

# Wellfleet Non-resident Taxpayers' Association

*Promoting community involvement and communication*

## Spring 2019 eLetter

**Reminder: please [pay your 2019 dues on-line](#) or by mail**

*If you haven't had a chance to read WNRTA's Spring eLetter sent out last week, please read this one instead.*

*For those of you who did read the original, please note that there are two minor corrections in this version, both involving taxes. First, the total short-term rental tax is 12.45%, not 14.25%. Second, the tax increases needed to pay for the town's share of dredging the Harbor and other expenditures approved at the Annual Town Meeting will not be the same for residents and non-residents. A non-resident who owns a property assessed at \$538,524 (the town average) will see a tax increase of \$308, as stated. However, because of the residential property tax exemption (RTE) adopted last September, the taxes a resident will pay on a property of the same assessed value will increase by 20% less—that is, by about \$246.*

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The first night of Wellfleet's Annual Town Meeting was like so many others this spring. Voters stood in the rain waiting to get into the elementary school gymnasium. A record was set in Boston: it rained on 21 days in April, the most in any month since record keeping began in 1872. Things did not improve much in May, with colder and wetter weather than normal. On the 14<sup>th</sup>, [CapeCodWeather.net](http://CapeCodWeather.net) declared, "It doesn't get much worse than this in May." One wonders if there will be *anywhere* to spread a towel at the ponds this summer. The weather has made it difficult to plant a garden but the flowering trees and shrubs have never been happier.



### **WNRTA 2019 Summer Programs**

**Thursday, July 18, 7:30 – 9:00 PM, Council on Aging  
Water, Water Everywhere**

Andrew Gottlieb, Executive Director of the Association for the Preservation of Cape Cod, will moderate a panel on the state of Wellfleet's waters, especially the ponds, shellfishing beds, and Cape Cod Bay.

**Thursday, July 31 7:30 – 9:00 PM, Preservation Hall**

### **Housing: Improving Your Home, Our Town**

Come hear Planning Board chair Gerald Parent, Realtor Bruce Katcher, and Elaine McIlroy, chair of the Wellfleet Housing Authority discuss what individuals and the community need to do if they want to improve a home and housing in Wellfleet.

### **Thursday, August 15 7:30 - 9:00 PM, Council on Aging State of the Town**

Meet members of the Selectboard who will join us for our annual meeting and a discussion of what the BOS hopes to achieve in the coming year. Bring your questions and ideas about what is happening in Wellfleet, how your taxes are being spent, and what the BOS sees as the most important issues facing the town.

**All programs are free and open to the public.  
Both venues are handicapped accessible.**

## **2019 Annual Town Meeting**



WNRTA President Susan Reverby attended Town Meeting for the first time and shared her impressions: “Hundreds of Wellfleet citizens waited patiently in the dripping rain to become ‘citizen legislators’ by participating in what town moderator Dan Silverman reminded them was the oldest form of democracy. Once inside they sat in alphabetical groups in chairs on the gym floor, while those of us nonresident taxpayers—and thus non-voters—and other interested parties took seats in the bleachers.

Silverman set a civil tone; he explained that there would be no back and forth debates or personal attacks, that questions/statements were limited to three minutes, and that there would be no applause until after the vote was announced. All votes were taken on a voice vote, even when the issue required a two-thirds majority. Things moved fairly quickly at first as budgets, contracts, road repairs, equipment purchases, and firefighter and police positions were approved.

Then it was time for the big-ticket items. The first up was the long overdue dredging of the Wellfleet Harbor. The Army Corps of Engineers will cover the \$5M cost of dredging the federal channel. The estimate to dredge the remainder of the Harbor is \$15M, which the town hopes will be split 50/50 with the state. The motion carried without debate, and the result was greeted with cheers.

The next issue was more controversial—the purchase of 200 acres of tidal flats off Indian Neck owned by a group known as the HDYLTA trust, as in How Do You Like Those Apples. (A [memo](#) about the issue from the Shellfish Constable to the Selectboard is posted on the town’s website.) Bought in 1999 by a shellfish group to protect their access after a legal dispute with “uplanders,” the flats were now being offered to the town, initially for many millions of dollars. By Town Meeting,

the owners had agreed to a \$2M price and an anonymous individual had offered to give the town \$1M towards the cost.

It would have been difficult for a novelist to make this up—the name of the owners' trust, the location of the “land” (underwater), and the anonymous gift. The discussion was lively. Do the owners have a clear title? Who really owns the bottom of the Bay? Was the price fair? Speakers referred to colonial ordinances, the importance of shellfishing to Wellfleet's past, present, and future, and the differences between agriculture and fishing. As things became heated, Silverman called the vote and determined that two-thirds were in favor.”

Susan concludes her account by urging “everyone to experience Town Meeting at least once.”

A second meeting was held the following Monday evening to vote on funding for questions approved at the first town meeting and to elect town officials. Eighty-eight percent of the 773 citizens in attendance voted to borrow the \$7.5M needed for Wellfleet's share of the cost of dredging the Harbor, an outcome that was never really in doubt. The \$1M for the flats was also approved.

It is estimated that the cumulative impact of the additional spending approved in the first year will increase the taxes by \$308 on a median-priced single-family home assessed at \$538,524 that does not qualify for the residential property tax exemption. The tax increase for a resident-owned property of the same value would be 20% less, or about \$246. A [breakdown](#) is available on the town's website.

## 2019 Beach Preparedness

No one reading this will be surprised to learn that the number of white sharks coming close to shore to feed on seals at swimming beaches is increasing. Since 2012, there have been five significant incidents involving white sharks and humans, including a life-threatening injury and a fatal attack in 2018.



While acknowledging that there will always be a risk of a shark-human interaction for anyone in the water anywhere on the East Coast, Wellfleet is working to improve its response to a shark-human interaction in the following ways:

- **Stop the Bleed Training:** Along with other Outer Cape communities, the town is conducting on-going Stop the Bleed training. Stop the Bleed teaches members of the public the basic techniques of bleeding control. First responders and lifeguards have already been trained. All town vehicles will carry “stop the bleed” kits.
- **Extended Lifeguard Monitoring:** The town will extend the lifeguard season on weekends through the end of September, provided staff is available.
- **Emergency Call Boxes:** Wellfleet is waiting on delivery and installation of Emergency Call Boxes, which should be in place for the upcoming season at all town-managed ocean beaches. Located as close to the beach as possible, each will be identified by a blue light so that visitors to the beach will be able to contact 911 quickly.

- **Specialized & Dedicated Life Saving Equipment at Beaches:** Wellfleet has ordered a Utility Terrain Vehicle supplied with all necessary medical equipment to be ready at any time for a first responder who needs it. Delivery of the vehicle is expected prior to the 2019 season.
- **Research into possible deterrent and detection devices:** The Town of Wellfleet joined with other Outer Cape towns along with the Cape Cod National Seashore and the Atlantic White Shark Conservancy to fund the Woods Hole Group to study the effectiveness of possible shark deterrent systems and possible shark detection devices. It has been clear from the beginning that there isn't a quick fix. Sharks and seals are in their natural habitat. We as humans have to modify our behavior. Perhaps the study will identify a possible deterrent or detection device that will make swimmers safer but nothing we do will make anyone 100% safe.

## Parking Task Force

The Parking Task Force has been meeting twice a month since the fall. The [minutes and recordings](#) of the meetings are available on the town website. Unfortunately, no non-resident taxpayers participated but you have a chance to give your input by taking the survey that was included in your 2019 tax bill and is also [online](#). Note that this year for the first time, you can get your parking sticker(s) [online](#).

## News Briefs:

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### ***Rental Occupancy Tax***

As you know from the [winter eLetter](#), last fall the Massachusetts legislature passed and the governor signed a bill to levy a tax on all short-term rentals throughout the state. Beginning July 1, any rental in Wellfleet of less than 31 consecutive calendar days is subject to a 12.45% tax. (A rental of 14 days or less per calendar year is excluded from the tax.) If this applies to your property, you must register at [MassTaxConnect](#).

### ***Recreational Marijuana***

Most of the Cape's 15 towns have banned retail marijuana businesses. The exceptions are Provincetown, Truro, Wellfleet, Eastham and Mashpee. In Wellfleet, the Selectboard has approved Host Community Agreements for recreational cannabis shops at four locations—two in South Wellfleet, one in the Cove shopping center, one at the health food store in town. A fifth application for the former bank building at 10 Main Street is pending. Securing an HCA does not guarantee that the applicants will receive a license. In any case, it is unlikely that any will be operational by this summer.

It is good to remember that even with the legalization of recreational marijuana in Massachusetts, you cannot smoke in a place where you cannot smoke tobacco, and you cannot consume marijuana in any public place. Like alcohol, you may not have an open container of adult-use marijuana/marijuana

products in the passenger area of your car while on the road or at a place accessible to the public. An “open container” includes a package with its seal broken or a package from which the contents have been partially removed. The 2017 Act does not change the existing penalties for operating a car if you are impaired by the use of marijuana or marijuana products.

### ***Reopening of Outer Cape Health Services in Wellfleet***



If all goes according to plan, on June 19<sup>th</sup>, Outer Cape Health Service’s Wellfleet facility will begin treating patients again. (To book an appointment after June 19, call 508.905.2888). There will be a Garden Party celebration, preceded by a tour of the new facility from 1:00 to 2:30, for \$25.00 a person. On June 12—earlier than usual—the Bernard Greenhouse Concert will take place at the First Congregational Church of Wellfleet, with world-class cellist Amit Peled and his Mount Vernon Virtuosi. All proceeds benefit OCHS.

The OCHS pharmacy at 2700 State Highway/Route 6 has remained open during the renovations. It serves year-round residents, summer residents, and visitors year-round. Customers do not need to be patients of Outer Cape Health Services. It accepts prescriptions from any licensed prescriber.

### ***Addition to Preservation Hall***

Memorial Day weekend traditionally marks the beginning of the summer season in Wellfleet. This year, on Monday, the 26<sup>th</sup> at 5PM, there will be a ribbon cutting celebration of the addition to Preservation Hall.

### ***Changes at campground***



Paine’s Campground at 180 Old Kings Hwy. reopened on May

23<sup>rd</sup> as the Wellfleet Hollow State Campground under the management of the state Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Owned by the Paine family for 60 years, the 28-acre site was sold to the state last year for \$3.6M. DCR spent the winter improving the infrastructure, including the roads, fire rings, parking areas, and water lines. The Paines operated 155 campsites; there will now be 107 tent or pop-up sites. Reservations can be made by calling (877) 422-6762 or [online](#).

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## In Memoriam: Frances Davidson, 1942-2019

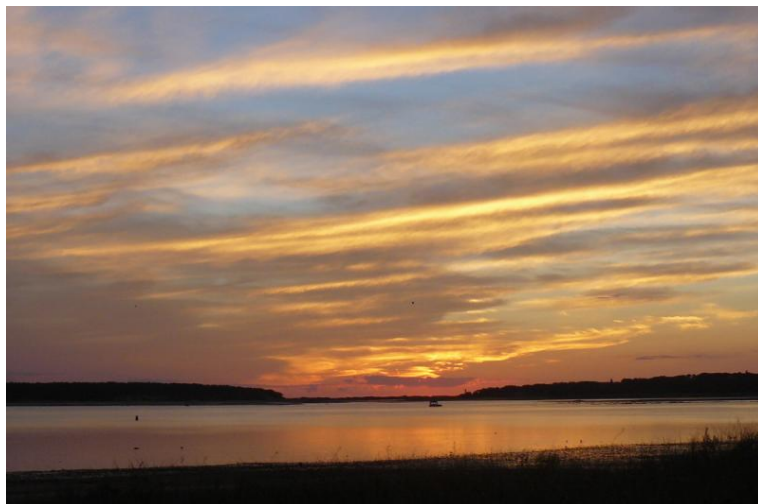


Long time board member and WNRTA treasurer died after a sudden and severe brain aneurysm on May 12, 2019. An international expert in human nutrition, she worked for decades for the U.S. Agency for International Development and headed up its Office of Nutrition. She spent many years improving the nutritional well-being of people in under resourced nations around the world.

In Wellfleet, Frances found quiet and time with her family and friends, as she took up gardening, knitting, swimming, and being with all of us. She always had time—and a smile—for WNRTA. You may remember her wonderful granddaughters who rode in the convertible for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July parade. Her family suggests that donations in Frances's memory may be made to a charity of your choice. Among her favorite causes were [HIAS](#), [breast cancer research](#), and the [Wellfleet Public Library](#)

## T.A.'s Monthly Report

Town Administrator Dan Hoort sends out a [monthly report](#). If you would like to receive it, you can sign up [here](#). Past months are now posted under News and Announcement on the T.A.'s [page](#).



## Dues and donations, please

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

To renew by credit card or paypal:

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

New members, [join on-line](#) or download the [WNRTA membership form](#) and mail it with your payment to:

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

### THANK YOU!

If you would like more than one member of your household to receive email from WNRTA, please send their names and email addresses (along with yours) to [info@wnrta.org](mailto:info@wnrta.org).

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