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**Commission supports tidal energy project
BY PETER B. BRACE INDEPENDENT WRITER**

Nantucket's Planning & Economic Development Commission voted unanimously last week to support Edgartown's proposed tidal generation project between Muskeget and Martha's Vineyard.

At its Jan. 3 meeting, the NP&EDC endorsed the permit issued to Edgartown by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to install tidal generators in Muskeget Channel. Commissioners also supported the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth's request for a \$5 million grant from the Renewable Energy Trust of the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative to establish a Federal Marine Renewable Energy Center for the East Coast.

Such a center could provide technical assistance to Edgartown for tidal generation projects and all other renewable energy projects proposed for the Outer Continental Shelf, said Planning Director Andrew Vorce.

Generically known as in-stream energy conversion devices, tidal generators are set in channels where tidal currents, ideally, turn the rotors of the generators at three to eight knots or 2.6 to 6.9 miles per hour. These underwater turbines are typically unidirectional, meaning that their rotors can change direction with the tides. They come in a variety of configurations, including short tubes, double-ended funnels, or open rotors anchored to the bottom. Generators in a specific location would be connected to a nearby power grid with submarine cables.

The NP&EDC also voted unanimously at the meeting to direct Blue Wave Strategies of Boston, Mass. to xapply to the Minerals Management Service for a lease of one square mile of ocean south of Tuckernuck Island for the installation of a data collection tower to be used to determine the viability of building an offshore wind farm.

Both actions are in line with the Planning Commission's and Nantucket's belief that alternative energy installations are good for the Cape and islands, but not for Nantucket Sound.

"We're working together with them [Edgartown and UMass Dartmouth]," said Vorce. "The whole idea is this is a collaboration with the two islands on the waters between the two islands. They're applying to FERC and UMass is applying for a grant.

"Out of that funding would be funding for Edgartown and, hopefully, Nantucket to investigate renewable energy alternatives in this area."

