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TOP STORY

“Lead or leave:” Town hits Vineyard Wind with list of demands

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Two of Vineyard Wind's offshore turbines.

File photo



(Updated July 29, 2025 5:30 p.m. to include comments from Vineyard Wind, state Sen. Julian Cyr and state Rep. Thomas Moakley)

(July 29, 2025) Claiming that Vineyard Wind has “gone into hiding” and failed to uphold its promises, Nantucket officials delivered a scathing public rebuke of the offshore wind developer Tuesday.

The town laid out a sweeping set of demands, including millions of dollars in potential penalties, project suspensions and new emergency safeguards during a late-morning press conference. Vineyard Wind was given two weeks to respond.

“When confronted about these failures, Vineyard Wind has pointed a finger at everyone but themselves, blaming subcontractors, GE Vernova and federal regulators,” Select Board member Brooke Mohr said. “They even blame Nantucket and the ocean . . . Since the immediate aftermath of the blade failure, and since the last presidential election, Vineyard Wind’s leadership has essentially gone into hiding.”

Among the town’s demands: Vineyard Wind must pay the island \$25,000 per turbine, per day, for every day the turbine lights remain on without the promised Aircraft Detection Lighting System (ADLS) activated.

It must also place \$10 million into escrow to fund emergency cleanups from future failures, and pay \$250,000 per violation of the town’s communication protocols.

ADLS systems use radar to detect nearby aircraft, only turning on the warning lights atop the turbines when necessary.

Perhaps the most significant demand is that Vineyard Wind agree to permanently suspend any new project if a future incident leads to a beach closure of seven consecutive days or a shellfish harvesting ban for 14 total days within a six-month period.

The press conference came just over a year after a Vineyard Wind turbine blade shattered 14 miles southwest of the island, scattering debris into the ocean that washed up along Nantucket's shoreline, closing south shore beaches during one of the busiest weeks of the summer.

In a written response Tuesday evening, a Vineyard Wind spokesperson said the company views the recent settlement with the town and GE Vernova as resolving all claims related to the 2024 blade incident.

The company said it remains committed to meeting regulatory requirements and coordinating with the town under the Good Neighbor Agreement.

"Following the conclusion of the settlement process, Vineyard Wind has anticipated resuming traditional communications and coordination with the Town in a manner that supports a productive dialogue," an e-mail from the company said. "Vineyard Wind believes the settlement represents a fair and conclusive outcome for all parties, and hopes the Town of Nantucket will move forward in the spirit of that settlement and work together towards a constructive, positive relationship."

It remains unclear what leverage the town can use to compel Vineyard Wind to meet its demands. When asked what would happen if the company rejects the demands or fails to respond by the Aug. 12 deadline, town offshore wind attorney Greg Werkheiser said, "all options are on the table," including litigation, regulatory petitions and public or political pressure.

He also said the controversial Good Neighbor Agreement with Vineyard Wind that many residents have urged the town to withdraw from, is the very reason Nantucket is in a position to make these demands at all.

"The solution to someone running afoul of their contractual obligations is not to take yourself out of the contract and relieve them of their obligations," Werkheiser said. "It's to enforce the expectations of the contract."

Critics of the Good Neighbor Agreement, which the town is now referring to as the Community Benefit Agreement, argue that it ties the town's hands and forces it to support Vineyard Wind.

But town officials say at this point it is helping to preserve their legal leverage.

According to the town, Vineyard Wind has failed in three core areas: communication, light pollution reduction and emergency planning.

Mohr said town officials were not notified of the 2024 blade failure until debris began washing up on Nantucket beaches, and that Vineyard Wind withheld information about a subsequent lightning strike on the same damaged turbine.

She said the company has "slow-walked" environmental impact reports and delayed providing information about the removal of potentially faulty blades.

The ADLS system, designed to dramatically reduce nighttime light pollution by activating only when aircraft are nearby, was promised nearly two years ago but remains inactive. Mohr said Vineyard Wind has missed multiple activation deadlines and provided only inconsistent explanations.

"Part of the (Nantucket) experience is being able to look out at a pristine, dark ocean and a sky well-lit by stars . . . And yet, for years now, that night-sky horizon has been polluted with dozens of constantly blinking red lights from Vineyard Wind's project."

Here is the full list of demands from the town to Vineyard Wind:

- Text emergency notifications to designated town officials within one hour on an incident or accident.
- Alert the same officials when blade monitors detect anomalies.
- Share with Nantucket the content of any written communications with or from federal agencies regarding project failures that have impacts on Nantucket.
- E-mail detailed monthly project updates to the Select Board and town manager.
- Present updates and take public questions at Select Board meetings upon request and no less than quarterly.
- Respond to written questions from the Select Board within three business days.
- Provide relevant project reports within one week of submission to any state or federal agency.
- Share all studies or data reports on adverse effects within 5 business days of receipt.

- Disclose correspondence with regulatory agencies within 15 business days.
- Notify the town if the company is asserting any confidentiality claims to shield public disclosure of reports or data contained in regulatory filings.
- Pay liquidated damages (\$250,000) per violation of the above communication protocols.
- Pay liquidated damages (\$25,000) per turbine per day) for each day that turbine lights are on without the Aircraft Detection and Lighting System (ADLS) being active.
- Within two months, initiate a process to seek public input on new emergency response plans, including blade-failure scenarios.
- Establish and maintain a \$10 million escrow fund to ensure coverage of cleanup costs from future failures.
- Permanently suspend new projects if any future incident forces beach closures or shellfish harvesting bans for seven consecutive days or 14 total days in any six-month period.

If Vineyard Wind does not respond in good faith, the town said it will escalate the matter further.

In addition, the town called on Vineyard Wind's owners – Avangrid Renewables, Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners and Iberdrola – and their investors, to uphold their stated commitments.

They also urged federal regulatory agencies and elected leaders including U.S. Sens. Elizabeth Warren and Edward Markey, Congressman William Keating, Governor Maura Healey, state Sen. Julian Cyr and state Rep. Tom Moakley to help enforce the company's obligations under the town's 15 specific demands for accountability.

"We are done waiting for them to do the right thing," Mohr said. "We call on Vineyard Wind's owners, investors, federal regulators, and our elected leaders to stand with us in holding the company to its word."

Cyr issued a response shortly after the press conference saying that while he remains a strong supporter of renewable energy, he stands with the Town of Nantucket and believes its demands are "reasonable and achievable." Cyr said he will work with state leaders to help enforce the Good Neighbor Agreement and ensure Vineyard Wind engages with Nantucket in good faith.

State Representative Thomas Moakley also said supports the town of Nantucket and that he will work with his state and federal counterparts toward the best interests of his constituents, including those on the island.

"The points listed in today's press release are reasonable expectations for Vineyard Wind to be a good neighbor to island communities," he wrote. "Our town officials must have a seat at the table as our region continues to lead the national transition to sustainable energy sources."

Vineyard Wind is the state's only active offshore wind project, and is exporting power from 17 of its planned 62 turbines, while 23 turbines have been fully installed, according to a quarterly investor report last week from Iberdrola.

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