

Wellfleet Seasonal Residents Association

Promoting community involvement and communication

Fall 2020 eLetter

It's time to pay your 2020 dues -

please do so [online or by mail](#)



*September beach day, LeCount Hollow
photo by Ellen Rothman*

As you know if you read the regular updates from WSRA this spring, Wellfleet did not escape the scourge of Covid-19, no matter how far away it sometimes seems from “the real world.” In the early months, the pandemic closed Town Hall, the library, theaters, churches, stores, motels, and restaurants—not to mention the swap shop--and threatened to devastate the 2020 tourist season. In May and June, many renters cancelled and others hesitated to book. Some seasonal residents joined the “covid refugees” leaving New York, Boston and other cities where the virus was surging and opened their Wellfleet houses months earlier than usual. Both year-rounders and seasonal residents pitched in to help feed hungry families. As it turned out, visitors *did* come, perhaps because the Cape is accessible by car to millions of people. From the middle of June to the middle of September, while a drought produced perfect vacation weather, the beaches were full of socially distanced groups using reconfigured parking lots.

Public restrooms were closed but portable toilets and wash stations were deployed at every beach.

It worked: social distancing and mask wearing kept the virus largely at bay. In a typical summer, the population of Wellfleet goes from about 3,000 souls to an



Hydrangea
photo by Julie Rothman

estimated 17,000—including hundreds of essential workers living in cramped quarters and mask-less partygoers crowded onto shuttle buses. Nevertheless, the infection rate on the Outer Cape remained and remains low.

From January 1 to September 31, the total case count for Wellfleet was only eight, one of whom died. 910 people were tested. In the last two weeks, there was one positive case for a positivity rate of 1.15%, among the lowest in the state. Perhaps the greatest damage has been done to the shellfishing industry which lost most of its customers in the spring when restaurants closed all over the country.

Oyster Fest-- The Shuck Must Go On!

As usual on the weekend after Columbus Day, Wellfleet will celebrate OysterFest. This year, the event will be streamed for free on YouTube at 5 p.m. on Saturday Oct. 17. Organized by Wellfleet Shellfish Promotion and Tasting (S.P.A.T.), the 2020 'Fest will feature celebrity chefs, including award-winning chef, restaurateur, and author Ming Tsai; and rising culinary star Elle Simone Scott, test chef and food stylist on America's Test Kitchen and the founder of SheChef, a mentoring organization for women of color in the culinary field. Cape Cod's own G. Love will be the musical headliner, with music videos filmed in various Wellfleet locations.

The highlight will be the 20th annual Wellfleet OysterFest All Star Shuck Off, a reimagining of the event's famous oyster shucking contest. Ten legendary shuckers will compete to be crowned "best of the best."



Two short films about Wellfleet's history as the heart of American oyster growing and the community's bonds with its shellfish farmers and wild harvesters will also premiere at the event.

The films were produced by director and editor Justin Lynch and graphic designer Andrew Jacob, both Wellfleet oyster farmers, joined by executive producer Liz Shook, who will also produce the virtual OysterFest.

In addition to the event's virtual entertainment, the 2020 Wellfleet OysterFest will include a series of online "Learn to Shuck" workshops and an online auction, with proceeds to benefit S.P.A.T.'s mission and support of the local shellfishing industry and community. For more information and to register, go to [Eventbrite - Wellfleet Oysterfest](#).

Boil Water Alert

The managers of Wellfleet water system discovered E. coli bacteria in samples on September 24th and 25th. The next day, the state issued a "[boil water alert](#)". Occupants of the 290 homes served by the system were told to boil tap water for at least one minute and restaurants for five.



photo by Tom Rothman

According to the state Department of Environmental Protection, E. coli bacteria can make you sick and are especially a concern for infants, young children, the elderly and people with weakened immune systems. Coliforms are bacteria which are naturally present in the environment and are used as an indicator that other, potentially harmful bacteria may be present. Bacterial contamination can occur when increased run-off enters the drinking water source (for example, following heavy rains). It can also happen due to a break in the distribution system (pipes) or a failure in the water treatment process. The cause of the problem in Wellfleet is still not known.

Getting the word out to residents, property owners, and businesses on the town water system proved to be a challenge.

Police Chief Michael Hurley sent out alerts developed by the Kansas company that created the town's website, but only people who had signed up for alerts on the town website received them. Anyone who had changed their email address or phone number missed the boil water alert issued on Saturday night. A second message sent on Sunday left some people alarmed and suspicious of a hoax.

Over 12 hours on Sunday, Rebekah Eldridge, water department clerk, and Jim Hood, chair of the board of water commissioners, personally called all property owners with hookups to the system. Those without current contact information could not be reached.

Chief Hurley conceded that "the process was clunky and confusing. People were getting frustrated. The main issue," he said, was "that the town staff was unprepared and untrained in the use of the emergency alert system.... The time, the effort, and the training was never put in. We were supposed to be set up and ready to go, but we seem to manage by crisis," Hurley told *The Provincetown Independent*.

Flushing of the system and additional water quality testing have occurred. After three tests with no bacteria, the boil water order was lifted and the water declared safe to drink on Friday October 3, 2020.

Most homes in Wellfleet use wells and are not tied into the town water system. Water and sewage continue to be critical issues on the Outer Cape, which sits on *one* aquifer. These concerns have been addressed at WSRA meetings in the past and will be featured again in next summer's programs.

To sign up to receive all emergency alerts, go to wellfleet-ma.regroup.com.

Annual Town Meeting

On Saturday, September 12, 2020, Wellfleet voters made history by holding the first-ever outdoor town meeting on the elementary school ball field. In less than four hours, 200 voters adopted all of the articles on the warrant, with the exception of those that were indefinitely postponed (including four that did not pass a Proposition 2½ override when the budget was approved on September 4, 2020).

Of the six overrides that did pass, the most expensive was to borrow up to \$3.8M to replace a water main for the town's secondary or backup public water source required by the state. Properties on Old Hay Road, part of Route 6, and Briar Lane would get access to town water, giving 80 customers the opportunity to hookup to the municipal system. If the town constructs the affordable housing complex being planned for Lawrence Road, an additional 9,000 gallons a day will be needed. Although the primary system has adequate capacity for that now, an expanded backup system will eventually be needed. The board of

water commissioner is optimistic that the town will receive grants to cover “a substantial portion” of the cost.

Voters also agreed to hire to new firefighter-paramedics, ensuring three people on duty 24 hours/day. Voters also approved \$110,000 to install a sprinkler system at the Wellfleet Elementary School.

Only minutes after a similar measure succeeded in Brewster and weeks before other Cape towns followed suit, Wellfleet voters passed a ban on the sale of non-carbonated, unflavored drinking water in single-use plastic bottles smaller than one gallon effective Sept. 1, 2021. “Less than 10 percent [of plastic] is recycled and most ends up in landfills,” a Brewster voter said. “Recycling cannot be effectively done. If we were able to turn plastic bottles back into bottles, the plastics industry would’ve done that. Instead they’ve run a multi-million-dollar campaign to convince us recycling works. Drink tap water. Plastic consumption is hurting us.”



\$350,000 in Community Preservation Act funding was allocated to Phase 2 of the Wellfleet History Society and Museum renovation project. Phase 2 will include:



photo courtesy of the Wellfleet Historical Society

1. The return of the period and memorial garden, (installation is ongoing).
2. Welcoming and accessible entrances, at the front and back.
3. Functional and ADA compliant restrooms and rooms for educational programs and meetings.
4. Updated HVAC, insulation, fire suppression, safety and security systems.
5. Connection of all 3 buildings through the interior.

Harbor Dredging

After 26 years of lobbying, waiting, and hoping and with a combination of federal, state and local money, the dredging of Wellfleet Harbor’s federal channel began the first week of October. On Friday, September 25, the digger—*Woods I*—arrived in the harbor. Once the rest of the machinery arrives, dredging will take place 24/7.

In order for the equipment the town needs to enter and dredge its harbor, the federal channel, which runs between state and town-owned portions of the harbor, has to have been recently dredged. The Army Corps of Engineers estimates that it will be finished dredging the federal channel well before its December 31 cut-off date. That will give the town the opportunity to do a month’s worth of dredging this year. It will continue in the fall of 2021 and be finished in the fall of 2022.

Medici Memorial Bench

On a beautiful late summer day, a bench was dedicated to the memory of Arthur Medici, who died in the fatal shark attack off Newcomb Hollow Beach in September 2018. His fiancée Emily Rocha and members of his family attended a short

service on the small bluff above the beach on Sunday afternoon, September 13th. Marisa Medici, Arthur Medici's aunt, thanked the Wellfleet community for its support.



photo by Julie Rothman



So. Wellfleet General Store, c.1950s

Pot Shops to Open

Two sites familiar to Wellfleetians—the South Wellfleet General Store and the Cape Cod Bank & Trust Building at 10 Main St.—expect to re-open by year's end as the town's first recreational marijuana dispensaries. Both Cape Cod Cannabis in South Wellfleet and the Piping Plover just off Route 6 have received provisional licenses from the MA Cannabis Control Commission.

Only completing construction and final inspection remain before they are authorized to open for business. Once they have received their final licenses, both shops can begin hiring staff and building inventory. The expectation is that at least initially consumers will shop only by appointment. A third shop, Nature's Alternative, is planning to open next to Dunkin Donuts on Route 6; its provisional licensing is still pending. Two marijuana stores are already open in Provincetown.

Dues and donations, please

WSRA counts on its members to pay dues without receiving an annual invoice. Dues and individual donations are WSRA's only sources of funding-- \$25 for a single membership or \$35 for a family/household membership per calendar year.

To join, renew or pay by credit card or paypal, use the appropriate link below:

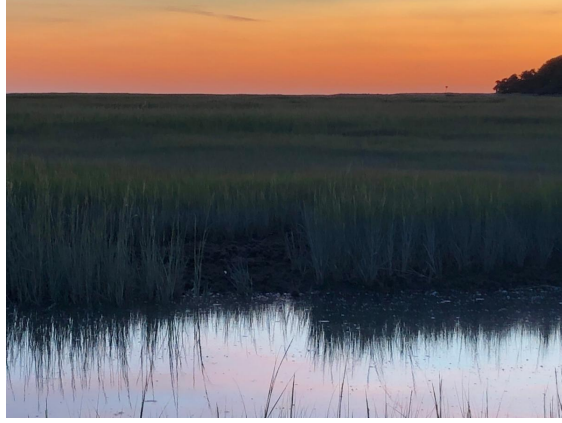
- * [For Individual Memberships \(\\$25 dues\)](#)
- * [For Family Memberships \(\\$35 dues\)](#)
- * [To give a donation](#)

New members, [join online](#) or download the [WSRA membership form](#) and mail it with your payment to:

WSRA
P.O. Box 1323
Wellfleet, MA 02667-1323

If you would like more than one member of your household to receive email from WSRA, please [email](#) us!

THANK YOU!



Lt Island sunset, photo by Julie Rothman
