point for alternative energy

To the Editor:

The case for a large wind turbine on Nantucket was substantially reinforced by an important study just released on the estimated effects of sea-level rise on U.S. coastal areas. The study projected that the sea's impacts could be much more frequent and intense than previously foreseen. Nantucket was specifically listed among locales the study looked at. Sizable surges in parts of the island were seen as possible by 2020, very soon compared to most projections of sea-level effects.

The connection to the wind turbine lies in wind energy being the

most commercially viable fossil-free alternative to coal and oil, which are the U.S.'s main energy sources. Fossil-fuel combustion is the principal source of greenhouse gasses, which are warming the earth's atmosphere and thereby melting glaciers and expanding the volume of water in the ocean.

A large wind turbine rising from a famous piece of the country's sea-based real estate would serve as a dramatic statement in favor of wind power. The proposed wind turbine, in other words, stands to help mitigate an impending challenge to the very survival of Nantucket Island. Aesthetic objections hardly counterbalance this dire existential prospect.

WADE GREENE

### Refutes arguments against erosion project

To the Editor:

I am writing to respond to some of the statements in the March 8 letter "ConCom made only decision it could with SBPF denial" by Virginia F. Andrews.

Our project is a small demonstration, designed to avoid harm to others, privately-funded, removable, from which we might be able to learn about an effective way to control erosion on Nantucket. We understand that some people believe almost as an article of ideological faith that trying to do anything to counteract the forces of Mother Nature is wrong, will not work and should not be tried. We also understand that SBPF created a major credibility gap with the ill-fated beach-nourishment project four years ago and it is difficult to get some people to listen to the merits of a new approach. However, we have found that when most people learn some of the details of our project, they usually decide it is worth allowing the small demonstration to move forward under the tight controls being considered.

Ms. Andrews states that we have taken an "end run around the regulations" when in fact the project meets all the legal criteria. After six months and over 500 pages of written testimony (check out the Conservation Commission's website or ours) all questions and concerns expressed by the ConCom, its professional consulting engineer and even the engineer for the Land Council which played an active role in reviewing the project were fully addressed. While some have said that in the end we "agreed to disagree," in fact there were not open technical issues that have not been conclusively resolved. Ms. Andrews comments that the project was "designed for a storm that only has a 1 percent chance of happening in any given year," but this is the agreed design standard. It makes little sense to build something that will not stand up to large storms.

She states that the amounts of sacrificial sand were based on "arcane calculations that are anyone's guess at best" when in fact this was a major subject of exhaustive analysis by all parties aimed at estimating the natural amount of sediment that erodes from the unprotected bluff so that the right amount could be added every year. This bluff and beach have been studied quarterly for 20 years. We have excellent data on how quickly it is washing away. Clear objective criteria were established to deter-

mine in advance whether the system "failed" and would need to be removed. Far from being "laughable" and a "fantasy," a well-documented construction process and cost estimate was presented to justify the proposed escrow. Ms. Andrews states that there are "things that SBPF could do that are permissible and that would not damage town property," but I don't know what she is referring to. As explained to the ConCom, we studied numerous alternatives before coming to our current plan. She is convinced that our plan will "not . . . work as proposed" but also charges that it is a "toe in the water" for future expansion. The only way it would be allowed to expand is if it is working. Is her concern that the system will not work or that it will? If it does work, aren't we better off as a community? If there are other methods that would work, they should be looked into as well. Erosion is a problem in many locations around the island. We need information about what works on our sand dune in the middle of the ocean and under what conditions.

Other common criticisms that we still hear about our project have also been thoroughly addressed. A leading example is the idea that unprotected properties adjacent to the installation will experience a scouring effect, but 45-degree angled returns combined with the large amount of sacrificial sand are designed to prevent that. In fact we have seen the reverse effect with the current terrace project. If scour does occur, the project will trigger "failure" and be removed. Another is that the town would take on a new liability by approving the project. However, a standard indemnification and insurance policy address this issue and the real exposure is the closure of Baxter Road and the access problems that will result for so many homes served by that road.

Our hope in appealing the ConCom's decision is that we can find a mutually acceptable settlement well before the legal process runs its course. It certainly sounds as if some of the ConCom members who voted to deny the project would have supported some revised version, but the commission's process does not allow for any back and forth with the applicant after deliberations begin. That's frustrating and wasteful for all concerned.

We recognize that trying to save our community requires pioneering efforts. Exposed as we are at the eastern-most spot in the U.S., we don't have other places to copy. It may be that in the end nothing will work. But what does it say about us if we walk away from our homes and community when there is an effective method of countering erosion out there that does not hurt anyone else? That is not how we have advanced as a country or a species. Shouldn't we try that first?

JOSH POSNER

### FinCom member sees too much risk in turbine

To the Editor:

I am not a wind turbine expert. I am a retired senior manufacturing executive with an engineering background. I was involved in the purchase of large manufacturing equipment, larger and more complicated than wind turbines.

Each purchase of major equip-

ment was expected to earn a large enough profit to increase the earnings of the company going forward. Only one out of 10 projects investigated came to fruition. Waste of time? No. It is just as important to know what not to do than to know what to do.

I am also a four-year member of the Finance Committee of Nantucket. In the last 1-1/2 years we have spent more time on this project than any other in my memory. Contrary to other public statements, the project proponents have had substantially more air time than the opponents. After many hours of reviewing material from the energy committee, other interested parties and a multitude of wind farms I voted not to support Article 13, the wind turbine at the Madaket landfill. My reasons are as follows:

- The production of electricity is not an essential service of the town like the landfill, streets and sidewalks, etc. It is not required. It competes for scarce tax dollars with projects that maintain essential services. In my opinion in the near future projects requiring over \$1 million might only be done with an increase in taxes/fees and the list is long. Let's focus on improving what we have now.

- This project will reduce little if any "greenhouse gas" emissions because the electric utility is required to maintain online, backup capacity in case of wind fluctuations or when the turbine goes down.

- There is a reasonable risk that this project could cause health concerns, negatively impact property values and become a source of litigation. Why take the risk?

- A large group of Madaket landfill neighbors are opposed to this article because it negatively impacts their environment. Whether I agree with them or not is not important. I am opposed to a community ramming a project such as this down the throats of the affected people. This is not how we should treat our neighbors. The end does not justify the means.

- Based on input from existing operations there is a risk that the project's projected construction and operating costs are too low.

- There is a reasonable risk that this project could lose money. The two key components of the financial analysis is the capacity factor at 45 percent and the annual increase in electricity costs of 3 percent yearly for 20 years. This represents a best-case scenario and is not based on operating experience. Based on my personal investigation I would use a capacity factor of 30-35 percent, an annual increase in electric costs of 0-1 percent, and increase the construction and operating costs, which puts this project under water.

- In my 40 working years I did two projects based on theoretical data such as this and hundreds where data was experienced-based. The machine manufacturer in both theoretical cases supplied the equipment at no charge as a research expense. We supplied the labor and operating expertise. In all cases my company had people who knew more about operating the equipment than the manufacturer. In this case Nantucket does not.

- Last but not least, the proposed wind turbine is ugly and will marginalize the beautiful views of the island. This represents my personal taste and should not be part

of a FinCom review.

Concerning the Madaket wind turbine project as outlined, I would have never considered presenting it to my board of directors. Too many risks.

JOHN E. TIFFANY

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To Our Beloved Mom & Oma  
Dolores A Bennett 03/23/2011

Goodbyes are not forever.  
Goodbyes are not the end.  
They simply mean we miss you  
Until we meet again.  
We think of you with love each day  
But that is nothing new.  
We thought about you yesterday  
And days before that too.  
We think of you in silence  
We often speak your name  
All we have are memories  
And your picture in a frame.  
Your memory is our keepsake  
Which we will never part.  
God has you in his keeping  
We have you in our hearts.  
Death leaves a heartache  
No one else can heal;  
Love leaves our memories  
No one can steal.



It's been a year  
since God took your  
hand home...