

Ocean Gate erects wind turbine to power offices, treatment plant

BY CHELSEA MICHELS • TOMS RIVER BUREAU • OCTOBER 20, 2009

OCEAN GATE — If anyone was skeptical about the borough having enough wind to sustain the state's first municipal wind turbine, a gust that catapulted an American flag across an outdoor stage might have changed their minds.

As borough and state officials celebrated the unveiling of sorts of the first turbine — a second one is also planned — and its positive effect on the environment, a blast of wind sent several flags flying on the portable stage set up for the event.

"Talk about wind. This is a great location," joked Jeanne M. Fox, president of the state Board of Public Utilities, at the ceremony to present the 50-kilowatt turbine, which was constructed a mere hour before the ceremony Tuesday afternoon.



Ocean Gate windmill dedication

The turbine at East Arverne and Ocean Gate avenues will be hooked up within several weeks to begin generating electricity for municipal buildings, but Tuesday the three blades spun in the breeze as a crowd stared skyward to view the windmill that had been anticipated for nearly three years.

"This is the greatest day in Ocean Gate and a great day in New Jersey," said Mayor Paul J. Kennedy, who credited resident Jim Fry, a retired Navy engineer, for bringing the turbine installation to fruition. "This wonderful, beautiful machine would not be here without Jim Fry."

As part of the ceremony, Kennedy unveiled the name of the turbine, Gale, which was selected through a contest held for local children.

The brainchild of 9-year-old Jenna Collins, "Gale" represents a gust of wind and is the acronym for Great Americans Love the Environment.

"I looked at the word 'gale,' saw what it meant, and I thought it was the right one," said Jenna.

Asked how he felt to have the brunt of the work behind him, Fry said the only word to describe it was "wow."

"We went through a lot, but every bit of it was worth it," he said. "Our mayor and council had the guts to take the first step. It's not proven yet, but we're optimistic. The more we generate, the less we pay."

Fox, the BPU president, said the two turbines are expected to generate 224,000 kilowatt hours of energy, providing about 80 percent of the electricity needs for the municipal office building and water treatment plant, while reducing total carbon emissions by 162 tons annually.

"It's really exciting that a small town like Ocean Gate can be such a leader for the state of New Jersey," Fox said.

"Other towns need to think about following their lead, especially along the shore."

Fox said the state's energy master plan calls for at least 30 percent of New Jersey's electricity to be generated by renewable resources by 2020, including offshore and onshore wind.

Mayor Kennedy said his heart was pounding while the turbine was being constructed, and he could not be sure the town would have it until it was built.

"We're little, we're small, but now I feel comfortable," he said. "I'm sure there will be many more now. We were the guinea pigs."