

# Cadets sail into the wind

## MMA will build 250-foot turbine



A rendering of the proposed wind turbine that will power Massachusetts Maritime Academy.

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STAFF WRITER

**BUZZARDS BAY** – A couple of years ago, a state engineer suggested a meteorological tower be built on the campus of Massachusetts Maritime Academy to confirm whether winds are steady enough and strong enough to build a wind turbine.

Adm. Richard Gurnon, the school's president, had a simpler plan.

He took the engineer on a walk on Taylors Point, pointing out doorways designed to keep the doors from flying off hinges, trees that grow slanted from the regular gusts.

"I said, 'I don't need a (weather) tower to show how windy it is here,'" Gurnon recalled yesterday. "I'll tell you which way the wind is blowing – it's from the southwest."

"She said, 'You're right.'"

Academy officials predict the turbine, a 250-foot structure now planned for construction in May, will provide enough electricity to power the entire campus on some days.

While it will cost about \$1.3 million to build, Gurnon said it will save the school – and the state – upwards of \$300,000 annually.

Construction and planning will be covered by the state's Division of Capital Asset Management, a special allocation of the Legisla-

ture, and a \$500,000 grant delivered yesterday by the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, a quasi-public agency that is working with town governments across the state in planning more turbines.

For academy leaders, the benefits go beyond the help with electricity bills. Gurnon predicts the turbine will serve as an on-campus training device for student engineers who will increasingly become involved in renewable energy production.

The wind power industry continues to grow. In 2005, the U.S. wind industry installed almost 2,500 megawatts of new wind power capacity – the highest one-year jump – boosting the total capacity to 9,149 megawatts.

All of the existing turbines built in America so far have been built on land, in contrast to the proposed Nantucket Sound wind farm, a contentious proposal that could become the nation's first offshore wind farm.

In Massachusetts, while many towns are looking at building municipal turbines, the examples are still few.

While such turbines can offset electricity costs at municipal buildings that chew up energy,

some local leaders want to know that the projects will be financially viable.

So renewable energy advocates want to show the public some success stories.

"Our mission is to provide a renewable engine," said Warren Leon, director of the collaborative's Renewable Energy Trust. "But we also want projects where the public is going to benefit."

There are examples already in the towns of Hull and Princeton, where turbines feed power directly to municipal light plants.

Similarly, the maritime academy will be able to use the electricity directly rather than sell to the utility, which would reduce the chance for turning a profit.

In Buzzards Bay, turbine supporters heard plenty of concerns about aesthetics and potential bird deaths.

Gurnon, a wind power advocate, would point to the Hull turbine, which is the same model as the proposed academy turbine.

"All I had to do," Gurnon said, "was say, 'Go to Hull, and then come back and talk to me.'"

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**The academy  
expects to  
save about  
\$300,000 a  
year.**