

Backing and bucking

Vanity push to be the first is a reckless way to set policy

BY PAM MAHONEY
AND JONATHAN STERN

In the HBO miniseries “Chernobyl,” a Soviet apparatchik tells a scientist that “I’m assured that there’s no problem,” to which the physicist says, “I’m telling you that there is.”

The bureaucrat says, “I prefer my opinion to yours.”

“I’m a nuclear physicist,” she counters, adding: “Before you were deputy secretary, you worked in a shoe factory.”

As Wainscott makes the case that Orsted’s landing site for its high-voltage electrical cables on a narrow lane in a residential and farming community is a mistake, the responses reinforce that the South Fork Wind Farm process has been driven by political expedience, bureaucratic incompetence, and corporate indifference.

While New York State has big plans for offshore wind, there is only one commercial offshore wind farm in the United States. That Block Island project, operated by Orsted, has an exposed high-voltage cable on the beach that will not be remedied until 2021.

Despite the need for a flawless execution for the first offshore wind farm in New York, this project has stumbled out of the gate. Our local assemblyman, Fred Thiele Jr., said, “Because of the bait and switch tactics of Deepwater/Orsted, I cannot trust them with my community’s future.” Thiele has since withdrawn his support for the 15-turbine installation planned some 35 miles off Montauk. We now know that this subscale project will cost ratepayers almost double that of other wind projects proposed for Long Island.

The Citizens for the Preservation of Wainscott, which is critical of the project, has experienced Orsted’s disingenuous promises. In response to community opposition (e.g., a 10-2 vote against the project by the Wainscott Citizens Advisory Committee), Orsted promised to explore an alternative site. Shortly after the November election, however, the company’s “engagement” was over, as Orsted spokeswoman Jennifer Garvey said it has sometimes faced “NIMBY-style opposition” and that the company “can’t [move this project] anymore.” Garvey



NEWSDAY/MARK HARRINGTON

The beach on Beach Lane in Wainscott, the planned site of a cable landing for the South Fork Wind Farm.

knows better: to address Block Island community opposition, Orsted moved its proposed Block Island wind farm landing site from a residential community to a state park.

Orsted’s deception has been matched by the incompetence of the East Hampton Town board led by the town supervisor. The supervisor professes to be baffled by the strong community opposition while peddling the absurd notion that high-voltage electric cables should be no more concerning than the laying

of a water main pipe.

While the supervisor’s lack of expertise in energy infrastructure projects is understandable, the town board’s failure to retain outside experts is inexplicable. The board has been dismissive of community concerns raised over the project. When told at a public meeting about a year ago that the advisory committee voted 10-2 against the project, a majority of the town board burst into laughter.

The real comic relief has, however, been provided by Win

With Wind, a true-believer group of mostly former town officials whose apparent goal is to be the first community to be powered by offshore wind. They have two arguments: climate change is an urgent crisis and “you’re a rich NIMBY.” Recklessly cutting corners to be “first” is vanity, not good policy. On the NIMBY point, the group lobs insults but won’t engage on the merits of the best available landing site other than to parrot Orsted talking points.

Citizens for the Preservation of Wainscott has offered potential alternatives beyond Orsted’s self-serving options. The options shorten the sea cable, reduce road disruption, leverage the rail corridor and avoid building a substation. Luckily, there is still time for Orsted and the town to pick the best available landing site rather than stubbornly persist in their mistake and trigger protracted litigation.



Pam Mahoney and Jonathan Stern are longtime Wainscott residents. They are supporters of The Citizens for the Preservation of Wainscott, which has raised concerns over the project.



the winds of change

Opposition can't be allowed to set regional energy goals

BY DAVID KAPPELL

I grew up on the village side of Georgica Pond and explored every inch of it in my sailing dinghy. Notwithstanding the alarming degradation of water quality, the pond remains a remarkably beautiful and peaceful place and I sympathize with those who seek to protect it and other similarly contaminated water bodies, like Wainscott Pond.

But year-round residents who have called East Hampton home for their entire lives know that big challenges (like climate change) and local concerns (like readily available and clean power) cannot be ignored. The 130 megawatts of power that Orsted's South Fork Wind Farm will produce will meet growing demand with a cutting-edge renewable resource while simultaneously addressing the crucial threat of sea level rise to our coastlines and way of life. Opposition by some Wainscott homeowners cannot be allowed to dictate regional energy policy, let alone the future of East Hampton.

And these types of projects

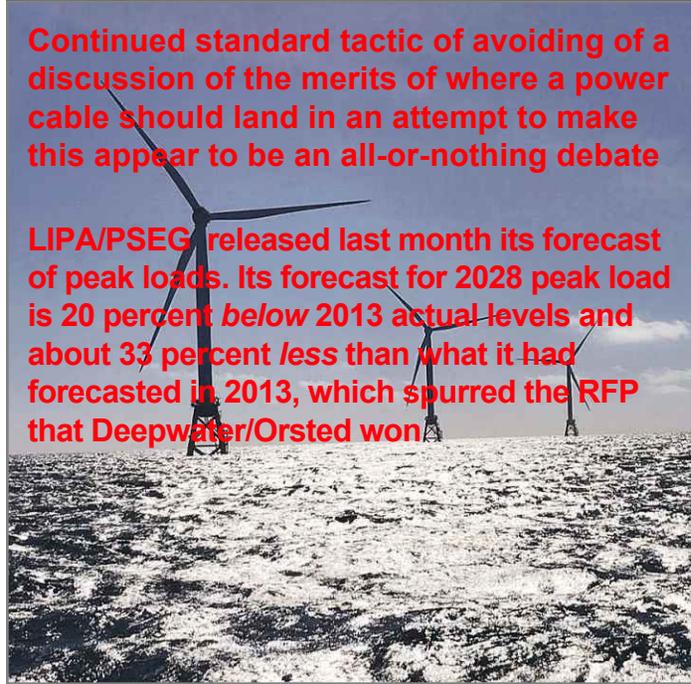
are not new.

I served as mayor of the Village of Greenport from 1994 to 2007. In 2003, we entered into an agreement with a developer to facilitate construction of a 50-megawatt power plant on village-owned land, designed to serve peak demand in East Hampton by using an existing cable that runs under Peconic Bay. Sixteen years later, the plant and its operation have produced no controversy, and the village and local school have enjoyed important rent and tax income while helping to meet the energy needs of our neighbors.

In 2017, Greenport negotiated to run a high-capacity cable underground — through my neighborhood, one block from my house — and then under Greenport Harbor to serve the peak needs of nearby Shelter Island. There was understandable concern among my neighbors, but the project was executed responsibly and without incident. We got a rebuilt street, the village received a cash payment of more than \$1 million, and our electric system gained a critical backup connection to the

Continued standard tactic of avoiding of a discussion of the merits of where a power cable should land in an attempt to make this appear to be an all-or-nothing debate

LIPA/PSEG released last month its forecast of peak loads. Its forecast for 2028 peak load is 20 percent below 2013 actual levels and about 33 percent less than what it had forecasted in 2013, which spurred the RFP that Deepwater/Orsted won



The company that operates the Block Island Wind Farm, Orsted, also has a contract from LIPA to deliver 130 megawatts of power to the East End of Long Island.

power grid. Furthermore, the project eliminated the need for the dirty oil-fired generators used each summer on the island.

The impacts of the Greenport Shelter Island power line project were de minimis and short-lived when weighed against the fiscal and physical

benefits to the village and the critical energy and environmental benefits to Shelter Island. The technology used to lay the cable underwater, horizontal directional drilling, is identical to what the South Fork Wind Farm will use for the cable landing at Beach Lane in Wainscott.

The coastal threat recently

became real in Greenport when the North Ferry Company announced plans to raise its landings by 18" because of rising tides that regularly interrupt ferry service to Shelter Island. More recently, erosion threatens the viability of the area along Dune Road west of Shinnecock Inlet in Hampton Bays. Add to this, ongoing discussions in multiple East End communities about moving hotels back to protect them from rising seas.

The electric load pocket in East Hampton is only going to get worse unless new power is brought in. The South Fork Wind Farm offers the best opportunity to do so with minimal impacts while putting East Hampton at the cutting edge of the shift away from fossil fuels to address sea-level rise. For this to happen, neighbors and communities need to cooperate, especially given that any adverse impacts will be short lived and occurring only in the off-season.



David Kapell, a former mayor of Greenport, is president of Stirling Public Policy, a consultancy that represents offshore wind energy interests.

This "high capacity cable" in Greenport that Kapell references was just 13kV, which is less than 1/10th the high-powered 138kV cable that Orsted is proposing to run throughout Wainscott

This Greenport-Shelter Island line is equivalent to common overhead LIPA distribution lines. It was such a small project that it was planned to be completed within three weeks and needed no Public Service Commission review.

Kapell's argument is almost as deceitful as East Hampton Supervisor Peter van Scoyoc, who compared building the infrastructure needed for the first offshore wind farm in New York State to installing the water mains in Wainscott last summer (due to toxic contamination likely from the Town-run airport)

Turns out that Kapell's premier client is Orsted, according to his online biography. No wonder why he fails to make any merit-based arguments