

Wellfleet Non-resident Taxpayers' Association
Promoting community involvement and communication

Summer 2018 eLetter

OysterFest 2018 is October 13-14th this year.

Volunteers are needed to make the event greener and more sustainable.
If you can help, contact eclshreves@gmail.com or text/call 703-855-6128

It was a hot and humid summer in New England, and Wellfleet was no exception. People flocked to the beaches in spite of the well-publicized shark activity. The whole Cape-even the Bay-seemed to be getting ready for a remake of "Jaws." Reporters-and one memorable day, emergency medical personnel-descended on Truro where the beaches were regularly closed to swimmers. Wellfleet's waters were quiet by comparison until the day state biologist Greg Skomal was using a long pole from the bow of a boat to take underwater photographs. A shark suddenly breached the ocean, bearing its teeth. "It came up and opened its mouth right at my feet," Skomal said. The drama was [captured on video](#). Fishermen and boaters have reported seeing breaching white sharks, but catching them on video is rare.



Marconi Beach, July 2018

State of the Town

Four members of the Wellfleet Selectboard (all but Jerry Houk, who was away) met with an SRO group of nonresident taxpayers at Pres Hall on July 26. There was a sincere discussion of relations between the town's part-time and full-time residents. "I don't think of 'us' and 'them,'" Selectwoman Kathleen Bacon told the audience. "I see 'we' here. I see us all in this together." Topics ranged from parking to water quality, from sustainability to harbor dredging, from affordable housing to the Herring River restoration project. There was a consensus that parking at the beaches, the marina, and in the town center was becoming more and more difficult. "We get it," Janet Reinhart, Chair of the Selectboard assured the audience. "We understand it's a problem." **She has formed a Parking Task Force and is eager to have at least one nonresident taxpayer involved. If you are interested and available, [please email Janet](#) as soon as possible.**

To promote communication among all members of the Wellfleet community, Town Administrator Dan Hoort has started a newsletter to report on the activities of Wellfleet's town government. For now, it summarizes Selectboard meetings; he hopes in time to cover other boards and committees too. [Click here](#) to read the July newsletter. If you wish to receive future newsletters, you can join the mailing list [here](#).

You can also read the [minutes and agendas](#) for meetings of the Selectboard or [watch the video](#) on the town website. If you want to keep in touch with Wellfleet on Facebook, there is a [public page](#), one called [Wellfleet Tales](#) and another, [Wellfleet-Raw and Unfiltered](#).

Taxation without Representation?

One of the liveliest summer programs focused on the issue of nonresidents' voting rights on the Outer Cape. Historian and WNRTA president Susan M. Reverby reviewed briefly the history of the relationship between voting and property ownership in America. She reported on the efforts in some resort towns to give nonresident property owners a partial franchise. Representatives from the nonresident taxpayers/part time resident associations in Truro and Provincetown explained how both of those communities have moved toward differential taxation, most notably a residential tax exemption [RTE]. By Massachusetts law, the RTE must be revenue neutral, so if a portion of the assessed value of residents' homes is exempt from the property tax, the tax rate must be higher than it would be without the RTE. This year in Truro, for example, the RTE resulted in a 6% increase in nonresidents' real estate taxes. (For more information on the residential tax exemption in Truro, [click here](#).)

Last September, the Wellfleet Selectboard defeated the residential tax exemption, but it was considered again at the September 11th meeting. This time the Selectboard voted 3 to 2 to implement a residential tax exemption in Wellfleet.

The Selectboard handed out the attached fact sheet on the RTE at the

September 11 meeting. It can be found [here](#) on our website.

The fall issue of the WNRTA eLetter will explain the RTE in more detail.



Main Street

Wellfleet Harbor

Wellfleet's harbor was last dredged in 1995 and has been in decline for the past decade. Assistant Shellfish Constable John "Clam" Mankevetch recently told the *Banner* that "there has been tremendous [shellfish] mortality because oysters can't get oxygenated water." "Black mayonnaise," as the anoxic, sulfuric sludge produced by dead marsh vegetation is called, "is encroaching on aquaculture beds, smothering the oysters and other shellfish. "Shellfish can't grow in mud," one frustrated oysterman said.

Dredging is also crucial for the marina, which has suffered a significant decline in revenue as the number of boat slips and fuel sold continues to decrease. Boats at the mooring field end up sitting in the mud at low tide. Ten years ago there was a long waiting list for the 300 moorings; this year, Harbormaster Michael Flanagan says, "we're lucky if we have 150 [boats] out there." Not just money is at stake. "It's a public safety issue," Flanagan said. "Right now the marina is restricted for four hours around low tide,.. If we had to respond to an emergency at low tide, we couldn't get a boat out."

Dredging is a complex and expensive undertaking that will take up to three years and approximately \$20 million. Town officials were disappointed to

learn this summer that Wellfleet will have to wait at least until the next funding cycle before the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers will conduct its part of the dredging. "Maybe we'll make the list next year," Janet Reinhart said at the State of the Town meeting, "but I'm running out of hope. We might have to borrow the money ourselves with a \$12 million bond."



Cape Cod National

Seashore

At a program co-sponsored by the Wellfleet Nonresident Taxpayers Association and the Wellfleet Forum on August 9, another full-house at Pres Hall had the chance to meet Brian Carlstrom, the new Superintendent of the Cape Cod National Seashore, and Deputy Superintendent Kathy Tevyaw. Here are the highlights of their report:

- The Cape Cod Commission met in June for the first time in a year but it is awaiting re-authorization from Washington before it can meet again.
- The new Superintendent intends to continue the policy of his predecessor- "rebuild as we retreat." It sounds simple but it is complicated to implement.
- The Park has been measuring the water quality in its ponds for over 20 years. It is stable and, in Carlstrom's words, "really good."
- Thanks to the Friends of CCNS, repair of the Red Maple swamp is almost finished; work on the White Cedar Swamp is next.
- New concrete vault toilets will replace the porta-johns on Great Island.
- Archaeological research will continue next season at Great Island.

Wellfleet Memorial Garden

In early June, after four years effort, the Wellfleet Memorial Garden officially opened on Main Street next to Preservation Hall. Located on town-owned land but privately funded and maintained, the Garden memorializes local people who died young.

One of them was Louie LeBart, who died at 25 of a heroin overdose. His mother Holly sees the garden as a place where Louie's memory can continue to foster beauty in the Wellfleet community. "Some people will love this garden because they know why it's here," Katrina Fryklund, co-founder and co-chair of the Live for Lou Foundation, said, "and some people will love it because it's beautiful."

Wellfleet
Memorial Garden,
June 2018



Affordable Housing Crisis

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts requires each city and town to have 10% of its housing be affordable; in Wellfleet, it is 2%. As sky-high housing prices make it ever harder for those who work in Wellfleet to find a nearby place to live, the Wellfleet Housing Authority and the town's Local Housing Partnership have been using their limited resources to come up with proactive and creative responses to the problem, but progress is necessarily slow. A comprehensive "Housing Needs Assessment and Action Plan" was completed late last year, and the Selectboard approved its goal of developing 60 additional permanently affordable homes in Wellfleet over the coming decade. "The town needs these units, or we do not have a sustainable community," Selectman Kathleen Bacon said at the annual State of the Town meeting. Recent accomplishments include building six (now inhabited) rental units on Gull Pond Road; awarding a contract to Cape Cod Habitat for Humanity to construct two ownership units off Route 6; and use of the "Buy Down" program to help another local family become home-owners. Approval of funding for a 65-unit regional project sited just south of Bracket Road in Eastham will provide affordable homes for at least a few more local families. Want to help? Go to [the Wellfleet Affordable Housing Trust Fund website](#).

Dues and donations, please

WNRTA dues are modest--\$25 for an individual, \$35 for a family-but they are what keep us afloat. To pay online, please go to <http://wnrta.org/join/>. If you prefer, you may send a check to:

WNRTA
PO Box 1323
Wellfleet, MA 026671323

If you would like more than one member of your household to receive the eLetter, please send their names and email addresses (along with yours) to wnrta.org.

Wondering if you have paid your dues for 2018? You can email wnrta.org and ask.

Name | Company | Phone | Email | Website

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