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OPINION

The Newport Daily News

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"Our view" represents the opinion of the editorial board, above

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2010 ♦ PAGE A9

OUR VIEW

Wind energy collaboration is great idea

While much attention has been paid to proposals to develop offshore wind farms in Rhode Island waters, a group of East Bay communities has been working together quietly to pursue options to build an onshore wind farm to serve the region. This is a positive development in a number of ways.

First and foremost, it is encouraging that nine municipalities, including the local communities of Newport, Middletown, Portsmouth, Tiverton and Little Compton, have been meeting regularly for more than a year to discuss ways to work together to reduce energy costs and dependence on fossil fuels.

And as individual wind turbines crop up around the county and the state, it becomes clearer that it is impractical for every municipality to have its own wind-power generator. "We can't have a turbine at every high school in the state," Keith Stokes, director of the state's Economic Development Corp., said during the first "2020 Vision" forum co-sponsored by The Daily News and the Newport County Fund of The Rhode Island Foundation.

During the second "2020 Vision" forum, Kenneth Payne, director of the state's Office of Energy Resources, also pointed out that depending on one large corporation to solve all of the state's energy needs is a dangerous proposition. Wind power should be part of an overall energy strategy that includes diversifying sources and increasing efficiency, he said.

Yet, perhaps because its generators are so visible, wind energy has become a focal point for discussions locally and statewide.

As communities debate how to regulate individual turbines and where they could be appropriately sited, the East Bay Energy Consortium has been developing a proposal for a wind farm of up to 10 turbines in the Tiverton Industrial Park that would serve all nine municipalities.

The EDC and The Rhode Island Foundation awarded \$140,000 in funding to the consortium to hire Applied Science Associates Inc. to study the viability of wind energy in the region. In late April, the Tiverton Town Council approved the installation of a 150-foot-tall anemometer to collect wind data in the industrial park over the next year.

"All of this is very preliminary, but I think it's a very positive idea economically and for the environment," said Garry Plunkett, who represents Tiverton on the consortium. "Whatever community ends up hosting these turbines will make

TO GO

The third and final forum in the '2020 Vision' series will be held Wednesday from 5:30-7:30 p.m. at the Pell Center for International Relations at Salve Regina University in Newport. The topic is education and Deborah A. Gist, state commissioner of elementary and secondary education, will be the keynote speaker. Participants will break into smaller groups to explore subtopics and answer a series of questions using an electronic voting system. To reserve a seat, send an e-mail to NCFEvent@RIFoundation.org (it is case sensitive) or call 427-4048.

In case you missed it: To see coverage of previous forums and poll results, go to www.NewportDailyNews.com and click on the '2020 Vision' icon.

additional revenue from leasing the property, and this is a system that ends up benefiting the region, so everyone will see a significant savings in their power bills." In Tiverton, where the study is focused, "it could help draw in new businesses because wind turbines are certainly compatible with any future development in the industrial park," he said.

The consortium sprung out of an energy summit held last year at Roger Williams University in Bristol. Soon after hearing about the benefits of collectively pursuing "green" energy projects, the five local communities signed a memorandum of agreement with Barrington, Bristol, East Providence and Warren. The consortium meets twice a month and recently issued a four-page report on its progress to member municipalities.

Much remains to be determined, including the size and scope of the proposed project as well as the cost for participating communities, but this is an exciting partnership, and we look forward to seeing what benefits it may reap.

READERS' LETTERS

CRMC should hear opposition to proposed oyster farm in Tiverton

I am writing on behalf of the Nannaquaket Neighborhood Association to bring attention to the status of the proposed 3-acre oyster farm in the southwest area of Nannaquaket Pond in South Tiverton, one of Tiverton's little treasures.

The proposed farm's dimensions are 400 by 300 feet, about the size of two side-by-side football fields. There are six to nine trawl lines each having 50 to 100 plastic mesh cages (4' feet by 2' by 3 inches) floating on the water's surface with an unknown number of marker and support buoys, a total of 300 to 900 cages. From March to December each cage will have hundreds or thousands of 1-inch oysters growing to maturity for 10-24 months.

It is hard to believe that a large area such as this will not pose a safety risk for such a highly used recreational area. This proposal also has conflicts with commercial and recreational quahoggers, who have historically fished these grounds; recreational boaters and swimmers, who have enjoyed the pond for generations; and pond-area residents who pay high taxes to live on and enjoy the scenic beauty of the pond.

If the oyster farm is approved, we will have a permanent and hazardous ugly eyesore that will negatively affect the pristine beauty, property values and quality of life for the entire pond.

We have sent dozens of letters in opposition to the Coastal Resources Management Council requesting a hearing. In addition, we have retained attorney Turner Scott, who formerly sat on the CRMC for 10 years, and who has written a letter requesting a subcommittee hearing. We have dozens of signed affidavits from the above-mentioned groups.

The Tiverton Town Council voted unanimously, 7-0, in opposition on May 24.

The Shellfish Advisory Panel (under the state Department of Environmental Management) voted 4-2 in opposition on May 27.

The Marine Fisheries Council (under

the DEM) voted 3-2 in opposition on July 12.

However, in spite of some optimistic views, our chances of stopping this calamity from happening are unknown. We need our government officials to support us by writing letters to the director of the CRMC, Grover Fugate, requesting a subcommittee meeting in Tiverton, something I understand the CRMC does not grant easily.

If the oyster farm is approved, we will have a permanent and hazardous ugly eyesore that will negatively affect the pristine beauty, property values and quality of life for the entire pond. It will become a completely private and restricted area with a top and bottom lease for the leaseholders' use only (which is transferable without going through the formal application procedure). It will never be given back to the public. It is only for the financial benefit of two people, Peter Sebring of Bristol and Jim Duckett of Tiverton. The end product will be sold mostly in Boston and there is zero benefit to the town of Tiverton.

Jacqueline Mei, director, Nannaquaket Neighborhood Association

Portsmouth School Committee shows common sense in decision not to sue

After attending the Portsmouth School Committee meeting Tuesday night, I came away with a sense of relief that common sense had finally prevailed. The chairman of the School Committee decided that it would not be prudent to sue the town of Portsmouth if the citizens of Portsmouth voted to reject the referendum to exceed the budget on Oct. 5. The School Committee agreed with him unanimously.

It would seem that irrespective of the budget issue, hiring an attorney who specializes in Caruolo lawsuits was premature, inappropriate and wasted funds that could better be spent on the education of our children.

Other issues also on the agenda

included the specific impact on the education of our children if the voters decline to approve the referendum and do not add \$765,301 to the budget approved by the Town Council. The Portsmouth school administration also provided data relating to full-time equivalent personnel. All of these issues are contentious and difficult to resolve, but not addressing them is simply not an option. Difficult problems usually get more difficult when they are not dealt with in a timely manner.

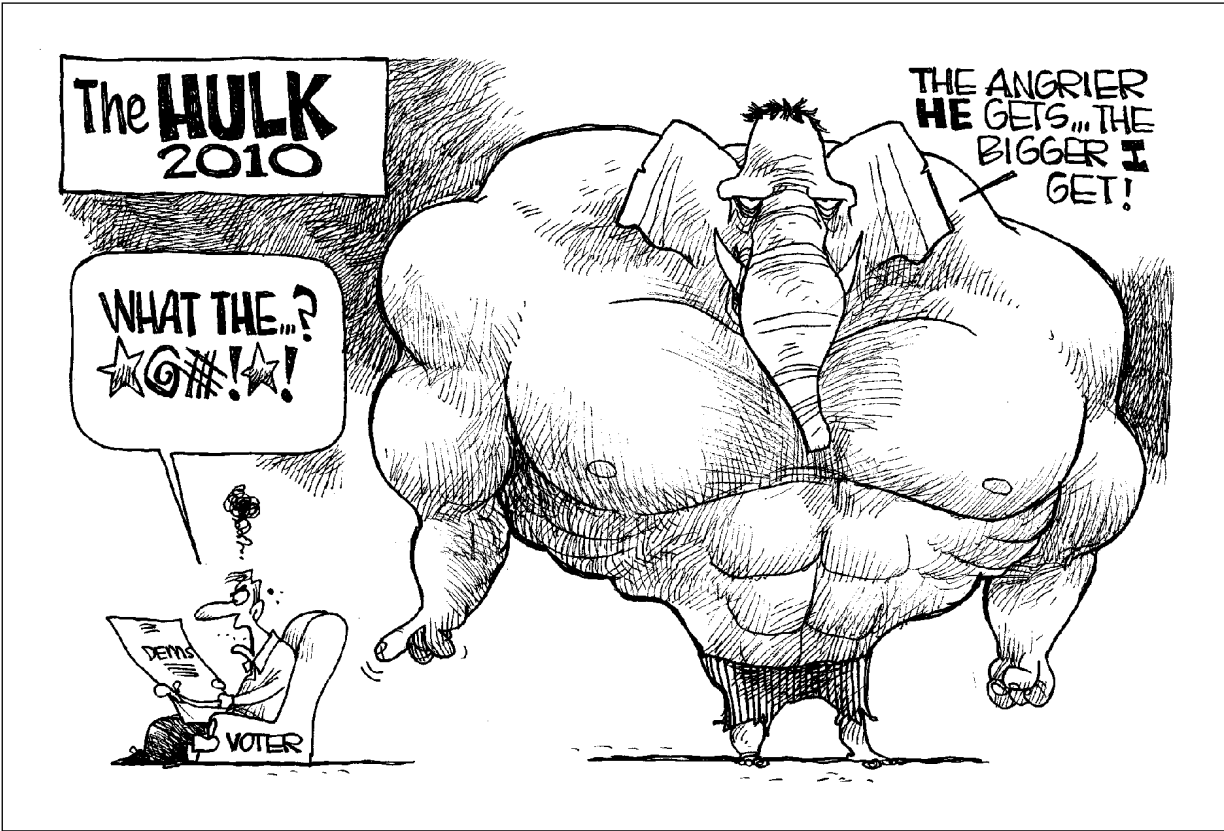
So, I would like to commend the School Committee and school administration for the courage to finally bring these issues forward.

Virginia Bledsoe, Portsmouth

SOMETHING TO SAY?

We welcome our readers' views. Our letters policy follows:

- ◆ Each letter must bear the writer's full name (no initials, please), signature, full address and telephone number (for verification purposes only). We will not publish a letter without a phone number.
- ◆ We may condense letters, and correct errors of spelling and punctuation.
- ◆ Letters should be no more than 450 words. Proposed guest view columns should be no more than 750 words.
- ◆ Because of the volume of letters we receive, we cannot always publish them immediately.
- ◆ We will run no more than two letters per author per month.



Jerry Holbert ♦ Boston Herald

Rather than soaking the 'rich,' cut everyone's taxes

What should we do about ending those Bush tax cuts? As you may have heard, those are the tax cuts

BURKE A. CHRISTENSEN

Eastern Kentucky University

that let the rich get away without paying their fair share of federal income taxes and force the middle class to carry the

burden of paying for the costs of government in Washington.

I'm sure you all know that under our progressive tax system, the more money you make, the higher the income tax rates you have to pay. The poor pay very little in income taxes.

In fact, according to the IRS statistics for 2007, the bottom half of taxpayers paid 2.89 percent of all federal income taxes collected. If your adjusted gross income in 2007 was \$32,879 or less, you were in the bottom half.

That means, of course, that 97 percent of the federal income tax burden fell upon the upper half of taxpayers. Those are the wealthy people making more than \$32,879. This is the wealthy half of the population that the politicians look to when they want to tax somebody.

Well, actually what they say is that they aren't going to tax the poor



Jeff Stahler ♦ Columbus (Ohio) Dispatch

because the poor barely make enough money to feed their kids and have nothing left to pay taxes. And they don't want to increase the tax burden on the middle class — those hard-working men and women who are struggling to pay the mortgage and educate their kids. They want to make the rich pay their fair share.

You've heard that speech before. So, who has an income that will enable them to help pay more? Well, \$66,532 doesn't sound like a rich person, but 75 percent of taxpayers reported an AGI less than \$66,532. And they don't pay much in taxes. The bottom 75 percent paid 13.41 percent of all income taxes.

Remember that the politicians don't want to increase taxes on the middle class. So let's take them out. Let's say that an income between \$66,532 and \$113,018 is a middle-class income and we'll just increase taxes on those who make more than that. Ninety percent of taxpayers make less than \$113,018.

It's starting to seem like there aren't very many of those rich folks left to tax. And the top 10 percent is already paying 71.22 percent of all federal income taxes. If you are in the top 10 percent, you are the target of those tax-and-spend politicians.

When do we really get to "soak the rich"? If your income was more than \$160,041, you made it to the top 5 percent, which paid 60.63 percent of all federal income taxes. Think about that for a minute. The top 5 percent of taxpayers paid a greater percentage of all federal income taxes — 60.63 percent — than the bottom 90 percent, who paid 28.78 percent.

Where are the really rich? At \$410,096, you made it to the top 1 percent. Are they paying their fair share? The top 1 percent paid 40.42 percent of all federal income taxes; more than the bottom 95 percent, which paid 39.37 percent.

Where are all those millionaires? How much do they pay?

At \$2.15 million, you made it to the top one-tenth of 1 percent. The average income for the taxpayers in this group was \$7.4 million and the average federal income tax they each paid was \$1.6 million. Together this one-tenth of 1 percent of all taxpayers paid 20 percent of all federal income taxes; that's more than the bottom 75 percent paid. If we are going to depend upon these folks to pay for what the government wants to do for us, we're going to need a few more millionaires.

The real problem is not the distribution of the tax burden. The problem is that the cost of government is too high.

We have to remember that it is us — all of us — who are paying for 100 percent of the cost of government. It is time to stop trying to shift the tax burden to the other guy and to start reducing the cost of it for all of us.

Burke A. Christensen holds the Robert B. Morgan Chair of Insurance Studies at Eastern Kentucky University. Readers may write to him at EKU, 521 Lancaster Ave., Richmond, Ky. 40475-3102.