



T R U R O
PART-TIME
RESIDENT
TAXPAYERS'
ASSOCIATION

Board of Directors:

Cathy Haynes, President
Anthony Garrett Vice President
Regan McCarthy, Past President
Frank Korahais, Secretary
Gail Pisapio Treasurer / Clerk

Tom Bow
Eileen Breslin
David Daglio
Ron Fichtner
Mark Hammer

Caroline Smith
Peter Sullivan
Peter Weiler
Steve Wynne
Andy Smith (Emerit.)

P.O. Box 324 · Truro, MA, 02666
tprta@tprta.org · www.tprta.org

ADOPTED

Minutes of Twenty-Fifth Annual Members' Meeting
Truro MA | via ZOOM | Saturday, July 3, 2021

With a quorum of 70 Members in attendance the meeting was called to order at 10:03 AM

President's Report: **Cathy Haynes, President**, opened the meeting and described the procedure to be followed in this virtual meeting. Member questions would be submitted and curated for presentation and response. Cathy recognized TPRTA Board Members, thanked them for their service and welcomed new Board Member, Eileen Breslin.

1. The **2020 Annual Meeting Minutes** were approved by acclimation.
2. TPRTA's finances remain sound and the organization continues to remain in solid financial shape. Membership is robust. Indeed, the email announcements from TPRTA reach an audience exceeding fifteen hundred readers.
3. In her remarks, Cathy Haynes described TPRTA as an independent voice representing the non-voting taxpayers of Truro and committed to the good of the entire Truro community. The non-voting taxpayers of Truro contribute nearly 85% of taxes and fees received by the Town. In addition, TPRTA has provided time and expertise to Town committees, provides a pass-through service wherein its members contribute to TEAA/TNA's scholarship program, and supports Town charitable and civic organizations. Moreover, TPRTA sponsors the **Good Neighbor Truro (GNT)** program, created to assist those who needed to remain homebound during the pandemic with volunteer help to deliver food, pharma, mail, and other basic necessities in COVID-safe way. With 65 volunteers, it fulfilled hundreds of individual requests from April 2020-May 2021 and worked with the COA, the Farmers Market and the Truro Community Kitchen to provide delivery service for medications, mail, groceries etc. Regan McCarthy, TPRTA Past President, and Anne Greenbaum, TPRTA member, has provided much of the impetus and support to the creation and operation of GNT.
4. A motion was passed to conduct further meeting business after our guest presenter, Brian Boyle, had completed his remarks and answered member questions. Mr. Boyle was then introduced by Regan McCarthy.
5. **Guest Presentation: Brian Boyle** has visited Truro for forty years and resided in Truro for nearly 20 years. He has long advocated for serious conservation measures regarding waste water and potable water quality management. In addition, he is well-versed regarding Town finances and their effect on the tax base.

- a. **On water supply** - Boyle spoke to the limited and fragile nature of Truro's water supply. The aquifer is comprised of two "lenses" The Pamet and the Chequessett. The quality of water is affected by water runoff into the ground and most critically, by waste water. Truro's water gets to users primarily through private wells and waste is directed through private septic systems. Over the years it has become clear that quality is closely tied to nitrate levels, which also serves as an early warning sign of other potential contaminants. In effect, property owners are responsible for our own water quality.
 - b. **Water quality standards** - While the EPA created a "10 mg/L" standard in the 1960s, current science now says even low levels of nitrate are associated with risk of disease and that increases in nitrate levels are related to increases in the number and types of disease found to occur at rising levels of nitrates. Levels as low 1 mg/L are established to have health effects; 3 mg/L is the level which Truro's Board of Health considers a "warning" level; and 5 mg/L of nitrates is now seen by scientists as the maximum level within a "safe" range. Local and state building ordinances rely upon the EPA standard, yet our practices at road maintenance, lawn care, and other action introduce contaminants while the realities of aged septic systems in Truro – especially cesspool-based septics – makes it very hard to control nitrate levels. As a result, water and people's health are threatened. Communities should begin to focus on the effects of high-density development and numbers of people occupying an area (humans per acre) and consider ways to create fund reserves to provide low cost loans for septic upgrades – small necessary steps in the right direction. Truro has required that all cesspools be replaced by 2023.
 - c. **Town fiscal management** - Boyle advocates for government transparency and more citizen engagement. To that end he has developed the *PEEPS portal* as a means to illustrate individual taxpayer levels now and in the recent past – up to 10 years back. At a broad level, he reported that the Town budget has grown from approximately 50% in seven years: from \$14 million in 2014 to nearly \$22 million for 2021. He compared the macro-economic figures associated with consumer pricing which grows at a rate of 1% per year, to Truro taxes which have been rising at 4% per year. In other words, Truro taxes have grown 63 times faster than inflation in the last seven years. He added much of this has been related to overhead cost (salaries, benefits, pensions, capital debt) as opposed to added services. He worries that townspeople "go along" with these increases without understanding most of what is being presented... and of course, that the lion's share of the tax burden is borne by the non-voting taxpayers.
 - d. **Q&A** - Boyle was asked what individual property owners could do re water quality and the Truro budgetary issues. He recommended having water tested annually, upgrading septic systems where necessary, limited use of lawns and non- organic lawn fertilizers etc. He suggested people should look in to installing osmosis reversal systems for water purification. For both the water and cost of government issues he is a strong advocate for informing people, full transparency and getting people engaged.
6. **TPRTA SURVEY 2021 - Regan McCarthy** provided a short overview of TPRTA's recently completed **TPRTA Survey 2021** of its members. There was a strong response already (over 400) by the time of this meeting. A more comprehensive report on the survey and responses will be forthcoming. Some highlights are:
- **Voting** - Only 6% of TPRTA Members vote in Truro now. 54% said they would vote if they could.
 - **Time spent in Truro** – Average was 7 months/year, a significant increase from 2015 (4 months/year).
 - **Town Services Use** - Most said they had not added to their use of town services.

- **Residential Tax Exemption (RTE)** - This was strongly resisted by part-timers in 2017 and 2018. Currently approximately 500 full-time residents (about half of those eligible) are taking advantage of RTE. Approximately 47% of TPRTA respondents have come to accept the RTE is a fait accompli; are not pleased with that tax relief that is born only by part-timers is in effect; and believe that the present 20% rate is as high as it should go; More than 70% said they would like to see it rescinded and replaced with other more equitable tax relief measures on a needs-tested basis. Most believe the Town has not demonstrated if the RTE is accomplishing its objectives.

7. Other Town Matters -

- a. **ATM-** Haynes provided info on the 2021 Annual Town Meeting (ATM), reiterating budget increase to \$22MM and that voters passed all articles including accessory dwelling articles, making ADUs buildable “by right”-- provided they are restricted for affordable rental units. This would expedite approval processes as long as used for affordable housing. The State imposed lower ADU size caps in 2021 that overrule ATM articles specifications on maximum size.
- b. The **Tax Rate Classification Meeting** 2021 may take place in August (TPRTA will advise members of date). That is when the tax implications of budget will be clearer.

8. Adjournment - There being no other business the meeting was adjourned at 11:10 AM

Respectfully submitted,
Frank Korahais , TPRTA Secretary