



**TRURO
NON-RESIDENT
TAXPAYERS'
ASSOCIATION**

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TNRTA NEWSLETTER

Spring / Summer 2016

Letter from the President

Dear Neighbors,

Mother Nature was kind to Truro this winter for the most part, and we are easing into spring for the first time in many years. This past off-peak season has been an intense period for Truro, which is now addressing issues key to town management and operations going forward. Most of these are reflected in the FY 2017 Town budget and in recent votes at All Town Meeting, described in detail inside.

The Bottom Line of ATM

At All Town Meeting on April 26, voters returned to their lightning speed approval of a Town budget for FY 2017 of **\$18,247,676**. This compares to the approved budget for FY 2016 of **\$17,795,825.25** (revised to **\$18,200,725.25**). Voters approved two articles that increase this FY2017 amount as well - an exclusion of \$120,000 to repair the outfall pipe at East Harbor (Pilgrim Lake) and an override of \$241,727 for staff costs for six new full-time members for the Fire/Rescue Department. This effectively makes the approved town costs at ATM **\$18.609 MM** with overrides and exclusions.

The outfall pipe repair exclusion is a one-time cost while the override will permanently increase the budget base for Town personnel. Both have to be approved at the ballot box on May 10, along with the selection of two Selectmen and other elected town officials. This Fire/Rescue Department article reflected more than two years work evaluating the operations of the Department, recommending ways to improve performance for our safety and well-being, and incrementally implementing the recommendations. Exclusive of this override, the budget represents a 1.19% increase over last year (i.e., less than cost of living increases).

Winter is barely over...

Some of you joined a valuable and informative discussion with the Town

Administrator and Chair of the BoS at a special forum TNRTA held last summer on "Snow Plowing of Private Roads in Winter Emergencies." We had a good size crowd that gave a range of opinions, which Town officials took to heart. After much deliberation, the Town re-crafted **Policy 17** to define "emergency" and clarify the Town's position: Going forward, **in true winter emergencies, the Town will plow private roads on an as needed basis to ensure safety and access of emergency vehicles, but in all other cases, properties owners on private roads are responsible for their own plowing and maintenance.** Read more on this policy on the TNRTA website.

Land Matters

Voters had few zoning bylaws or land-related articles to consider, but two generated lively debate: a citizens' petition to memorialize Town road design specifications into the zoning bylaws at ATM, which voters rejected after an impassioned presentation by Lisa Tobia, Chair of the Planning Board, to let the PB do what the voters asked it to do: develop an updated and workable new definition of "street" and "street adequacy" in FY 2017. This is what we have been asking for as well. This year the PB will take this up, hopefully developing a better definition of street and street adequacy that will preserve rural character, protect property owners' rights, and work with current conditions on the ground. We will create and inform you of opportunities to participate in this process actively.

The Town also sought - and got - voter approval to accept 4 acres of land from the Commonwealth to use for "affordable" housing. Voters attempted to clarify what "affordable" means, but confusion remains on a central aspect: whether this property will be developed as "community housing" for local moderate income residents making up to 120% of area median income (AMI) or

TNRTA ANNUAL MEETING 2016

JULY 2, 2016 – 10 AM

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through 40B housing streams, designated for any resident from anywhere in the Commonwealth with incomes below 80% AMI. There is wide consensus in Truro that we need urgently to create rental and purchase opportunities for working families, young adults and seniors now living and/or working in Truro. Community housing best suits that need. The article allowed for "affordable housing" which suggests this may not be fully targeted to reach Truro's seniors, young adults, and working families. We will have to see how the Town clarifies its intentions, defines its options and identifies the revenues to develop this land to address the needs of Truro residents.

What's In a Name?

This past year has been an especially challenging year for part time residents, not only in Truro but also in the Outer Cape and Barnstable County overall. We have found ourselves being re-cast in many towns - most notably, Provincetown - not as neighbors, friends and the main source of tax revenues, the overwhelming consumers of local goods and services, and the major contributors to local charities and cultural organizations that we are - in other words, integral to our respective communities. Recently, the rhetoric among some politicians, housing developers and citizens has begun to describe us as burdens on town resources, who drive prices up, create all sorts of adverse effects on town economies, and are second class "second homeowners" - essentially, just another class of visitors - who should be subject to a variety of tax surcharges. Our sister organizations in other Cape towns have expressed deep concern over this as well.

As one example, Provincetown Selectmen recently passed a 20% residential tax

exemption that shifted the tax burden entirely onto part-time residents, and this may increase to as much as 35% depending on Beacon Hill. This bitterly divided Provincetown. In Truro, where part time residents already cover nearly 75% of the tax base, even a 20% residential tax exemption would increase our tax contribution to well over 80% should Truro ever do this. Fortunately, Truro has been more modulated, choosing not to adopt such a measure, but is not entirely immune to the rhetoric.

But this is not the only idea floating that sees non-residents as a separate class of taxpayer and an endless source for tax revenues. Looming in front of us is another initiative - Sen. Dan Wolf's plan to develop an "Affordable Housing Trust" now proposed like this: Non-resident taxpayers would be subject to a higher property tax rate than year-round residents. The extra revenue would go into an Affordable Housing Trust that year-round residents at certain income levels could use to help

them purchase a home. If/when the house is sold, the year round homeowner would return the money provided by the Trust Fund but would pocket any appreciated value on the sale of the house. This idea is being developed and we will be involved in the conversation about it. Watch this space.

Our view remains that we are one community made up of neighbors, friends, and taxpayers. Most of us have deep roots in Truro, and happily pay the lion's share of taxes to keep this Town beautiful, well-equipped and staffed, and functional for the common good. We have urged - and supported - Truro's efforts to advance other measures to help make Truro more affordable, including expansion of accessory dwelling units for year round use and adoption of regional guidelines and solutions to develop middle income housing across Cape communities. We have also been active in working with the BoS to engage more directly with us. For example, over the winter, members of our Board met with

members of the BoS to discuss ways to do this, including TNRTA hosting more topical forums in the summers, along with the BoS holding a public "all town meeting" for part-time residents. Indeed, the BoS has tentatively scheduled such a first-ever meeting for July 18. I remain optimistic that the common sense and good will that characterizes Truro will not only prevail here but become a strong beacon of sanity and civility for the region. We *are* one community.

Such a short winter, so much news! So, here we are - enjoying the eruption of spring and eager for summer. Have a great one! **Join us at our Annual Meeting on July 2nd.** Please feel free to contact us anytime at tnrta@tnrta.org with your views, concerns, and questions and check our website occasionally for updates at www.tnrta.org.

Best Wishes

Regan McCarthy, President

Town Meeting / Town Vote

Truro's Annual Town Meeting was held on April 26, 2016. The highlights of Town Vote on the 32 articles proposed follow here:

Votes approved the following articles on Budget and Costs:

• **Amendments to the Current Year's Omnibus Budget –**

Voters approved the following amendments to the current year's budget **with no change in the total budget**, allowing transfers of **\$38,300** to other allocable activities: Transfers from free cash include **\$18,300** to cover snow removal costs, **\$10,000** to purchase beach sticker sales and tracking software, and **\$10,000** to purchase similar software to track dump sticker sales. Notably, of this \$18MM, roughly \$17 MM is raised through property taxes; the remaining \$1 MM comes from fees, external public sources, and CPA funds. Of these **\$270,335** will come from Golf Course receipts and FY 2017 is the last year that Truro will capture this source of revenue, representing more than a quarter of the non-tax revenue base that will have to be replaced or dropped in FY 2018.

• **The Omnibus Budget for FY 2017 – Voters easily passed the budget in the amount of \$18,247,676 (\$18.609 MM with overrides and exclusions), approved in FY 2016 at \$17,795,825.25 and actually revised to \$18,200,725.25.**

Questions were raised about only three budget items: two items concerning the Community Preservation Act funds, discussed below, and **\$140,000** requested to cover Town Counsel fees, notwithstanding that this was a **\$37,000 reduction** over last year. The discussion resulted from an ongoing allegation that the Town has spent legal fees unwisely on the Kline matter. In fact **over 8 years of litigation in that matter**, the town has spent a total of **\$215,000** of which **\$10,600** was spent in **FY 2016**. Selectman Maureen Burgess

noted at ATM that the Town has acted honorably and necessarily to enforce Land Court orders on Kline. The majority of legal costs have gone to other normal business/legal affairs of the Town, predominantly labor issues. The voters adopted the **\$5.389 MM school budget**, which decreased a modest \$29,383 from FY2016.

- **Authorizations:** Voters approved reauthorization of a revolving fund for COA, not to exceed **\$30,000**; and voters approved creation of a **Capital Expenses Stabilization Fund** and transfer of **\$100,000** from Free Cash this year (i.e., not additive to the total budget). Uniquely, the voters were asked to approve the withdrawal of an authorization approved at ATM 2014 to borrow \$500,000 for the Truro Conservation Trust to buy its portion of Edgewood Farms. TCT did not need the funds!
- **Capital Items in Omnibus Budget:** Voters approved several articles for capital expenses that were part of the omnibus budget and do not require approval at the ballot box: **Community Preservation Act funds (\$473,741, see below); Approval to borrow funds for road work, in anticipation of receiving State Highway Aid, a customary article (as/if needed; in FY 2016 this was \$170,426); and transfer from the Stabilization Fund to an employee retirement account first created in FY 2015 to cover unused sick/vacation time of retiring employees (\$50,000 as/if needed).**
- **Re-Allocation of Free Cash in Omnibus Budget:** Voters approved moving **\$1.7 MM** of existing funds in free cash to other categories within this year's budget: **\$1.3 MM** to stabilize the tax rate; **\$3,052** to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund; and **\$400,000** to the "OPEB [Open Post-Employment Benefits] Trust Fund]."

- **Community Preservation Act Funds:** As noted above, voters approved another **\$473,741** for several activities: **\$26,500** to construct ADA compliant access to Snow’s Park in Town Center; **\$48,600** to restore the (Paul) Revere Foundry Bell at the First Congregational Parish Historic Meetinghouse; **\$150,000** for the first phase of restoration of three historical buildings at **Edgewood** campus of Castle Hill; **\$168,200** for the first phase of restoration of the Truro **Highland House** Museum; **\$40,000** to cover the costs of a shared **affordable housing** consultant with Wellfleet to assist each town’s respective Housing Authority; **\$13,567** for the statutory reserve for affordable housing; and **\$26,784** for **administrative costs** of the Community Preservation Committee. The article requesting the shared consultant raised numerous questions about whether and how this would benefit Truro, how this would be monitored, and whether this was a staff or consulting cost.
- **Two Articles (not in Omnibus Budget) on the Ballot for May 10**, totaling **\$361,727**. These were discussed above. The Ballot questions are: **Q1:** repairing the **Outfall Pipe** in East Harbor (**\$120,000**); and **Q2:** Funding the wages and benefits for six (6) full time Fire/Rescue positions (**\$241,727**).

Voters also approved specific articles of interest, including:

- **Acquisition of State Property:** Voters ultimately approved the most contentious article discussed at ATM concerning a grant of approximately 4 acres of land by the Commonwealth (at Highland Road near Rt 6) to the Town. This contention was not over the grant itself, for which the Town and taxpayers are grateful. It was over the perceived lack of voter participation in future. An amendment requiring the BoS to report to the Town of the costs and uses of the land at the next ATM was put forward as way to ensure that the terms in the article granting “disposition... as the Board of Selectmen deems appropriate” would be brought back to Town meeting for voter approval. Further, the uses of the land for undefined “affordable” housing was also of concern, since community housing is not the same as “affordable housing” eligibility criteria defined by 40B. The amendment was discussed, and limited but quite vocal opposition ensued. The amendment was defeated and the article passed on the assurances of Selectmen that sufficient review procedures and public hearing mechanisms are in place to make use the use and disposition of the granted land transparent.
- **Personnel Articles:** In addition to the approval to add six full-time Fire/Rescue staff (above), voters approved the non-

union Classification and Compensation Plan for FY 2017 (“COLA” costs).

- **General and Zoning By Laws:** Voters passed one zoning article and declined to approve two zoning articles. **Voters approved** a five-year extension of the Growth Management Bylaw, set to expire otherwise this year. **Voters rejected** two petitioned articles: to incorporate historic street **design specifications** into the current definition of “**street**” and an article to increase penalties for failure to **pooper scoop** in Town.
- **Charter Revisions:** Over the past several years, voters have approved and sent to the ballot box numerous revisions to the Town charter, including 10 on the May 10 ballot sheets this year (described in the Spring 2015 newsletter, on the TNRTA website). The voters at ATM 2016 approved nine (9) additional charter revisions which will be on the 2017 ballot, most of which re-organize the relationship between the Town Manager and direct reports and/or pertain to hiring, evaluation and financial review authorities: to appoint a collective bargaining team, whose membership can be determined with greater flexibility; to give authority to the Town Manager to appoint Department heads; to allow the Town Manager to appoint all employees except those in the school, without consultation of multi-member bodies; to set properly sequenced dates for the financial review process of the proposed Town Budget by the Budget Task Force, the BoS and the Finance Committee; and to consolidate and re-organize charter revision items, where appropriate, to avoid redundancy.
- **Voters approved** several other articles of note:
 - To grant a **perpetual pedestrian easement** across Town land from Route 6 to reach land of the Truro Conservation Trust and scenic trails on their land, recently acquired at Edgewood Farms.
 - To ask the General Court (State legislature) to pass special legislation allowing Truro to **collect a room occupancy tax** on private condo and home rentals for less than 90 days duration, in the same manner it now collects this tax from motels and hotels. This article raised some debate about whether this constituted triple taxation and/or an oppressive burden on casual and/or occasional short-term renters.
 - To clarify the **abutter notification process** for preserving historic properties to direct abutters and abutters of abutters within 300 feet of the property under review.
 - To limit the **licensing of swimming pools** to the Health Agent and the Building Commissioner.

Town/Regional News

Senior Housing Needs Survey

A dedicated group of volunteers related to the Truro Council on Aging is developing a survey of housing needs of Truro’s seniors and soon-to-be-seniors. The aim of this project is to gather actual data on Truro’s current and projected housing needs for this cohort for the next 10 years or more. Of note, included in this survey will be questions related to the plans of current part-timers about retiring to Truro as well. TNRTA will assist in the distribution of the survey by snail mail and electronically to part time residents. So when it arrives, **please participate and respond.**

Developments in Eastham

In recent months, the 11-acre “T-Time” property has been both the hope and the bane of many on the Outer Cape, and especially for Eastham residents. Stratford Developers, a housing developer heavily engaged in 40B housing, acquired the rights and proposed to build 115 affordable units as well as a community center and other amenities. Because 40B housing is open to residents from anywhere in the Commonwealth, other towns on the Outer Cape saw this as a potential regional solution to their housing needs. But Town residents in Eastham have the same question Truro

does: how to take care of folks who already live and work in their Town who make modest incomes and need moderate income community housing options, not low-income options? The project was reduced on the eve of their ATM to 50 units for persons at 80% and 30% of annual median income (\$36,800 and \$18,400 respectively, for a single person). Town voters came very close to having the Town buy the property or take it by eminent domain at their recent ATM, but missed the 2/3 majority needed by a small number of votes. So Truro is not alone in trying to find a way to make it possible for actual residents of our towns to stay here, affordably.

Truro Scholarship Winners 2016

TNRTA members generously support and fund the annual Citizens Scholarship, awarded by TNA/TEEA who select the worthy recipients. This year the scholarships are given to **Sarah Gribbin, Mackenzie Perry, and Sabrina Santos**. Each of these recipients are honor students, have been extensively involved in civic and volunteer activities, and have clear plans for their future. **Sarah**, daughter of a commercial fisherman, is an aspiring marine biologist and environmental scientist who will pursue these studies at the University of Southern Maine. **Mackenzie** is a passionate lover of the humanities, especially English and History, fields in which she excels and will pursue her studies in the fall. **Sabrina**, both an excellent athlete and scholar, is a fashionista at heart. She will study fashion communication and promotion at LaSalle College in the fall. These scholarships make a real difference in the lives of these exceptional Truro students. We are pleased to recognize these students, appreciate TNA/TEEA's diligence in selecting Truro's brightest each year, and are grateful for our members' sustained support of this program.

Please Contribute Your Voice, Views, Experience and Skills! RENEW or become a NEW MEMBER of TNRTA here.



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Send a completed membership form with dues to TNRTA. Dues are \$35 per household annually. Contributions appreciated.

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