

# Wellfleet Seasonal Residents Association

*Promoting community involvement and communication*



*Marta Reese Flanagan*

**Update**  
**1 March 2024**

## **Trying to right the town: Community Meeting on February 26th**

If you have been following the goings on in Wellfleet, you know that both our town administrator and assistant town administrator left in February, and Selectboard meetings have continued to be hours-long contentious encounters. In hopes of starting to turn this around, the Wellfleet Community Forum, our local civic non-partisan organization (<http://wellfleetforum.org/>), convened a meeting on February 26<sup>th</sup> for the town community to discuss their concerns. (You can watch a recording at <https://reflect-townofwellfleet.cablecast.tv/CablecastPublicSite/show/3168?site=1>. We apologize for not getting information on it out to you on time for technical complications.)

Here is a summary. The meeting drew nearly 200 people both at the Adult Community Center and on Zoom. The room was filled primarily with grey haired/or bald community members, reflecting both our town population and who can make evening meetings. Chaired by Town Moderator Dan Silverman, and run by Wellfleet Community Forum board members Sheila Ryan and Curt Felix, it allowed as many people as possible to discuss their worries and solutions to the ongoing sense that the town government is in crisis. Over and over the same issues came up. Some of the focus was on the silo nature of town departments and committees, and a sense that no one was tracking the major concerns. Other town members spoke to the length of the Selectboard meetings, and the anger and bullying that has occurred over and over. Other speakers thought we needed more training for the Selectboard, or a mediation committee/think tank to discuss the problems, or some kind of state oversight. More than one person noted that when concerns raised and opinions expressed at Selectboard meetings receive no response, either at the meeting or afterwards, frustration and anger can result. Still others said we all needed to step up to join the town

committees that need more people, but noted how hard it was to be involved in civic engagement when you are working two jobs and have small children.

Some of proposed solutions were more specific. One town member spoke to the key issue of sewerage the downtown district so we can address the water quality issues and revive our slowly dying town center. Several town members who have government or consulting experience noted that our town's problems are systemic but not unique, and offered to contribute their expertise to help improve things. Others noted that tensions predictable arise when the Selectboard engages in micro-management rather than broad oversight of the town administrator.

By the end, it was agreed that other comments/solutions could be sent to the Wellfleet Community Forum and then passed on to those in town government. In general, the meeting was cordial with much concern about what to do next. Town staff are still smarting from the attacks they receive for doing their jobs, and the lack of support from the Selectboard. Clearly, given the resignations, something went awry with the Selectboard and Town Administrator that needs examination. At least the meeting aired some of the issues, and hopefully more accountability and focus on the specifics of who makes policy and who implements it can happen in the future.

### **What Happened When?**

Town resident Mike Shannon has been in touch with the state's Attorney General over the open meeting laws. He is concerned with what happened at a June Selectboard meeting that led to tensions between several Selectboard members and then Town Administrator Rich Waldo. The meeting minutes that have been released are heavily redacted. As of February 27<sup>th</sup>, Shannon has been told that the Attorney General's office is reviewing his Open Meeting violation concerns. If they rule in his favor, then the minutes will be released without redactions. This might give us a better sense of what Selectboard members did and said at that meeting that seems to have been central to Waldo's decision to leave.



**Town Meeting, Wednesday, April 24<sup>th</sup>, 6pm at the Elementary School**

Everyone can attend town meeting, where town residents vote on the budgets, petitions, and overrides for next fiscal year. Seasonal residents can attend the meeting, but have to sit in the bleachers not on the main floor and cannot vote. If you want to speak, you need permission in advance from Dan Silverman, the town meeting moderator, who can be reached at <https://www.wellfleet-ma.gov/users/moderator/contact>. We will have a newsletter out before that meeting to let you know what is being discussed and voted upon.



## Herring River Restoration Project Update

*Prepared by Friends of Herring River\**



The Herring River Restoration Project (HRRP), co-owned by Town of Wellfleet and Cape Cod National Seashore, is coming up on the one-year anniversary of the March 2023 groundbreaking, the official start of the current Phase 1. The HRRP remains the largest salt marsh restoration project in the Northeast, and aims to restore the full tidal flow to 890 acres. Phase 1 will restore approximately 570 acres of the Herring River estuary and includes construction of all water control infrastructure. Specifically, this includes replacing the dike at Chequessett Neck Road with a new bridge and tide control structure; installing tide control structures at the entrances to Mill Creek and Upper Pole Dike Creek; elevating low-lying road segments and replacing culverts; monitoring vegetation and marshes; and installing other measures to protect public and private structures.

Work on the Chequessett Neck Road bridge continues, with the temporary bypass bridge expected to open to vehicular and pedestrian traffic in March. Additional geotechnical borings on the low-lying roads took place in late February. The contractors will incorporate this data as they continue working on completing a final design for a bid package. Meanwhile, final design of mitigation efforts for private properties abutting the restoration area, including the Chequessett Club, is also ongoing.

The construction contract for the Mill Creek Water Control Structure, a project owned by the Cape Cod National Seashore, has been awarded to Classic Site Solutions. The structure's design includes five 5-foot wide adjustable tide gates which can be managed to protect upstream properties. The water control structure is expected to open in the spring of 2025.

\*Friends of Herring River (FHR), now 15 years old, is a non-profit organization that serves as an essential partner in the Herring River Restoration Project. FHR administers over a dozen non-construction contracts, provides critical permitting compliance, and is largely responsible for community engagement, as well as writing, receiving, and managing federal and state grant funds. To follow along with Project updates, and view newly produced videos about the HRRP please go to our website: [www.herringriver.org](http://www.herringriver.org), and click on “Herring River Ecosystem.” Subscribing to the free FHR newsletter is always welcome too.



## **Affordable Housing Update**

### The Residences at Lawrence Hill

The long-planned affordable housing development on town land across Lawrence Road from the elementary school will break ground this year. The new 46-unit rental development will be known as The Residences at Lawrence Hill.

The Commonwealth awarded an allocation of federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits in late January, putting in place the final piece of the financing for the project. The two Massachusetts-based nonprofit developers, Preservation of Affordable Housing and the Community Development Partnership, have put the project out for bids. They expect to close on the financing in June and hope to break ground this fall.

Construction is expected to coincide with a related town project, a water treatment facility that will serve the new housing, the school, the fire and police stations, and some nearby homes. As a result, even with the 46 new housing units, the amount of nitrogen flowing into the harbor will be reduced from its current level.

### Maurice’s Campground

The town purchased Maurice’s Campground in 2022 for the purpose of building housing on the 21-acre parcel. Wellfleet’s goal is to support the construction of desperately needed housing affordable to year-round

residents like those who work for the town and local businesses, but who are priced out of the town's costly real estate market. It is also hoped that the site will include housing for seasonal workers, which is in even shorter supply. The Selectboard appointed a 9-member planning committee, including two seasonal residents.

The town issued a request for proposals for a master planner last fall. The six architecture and engineering firms that submitted proposals include teams of consultants with expertise in land use planning, landscape design, architecture, community engagement and housing development finance.

The Selectboard is expected to review the committee's recommendation at its March 12th meeting and enter into a contract shortly thereafter.

## **Town Planner**

Town meeting approved the creation of a new own planner position – someone who can devote time and their expertise to addressing the town's housing issues. Rich Waldo, the recently departed Town Administrator, recommended that the newly installed interim town administrator, Tom Guerino, hire Beth Pyles, a real estate attorney who until early February had served as conservation agent for Wellfleet. If hired, her duties are likely to resemble those of Truro's town planner, attorney Barbara Carboni. (Yes, the same Barbara Carboni who chairs Wellfleet's Selectboard.)

## **Kayak/Canoe/SUP Racks, or "What 'SUP'?"**

Kayak, canoe and paddle board racks are nice to have but a source of confusion for many. Do I need to get a permit? How do I get into the lottery? When do I need a permit ... and where?

There are answers! Here's a top-level explanation brought to you with the help of Suzanne Grout Thomas (Director of Community Services) from the Town of Wellfleet and Anne Fausto-Sterling of the Field Point Property Owners Association:

- The Town of Wellfleet owns and maintains racks for kayaks/canoes/stand-up paddle (SUP) boards at Mayo Beach, Powers Landing, Indian Neck and Gull Pond only. The permit fee is \$100 per year (May 1-November 1) per 48" space. The racks must be empty by November 2.
- Applications are accepted from Labor Day through December 31st annually for the following calendar year. The Town conducts a lottery each year for kayak/canoe/SUP racks. To enter the lottery, navigate to <https://www.wellfleet-ma.gov/beaches> .
- Winners are notified as of February 1st.
- Kayaks may not be placed anywhere but on a rack on Town owned property.
- Each rack space is issued a sticker for each canoe or kayak that

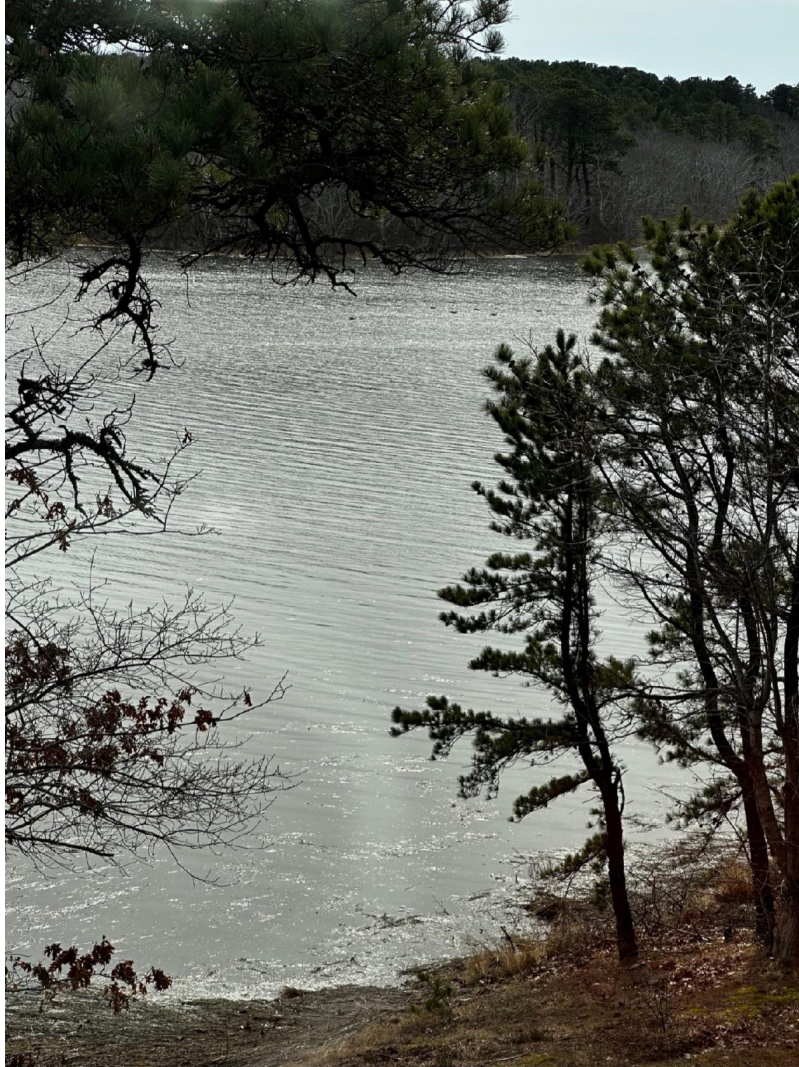
may be placed there.

- The sticker has the person's name, location and rack #. The Town's database has the rest of the contact information for each owner.

The kayak rack at Omaha Beach is owned and maintained by the Wellfleet Conservation Trust in association with the Harbormaster. It is not operated by the Town. Unfortunately, the rack was washed away this winter and it is against the rules to leave a kayak/canoe sitting on the dune or grassy area. The same pretty much holds for the Field Point beach at the far end of King Philip Road: there is no rack and the beach is owned by the Conservation Trust. Similarly, there is a rack at the end of Old Wharf Road, also maintained by the Wellfleet Conservation Trust, that is awarded by lottery for residents who live along the road.

These rules are helpful, but they do not address a question that arises throughout the spring/summer season: why are there empty racks? The answer has to do with people using racks for part of the season – not starting until well after May 1 or ending well before Nov 1]. Currently, there is no way to share racks. Imagine the headache of trying to administer (and record) user turnover. Got any ideas? Share them at [info@wnrta.org](mailto:info@wnrta.org) and we will pass them on to the town staff.





### **Links to various things in Town:**

**Arts and Culture:** [Wellfleet Cultural District List of Upcoming Events](#) and [Preservation Hall](#)

**Town:** [Town of Wellfleet home page](#)

**Town Meetings/ Events:** [Wellfleet Town News](#)

**Resources/ Services:** [Wellfleet Adult Community Center](#)

**Shell fishing:** subscribe to Nancy Civetta's Town Recreational Shell fishing Crier [nancy.civetta@wellfleet-ma.gov](mailto:nancy.civetta@wellfleet-ma.gov) or 508-349-0325

### **Join us!**

Dues and Individual donations are WSRA's only sources of funding. If you haven't already paid your 2024 membership dues, please go to <http://wnrta.org/join/>



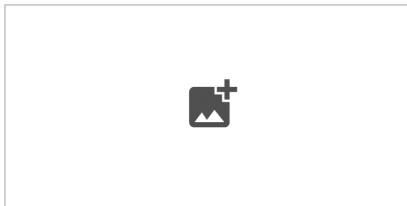


## Changes Are Coming

We are updating our website! In the coming months, you will see a mix of new and old, including:

- A redesigned website with greater ease of use for accessing resources and paying dues
- A new url and email address that reflects our renaming as the Wellfleet Seasonal Residents Association
- "Members Only" website pages with exclusive content for dues-paying members

Please be patient as we make these updates! In the meantime, you can use the existing website to read back issues of the newsletter, access valuable links and resources and pay your membership dues.



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