

Cloakroom politics may kill wind farm

By Edward F. Maroney
emaroney@barnstablepatriot.com

When Jim Gordon of Cape Wind Associates staked his claim to 24 square miles in Nantucket Sound for a 130-turbine wind farm, he took many people by surprise. Now a surprise arrangement reached behind closed doors in Washington may write *finis* to the project.

Language inserted into the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Act of 2006 is direct: any "offshore wind energy facility in the area commonly known as 'Nantucket

Sound' must be approved not only by the Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard but also by the "Governor of an adjacent coastal state."

With the exception of Democrat Deval Patrick, the candidates for governor of Massachusetts are opposed to or at least less than ardent backers of the wind farm.

In a conference committee vote, the language was OK'd by a 4 to 3 margin by participating U.S. senators. The trio objecting to the section included Olympia Snowe, Maria Cantwell and Frank Lautenberg.

(Cape Wind lost another recent vote as well, this one a referendum on the project held on Nantucket. The margin was 2 to 1).

To some, the turn of events seemed to satisfy a desire to fill in the "doughnut hole" created by the federal government in Nantucket Sound that limits state control of those waters. The fine hand

of U.S. Rep. Bill Delahunt's staff, some of whom also served his predecessor, Gerry Studds, may have played a role behind the scenes.

Mark Rodgers, communications director for Cape Wind, said his company has played by the rules - including review by 17 agencies - only to have them changed at the last moment.

If regulation of the Sound "is such a valid issue," he said, "why not raise it in Congress in the light of day" for public debate.

Asked whether principal backers of the Alliance to Protect Nantucket Sound, some of whom have interests in non-renewable fuels, are more concerned about blocking wind project in general rather than just protecting their million-dollar views of the Sound, Rodgers said he wouldn't make that assertion, but observed that there is "more at stake here than Cape Wind."