

## **WNRTA Winter Newsletter**

**February 2016**



Photo by Phyllis Bretholtz

So far, it has been a quiet winter in Wellfleet, although the giant blizzard that paralyzed the East Coast over the weekend of January 23-24 dumped 6-12" of snow on the Cape while barely touching most of mainland Massachusetts.

The Wellfleet Chamber of Commerce sent out this amazing video by Jeff Smith of Winterfleet or Wellfleet in the snow. It will take your breath away!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nvfBSn0zuUs>

Here are a few stories of interest to non-resident taxpayers:

### **Wellfleet Harbor**

Part-timers may think of shellfishing as recreation (and the source of delicious oysters and clams) but, next to tourism, it is also Wellfleet's most important industry. The town is one of the leaders in commercial shellfish production in Massachusetts, producing almost a quarter of the shellfish landings in the state. The 260 acres dedicated to aquaculture generate \$4.5 million a year and support about 200 jobs.

In November, more than 110 people attended the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual State of Wellfleet Harbor Conference. Dr. Seth Tuler of Worcester Polytechnic Institute explained that shellfish are particularly vulnerable to climate change and variability. Sea level rise, precipitation changes, increasing water and air temperatures, and ocean acidification all pose serious threats to shellfish and commercial shellfishing and thus to Wellfleet's economic and environmental vitality.

The [Social and Environmental Research Institute](#) maintains an excellent website that provides information on the impact of climate change on Wellfleet Harbor and presents strategies for mitigation.

While mitigating climate change will take decades, immediate action is needed to restore the health of Wellfleet Harbor. A healthy harbor should be dredged every ten years, and ours was last dredged in 2001. Silt has built up to the point where mariners can access the marina only three hours before or after high tide. A 2012 study estimated the cost at \$12 million, but continued build up is likely to drive up the cost further.

Even if the money were in hand, the lengthy process to address environmental concerns and secure the necessary permits means that dredging would begin late next year at the earliest. In the meantime, aquaculture is at risk suffer and recreational and charter boaters are already feeling the pain. The town has applied to the Army Corps of Engineers for funding and is completing the Corps' permitting process but a combination of federal, state, and local funding will be needed. Time is not our friend.



## **OysterFest 2015**

Wellfleet Shellfish Promotion and Tasting (SPAT), a local non-profit organization, sponsors the increasingly popular Wellfleet OysterFest every October. Last fall, the three-day event drew between 20,000 - 25,000 people. Mac Hay, owner of Mac's Seafood, told the *Provincetown Banner* that between 125,000 and 135,000 oysters were consumed, along with an unknown number of clams; he estimated that the added spending by visitors in town was at least \$2.5 million. Balancing the commercial benefits of the 'Fest while preserving its small-town character is tough. As Mac Hay said, "It's a conversation we really need to have in Wellfleet."

With the proceeds from OysterFest, SPAT was able to award scholarships, fund a report on the potential effects on shellfishing of climate change, and invest in the Aquacultural Research Corp.'s hatchery in Dennis, which was in danger of closing. The ARC hatchery provides 80% of the seed for shellfish propagation on Cape Cod.

## Harry Terkanian's Last State of the Town Address



Long time resident lawyer Harry Terkanian, who addressed the WNRTA membership last August, announced that after five years of service as Town Administrator, he will retire at the end of June 2016. A search committee has been formed to find his successor.

In his last State of the Town address on February 1, he told an audience of about 40, "I'm sorry to be the one to say the emperor has no clothes but the funding mechanism for the municipal water system is broken." The town borrowed \$2.5 million to construct it and assumed that everyone would connect voluntarily. Only 54% of potential customers have done so, not enough to cover the debt service on the loan. Justina Carlson, chair of the Board of Water Commissioners, told the Provincetown Banner that "The model for the water system was idealistic, in that connecting to it was voluntary. It's more normal to require people to connect." She said the Board was hoping to correct the model "before there is trouble." The water system is not the only budgetary challenge facing the town. The biggest infrastructure project is a renovation of the police station, estimated to cost \$5.5 million.

For more, please see the article in the February 2, 2016 issue of the Banner.

## Changes Coming to the Inn at Duck Creeke

In the spring, the Inn at Duck Creeke will re-open as The Wagner at Duck [no "e"] Creek. Erica Chapman and Leo Wagner bought the 80-seat Sweet Seasons Restaurant and 27-room inn housed in four buildings over more than five acres of land from Bob Morrill and Judy Pihl, who ran the inn for 35 years.

The couple and their four young daughters moved from Boston to Wellfleet late last summer. Chapman was raised in upstate New York, but she summered with her family in Wellfleet and worked at a number of businesses, including the Box Lunch and The Orleans Inn. Her parents owned a local B&B. Wagner resigned from his corporate job to settle his family in their new home and prepare for his new role as inn-keeper. Chapman is continuing to commute to her job in Boston several days a week.

"We want to preserve some of the history while embracing the contemporary era," Erica Chapman told the Banner. "We've already started stripping wallpaper. It will lose some of its 'antiqui-ness.'"

Other changes are in store. While the inn has been a seasonal operation, Chapman and Wagner plan to be open year-round. Meantime, as the Provincetown Banner wrote, "as townspeople gathered in mid-December for the annual lighting of the Christmas tree in front of Town Hall, every restaurant in downtown Wellfleet was dark."

## Dues and Donations, please

WNRTA dues are modest-\$25 for an individual, \$35 for a family-but they are what keep us afloat. You may send a check to:

**WNRTA  
PO Box 1323  
Wellfleet, MA 02667-1323**

If 2015 came to a close without your paying last year's dues, please double the amount.

Contributions are always welcome. All dues and donations are fully tax deductible.

To pay on line, please go to <http://wnrta.org/join/> or use the applicable Paypal link below (no account required):

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*As always, we thank you for your continued support.*