

NEWS FROM THE WELLFLEET NON-RESIDENT TAXPAYERS ASSOCIATION SPRING 2015

Possible Rooms Tax in Wellfleet: A Letter from WNRTA President Susan Reverby

Although 70% of Wellfleet's annual operating budget comes from property taxes paid by non-residents, we cannot vote at Town Meeting, where issues of importance to us are often decided. That is certainly the case this year when on April 27, 2015, Town Meeting voters will vote on whether or not "to authorize the Board of Selectman to petition the General Court for special legislation authorizing the Town to impose a room occupancy tax on vacation rentals."

Town Meeting has considered this proposal before, most recently in 2012. Translated into plain English, it means asking the state legislature to allow the Town of Wellfleet to "make vacation rentals subject to the same [5%] rooms tax as is currently paid by hotels and motels."

Here is how it works in the ancient Commonwealth of Massachusetts: Before the bill can be considered in the legislature, Town Meeting must ask the Board of Selectmen to vote in favor of it. If a majority at Town Meeting votes in favor of having the Selectmen petition the legislature, the bill still has to go before a legislative committee and then, if it makes it out of committee, be voted on by the full House and Senate. In other words, even if it passes Town Meeting, it does not necessarily become law.

I recently spoke with Sarah Peake, who represents the Outer Cape in the House. She has long supported the rooms tax. Because most rentals on the Cape are in homes, this tax would be a source of considerable revenue. Rep. Peake believes that the tax is a fair way to generate some of the revenue needed to meet steadily rising costs.

Peake has sponsored a bill to allow towns to implement this tax for more than a decade, and it has never made it out of committee. Both the governor and the legislative leadership object to a tax that applies only to some cities and towns, rather than all. While Peake hopes the bill will get to the floor this year, she sees an uphill battle given the anti-tax political environment on Beacon Hill. Furthermore, the powerful Massachusetts Board of Realtors has long opposed the legislation, arguing that it will have a negative impact on tourism and impose a burden on senior citizens.

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and would be affected by a room tax if one were instituted. Many WNRTA members rent their Wellfleet homes for at least a few weeks a year and would be affected by a room tax if one were instituted. Town Meeting will be held on April 27th at the elementary school beginning at 7:00 PM. It is open to anyone but non-resident taxpayers may not participate in the discussion or voting.

We will be back in touch with a report on the results of the meeting (which will also appear on the town's website <http://www.wellfleet-ma.gov/node/111/news>).

We are planning to devote one of our summer meetings to the issue. Stay tuned.

Susan M. Reverby
WNRTA President



Rumble Strips on Route 6

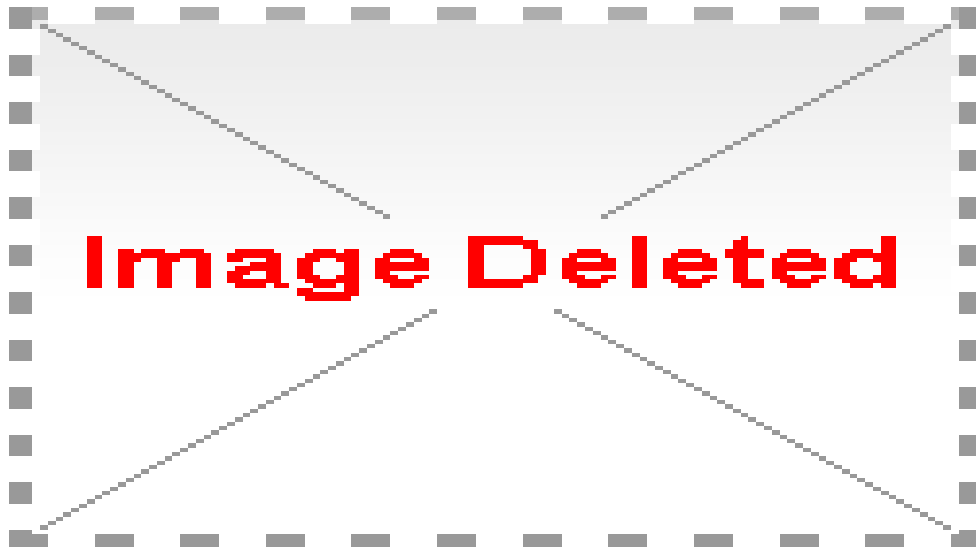
In the wake of four serious accidents in 2014, the state Department of Transportation will install three sections of "rumble strips"-one-inch grooves ground into the pavement to alert distracted or inattentive drivers-on Route 6 in Wellfleet.

The first will be from the Eastham town line to Castagna Drive, the second will run from Lieutenant Island Road to Old County Road, and the third from north of Main Street to north of Wellfleet Woods Lane.

A way to avoid traffic studies that would take much longer, the rumble strips are being "viewed as an experiment," according to Board of Selectmen Chair Paul Pilcher. "There might be more extensive work done in the future. This is not necessarily the final product."

Wellfleet Police Chief Ronald Fisette said that the town will ask state highway officials to assess the Route 6 passing zones in the future.

A Memorable Winter



WNRTA Board member Jim Campen took this photo of Newcomb Hollow on January 30th.

Unless you spent the past few months on Mars, it won't come as news to you that the winter of 2015 broke all kinds of records in eastern Massachusetts. It began in mid-November when dropping water temperatures and westerly winds caused the stranding of more than 1100 sea turtles compared to the last record year (2012) of a mere 413.

The Banner reported that "in more than 30 years of conservation work, it was the largest influx of cold-stunned sea turtles the [Wellfleet Bay] sanctuary had ever seen." A blizzard on January 27th was the first in a series of giant storms that left Wellfleet looking like Buffalo. There was erosion on both the ocean and bay sides, but while the steps at Nauset Light Beach in Eastham were destroyed, the ones at Marconi Beach survived.

A Cape Cod Times videographer captured the giant ice chunks in Wellfleet Harbor. <http://www.capecodtimes.com/article/20150311/NEWS/150319840/0/SEARCH>



Changing of the Guard at the Library

Elaine McElroy retired this winter after 34 years as director of Wellfleet's much-loved library. In 2008 Elaine was one of 10 winners of the "I Love My Librarian" Award given by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the New York Times.

In her nomination of Elaine, Harriet Korim described her perfectly: She "calmly and confidently showed me how to use my first search engine-- and I was a raving Luddite! Elaine is a natural teacher and a rare leader who knows not only how to inspire but how to empower and delegate... She has a similar effect in her support and encouragement of young and old artists, teachers, scholars, community organizers and cultural programmers: She makes it clear the library belongs to us."

The new director is Jennifer Wertkin, who comes to Wellfleet from the Columbia University Law School. A graduate of Bates College, where she majored in anthropology and religion, she earned a law degree in 1997 from the University of Wisconsin. Her practice focused on Indian and government law before she decided to become a law librarian. After the public meeting with candidate Wertkin, Esther Elkin told the Banner: "She's fabulous. I think she's just the right person for the job. She's in her early 40's and right at the cusp of what libraries are becoming."

Coastal Erosion Commission Draft Report Available for Public Comment

In 2014, the Massachusetts legislature established a Coastal Erosion Commission to investigate and document a problem that is close to home for those of us who love Wellfleet-coastal erosion.

The Commission was charged with developing strategies and recommendations to reduce, minimize, or eliminate coastal erosion and the impact it has on property, infrastructure, public safety, and beaches and dunes.

On January 7, 2015, the Coastal Erosion Commission issued a draft report and began a 90-day public review and comment period. You can find a copy of the report on the Commission's website.

<http://www.mass.gov/eea/waste-mgmt-recycling/coasts-and-oceans/erosion-commission-report.html>



Nellie Road, South Wellfleet, spring 2011
Photo by Ellen Rothman

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- 1) Personal Check (Mail to WNRTA, P. O. Box 1323, Wellfleet, MA 02666
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* To use Paypal, enter your email address and Paypal Password.

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