

WNRTA Annual Meeting 8/10/15
MINUTES

The meeting took place at Preservation Hall and opened with a welcome from WNRTA President, Susan Reverby. She remarked that our website is currently being updated and advised members to access it often for information relevant to them as property owners.

Board member May Ruth Seidel made a motion that WNRTA go on record as supporting the proposed dredging of Wellfleet Harbor. The motion was approved unanimously.

Susan introduced the first presenter of the evening: Rep. Sarah Peake, 4th Barnstable District, who is serving her fifth term in the state legislature.

Sarah spoke in support of the proposed Room Occupancy Tax Bill, which would require overnight guests who pay to stay in a private residence to pay an 11.7% tax, the same amount paid by people who stay at local inns, motels, and B&Bs, such as the one she and her wife have operated in Provincetown for 23 years. She emphasized that the surcharge would not be paid by property owners and that just over half of the revenue [6.0% of the 11.7%] would go into the town's general fund to be used at the discretion of the Selectmen. The rest of the revenue would go to the state.

Sarah pointed out that the traditional rental market on Cape Cod has shrunk dramatically. Internet technology allows anyone to list their property for rent, and tax codes and statutes haven't kept up with this changed market. She maintained that the projected revenue (\$400K – \$500K) could address the additional services the town provides during the busy season: beach maintenance, lifeguards, emergency responders, wastewater management, and more.

The next speaker was Harry Terkanian, Wellfleet Town Administrator, who addressed the state of the town. He introduced Selectman Helen Miranda Wilson, who encouraged the audience to become familiar with the Town website, an excellent vehicle to find out what's happening and when.

Harry reviewed the 2016 budget, describing it as a good way to look at the future of our community. Unlike most towns, where property taxes generate around 57% of operating revenue, Wellfleet's property taxes account for 81% of revenue. The median income of Wellfleet residents is below that of most towns in Massachusetts, and there are significant issues with the formula that determines how the town is categorized and reimbursed by the state. Wellfleet gets only 3% of its revenue from state aid, compared to an average of about 20% for other Massachusetts cities and towns. This is because the formula for distributing state aid to cities and towns depends on "Per Capita Equalized Valuation," which is the total assessed property value divided by the number of residents. By this measure, the fourteen wealthiest

municipalities in the state are, with only one exception, all on Cape Cod and the Islands (the exception is Rowe, which hosts a privately owned nuclear power plant within its borders).

Harry reviewed the 2016 goals set by the Board of Selectmen:

- 1) Advance the dredging project
- 2) Review town finances for additional sources of revenue
- 3) Invest in town facilities: Town Hall, Police Department building and Recreation building all suffer from deferred maintenance and need upgrades

- 4) Address economic development: As Wellfleet's population of twenty-five to forty-year-olds dwindles, there is a corresponding decrease in commercial activity. The scarcity of young families means a drop in the Wellfleet Elementary School population. The school was designed for 200 students, and current enrollment is 97.

The evening concluded with questions and comments from the audience on a range of topics: dredging the harbor; regionalizing area elementary schools; the status of paved private roads; planning for the local impact of global warming; the Mayo Creek and Herring River restoration projects; the town's unfunded pension liabilities; and reassigning the state's categorization of Wellfleet to a more accurate classification.

Respectfully submitted,

Betsy Van Dorn