

It's all about power

Four companies, billions of dollars worth of investments... how will it all turn out?

By PAULA GIBBS
Editor

Four companies, all related to generating or transmitting electricity, are now wooing Wiscasset for the privilege of locating here.

The first, New York-based Natural Currents, filed an application in August with the federal government to study the feasibility of producing tidal energy on the Sheepscot and Back Rivers. The second, Riverbank Energy, proposed a \$2 billion underground tidal energy plant in September.

At the Wiscasset Planning Board meeting Monday night, the president of Toronto-based Transmission Developers, Inc. announced his company wants to lay an underwater cable to transmit electricity from Wiscasset to Boston – another one billion dollar project.

Tuesday night, the selectmen heard from the president of a Maine-based company, Ocean Renewable Power Company (ORPC), which has been successful in generating power in Eastport.

Although it wasn't announced at Tuesday night's meeting, Wiscasset submitted a "Notice of Intent to File a Competing Application" on October 15 with the same agency Natural Currents filed with, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

Asked after the meeting if the selectmen had voted to submit the filing of intent, Town Manager Arthur Faucher said a vote wasn't necessary. The reason for the filing, he said, is that FERC provides a 60-day window for any competing applications to be submitted. That 60-day period ended on October 20, Faucher said. The filing will give the town another 30 days.

Earlier in the meeting, Chewonki Foundation Sustainability Coordinator Peter Arnold presented the selectmen with a draft of the actual FERC application. The application lists as "agents" for the town, Selectman Chairman David Nichols, Arnold, and Faucher. The draft application lists ORPC as the company that would build the turbines.

ORPC president Chris Sauer spoke to the selectmen about the facility in Eastport, the technology involved, and the research the company has utilized, thanks to scientists at the University of Maine at Orono.

Meanwhile, Natural Currents president Roger Bason, who spoke at a selectmen's meeting on October 7, urging the town to work with his company instead of filing its own application, sent a follow-up letter to the town on October 16.

Continued on page 3

It's all about power

Continued from 1

"We look forward to a potentially cooperative development of the tidal power resource of Wiscasset, one in which allows participants to gain from a wise and proper plan that will bring benefit to all parties," Bason wrote."

In his presentation to the planning board Monday night, Transmission Developers, Inc. president Donald Jessome said his company has pulled together investors, including Blackrock, an investor in the Riverbank Energy proposal, to develop a 1,000 megawatt underground transmission line to send AC power to Boston.

Called "Maine Express," Jessome said the project "will ease electrical transmission congestion and improve system reliability in Maine."

"Maine Express will also preserve the environmental integrity of the Back and Sheepscot Rivers, while also helping grow the mid-coast regional economy." The line would be about 160 miles long, and would use land at Point East's I-park, formerly owned by Maine Yankee. Point East project manager Scott Houldin accompanied Jessome

some to the meeting.

"The Maine Express will construct an AC-DC converter station at Wiscasset and a DC-AC station in Boston," Jessome said.

In other business, the selectmen appointed Town Treasurer Jim George as interim town clerk, held two public hearings (one on General Assistance maximums and one on junkyard permits), approved setting up a new account to pay Maine Yankee-related legal bills, and clarified a snow removal bid award.

Several residents expressed their anger during the public comment section at the end of the agenda, saying they should be allowed to comment on agenda items as they are presented, not at the end. A

couple of examples were given of times when residents alerted the selectmen to mistakes they had made, and had to take another vote. None of the selectmen appeared willing to go back to the prior practice, however.

"When selectmen are conducting their business, you should not be interrupting," Faucher said. "If you want something on the agenda, come see me and it will go on," he added.

Prior Morrell said it doesn't do any good to have the public comment section at the end when the selectmen have already taken action on the agenda items.

Larry Lomison accused the selectmen of "stifling citizens'

rights."

"We used to do it that way [allowing comments after each agenda item] until someone stood up and started screaming at the board," Nichols said.

"You should have called him out of order," George Green said. Nichols said the board doesn't have to have a citizens comment period.

"Everybody has to suffer now because of one person - that's it," Nichols said. Morrell said he was the person who "had caused the disturbance" over a right to know issue. Nichols also said the board isn't obligated to have public comment session at all.

"I agree," said Morrell. "And you can all be replaced as a board." Morrell said.

Fixtures and forces

Continued from page 2

the important ideas Mr. Pollan essayed. That the other, better candidate, better man, almost certainly better president wanted the Reader's Digest condensed version says much, I think, about how thin and sad our choices, our public life, our country have become, how far we have slipped and how much farther yet we may fall.

Good night. Good luck. Thank you for your attention to my eighteen

