



Cape Winds considering locating at Quonset park

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NORTH KINGSTOWN -- The alternative energy company Cape Wind Associates may lease space in the Quonset Davisville Port and Commerce Park to build windmill turbine blades.

Quonset is one of a handful of sites in the Northeast, including Quincy, Mass., and Nova Scotia, being considered for the manufacture of the 165-foot blades needed to turn the 130 windmills that are planned for Nantucket Sound, said Geoffrey Grout, general manager at the Quonset park.

Cape Wind is seeking approval to build the first off-shore power-generating wind energy farm about five miles off the Cape Cod coast.

Cape Wind officials are scheduled to meet with the state Economic Development Corporation on Wednesday to discuss the possibility of conducting business at Quonset, according to Grout.

The proposal would likely involve leasing space at Pier 2 and another 30 acres for assembly and staging, starting in the summer of 2005. Cape Wind has also expressed interest in using Quonset's rail lines and airport, in addition to the port, Grout said.

"It's a sensible and profitable proposal," Grout said. "And it [would mean] a couple of million dollars in rental space and about 500 jobs."

Cape Wind is currently seeking financing and trying to secure permits for the \$700-million wind farm, Grout said.

The company first took interest in Quonset about a year ago and has met with state and industrial park officials twice. But Grout said he expects to receive more details on the proposal soon.

Cape Wind officials were unable to be reached, but the company's Web site reports the project is now in the permitting stage and manufacturing is slated to start in 2005.

Although the EDC supports the proposal, Grout said it would need to ensure that Cape Wind's activities would not disturb the North American Aerospace Defense Command or the fishing companies that use

Pier 2.

One possible problem is that Cape Wind is interested in the same pier space as the USS Saratoga museum, said Sen. James C. Sheehan (D-North Kingstown), a member of the Quonset Davisville Management Corporation board of directors. For several years, veterans have been trying to raise enough money to move the aircraft carrier from Middletown to Quonset and turn it into a museum.

"It's up to the board to decide if there is any way to achieve a win-win scenario," Sheehan said. "But I think there is a lot of preliminary support on the board for the Cape Wind proposal. I think it would be very positive for the state, and the board might view Cape Wind as a bird in the hand."

Although the project is still in the negotiating stages, the EDC and the majority of the board members said they supported the proposal.

"Manufacturing at Quonset -- it's the name of the game, what we've been looking for," QDMC board member and Town Councilwoman Dale M. Grogan said. "Bringing that many jobs to an area of Quonset that is designated for that endeavor is a good fit for the State of Rhode Island."

Along with the creation of jobs, Grogan said the Cape Wind proposal would also be consistent with the park's master plan and the town's hopes of bringing in more tax dollars.

The Cape Wind project calls for 130 wind turbines to be installed at Horseshoe Shoal, which would generate 420 megawatts of clean energy at peak times -- or about three-quarters of the Cape and islands' power needs, according to the company's Web site.

Online at: http://www.projo.com/business/content/projo_20040105_nkwind5.1c6ca4.html