

Wellfleet Non-resident Taxpayers' Association

Promoting community involvement and communication

NOTE: THE 2016 OYSTER FEST WILL TAKE PLACE OCTOBER 15-16TH . STOP BY THE WNRTA TABLE IN FRONT OF THE CHOCOLATE SPARROW.

WNRTA Fall 2016 Newsletter

In case you weren't lucky enough to get to Wellfleet this summer, it was the driest on record. The drought made for glorious vacation weather, a low water table and thus disconcertingly big beaches at the ponds, and unhappy gardeners. A tropical storm brushed by the Cape on Labor Day; it cancelled ferries and churned up the surf but dropped scarcely half an inch of rain on Wellfleet.



photo by Phyllis Bretholtz



photo by Ellen Rothman

The early summer was not only dry but noisy, as gypsy moths chewed their way through hundreds of acres of trees. Since they are partial to oaks and will feed on pitch pines if desperate, the Outer Cape was particularly hard hit. How well the woods rebound depends on whether the trees get adequate moisture this winter. We'll keep you posted.

A late breaking, good news story:

On Thursday, September 15, more than a dozen white-sided dolphins were spotted swimming in Wellfleet harbor. By mid-afternoon, the tide was going out and the dolphins were in danger of being stranded in a muddy area near the Chequessett Neck Yacht and Country Club. The club's manager called the International Fund for Animal Rescue, which managed to capture all 16 animals and transport them by road to the deeper waters off Herring Cove Beach in Provincetown, The Boston Globe reported that they "swam away into the sunset." The [CYCC Facebook](#) page records the rescue.



photo by Barbara Boone, CYCC

WNRTA Annual Meeting

Over 60 people attended the Wellfleet Non-resident Taxpayers' Association annual meeting on August 11, 2016, at Preservation Hall. Assistant Town Administrator Brian Carlson gave a report on the "State of the Town" and reviewed the financial and environmental challenges facing Wellfleet. Steve Fossella, chair of the Provincetown Part-time Taxpayers' Association, discussed the experience of P'town's part-time residents. He endorsed the idea of non-residents in the Outer Cape towns coming together on an informal basis to address common concerns and present a unified voice on regional solutions. The slate of officers and members of the [Board of Directors](#) was approved unanimously.

Parking lot expansion

One of the topics Brian Carlson covered at the annual meeting was the town's plan to expand the parking lot at White Crest. In response to the loss of parking spaces at the ocean beaches over the past few winters and the town's reliance on the income from resident and visitor parking--\$1M in 2016--the town has issued an RFP for engineering services to expand the parking lot on the west side of Ocean View Drive by 300-400 spaces.

The selectmen plan to seek an appropriation for this project at the April 2017 Town Meeting and completing construction in time for the 2018 summer season. Shuttle buses will transport beachgoers from the parking lot to the beaches.

WNRTA Summer Programs

On July 14, Dennis Murphy, Chair of the Board of Selectmen, and Joe Aberdale, Chair of the Marina Advisory Committee, brought members up to date on the critical problems affecting Wellfleet harbor.

The harbor was last dredged in 2001. Fifteen years later, it is badly in need of being dredged again. The town will soon receive the necessary permits, which are far more extensive than they were in 2001. Not surprisingly, the major challenge ahead is finding the estimated \$15M the project will cost.

Boats cannot get in and out of the harbor for three hours on either side of low tide. This situation threatens recreational boating and the revenue it generates, public health and safety, and perhaps most worryingly, the sustainability of the shellfish industry. The so-called "black mayonnaise" that is clogging the harbor is already spewing into nearby shellfish beds, smothering and killing off the oysters. It has to be hauled out and dumped into the Bay, adding greatly to the cost.



photo by Phyllis Bretholtz

The Army Corps of Engineers controls the harbor channel and initial mooring basin and is responsible for dredging these areas; the state and town for the rest. In 2001 state monies were available for harbor dredging and maintenance. No longer. Federal funding is severely limited and competition is intense, especially for small harbors. Extensive lobbying effort will be required to secure funding on both the state and federal levels.

WNRTA members will be asked to lend their support to the lobbying effort once it begins later this fall.

For more, see "[Dredging Wellfleet Harbor](#)" on the town's website.

On July 28, the Senior Center was again full when WCAI science editor Dr. Heather Goldstone, beach administrator Suzanne Thomas, and marine biologist John Chisholm made lively presentations on the state of Wellfleet's backshore.

Perhaps the most dramatic was Chisholm's report on the latest research into the Atlantic white shark, the largest predatory fish on the planet.



When the scientists can get close enough to a white shark, they affix an acoustic tag to its dorsal fin.

The tags last for up to 10 years, emitting a series of pulses that are recorded whenever the shark swims within range of receivers placed in the water.

The resurgence of the seal population, which was almost wiped out before the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, has drawn increasing numbers of Atlantic white sharks to the ocean waters of the Outer Cape. Chisholm pointed out that white sharks are "pretty intelligent. They are finding seals among bathers," and he reminded the uneasy audience that there have been only two incidents in Massachusetts involving sharks and people in the past four years. Still, the town has posted new "Be Shark Smart" signs at all of its ocean beaches to publicize the following safety tips:

- Do not swim near seals
- Swim close to shore in waist deep water
- Avoid swimming at dawn and dusk
- Swim and surf in groups

The big surprise to Chisholm and fellow scientist Greg Skomal was Wellfleet harbor. Last year there were more than 6,564 individual shark detections in Wellfleet harbor. With 14,124 detections from 28 sharks, in Massachusetts only Chatham had more activity. "On July 22, Chisholm and Skomal detected 19 sharks in a single day. "We've seen as many as 22 individual sharks in a day, usually at the peak at the end of August and September," he said, adding that he didn't know "if this is an early peak or if September will blow our socks off." Chisholm allowed that "there is a risk to swimming and kayaking in Wellfleet Harbor. You have to keep in mind that they are out there."

The Atlantic White Shark Conservancy has collaborated with the state Division of Marine Fisheries, Cape Cod National Seashore, and towns on the Outer Cape to develop the "[Sharktivity](#)" map and smartphone app that can be used to view or submit white shark sightings and to receive push notifications for beach alerts based on confirmed sightings.

New reading room for the library

Stephen Hale Associates, the Boston-based firm that designed the renovation of the former candle factory into the library 30 years ago, has been hired to design a small, wood-frame addition on the west side of the existing building. The 500 square-foot reading room will be named for Martin Nerber, a regular library patron who left \$200,000 to the Wellfleet Public Library when he died in 2009. The addition, which will also house the library's collection of Cape Cod material, should be completed by May 2017.



The library trustees face an enviable problem - how to spend a \$252,521 bequest from the estate of Carmela Hilbert, who died at the age of 90 in 2014.

An elementary school teacher in Newton, MA, who owned a cottage in Wellfleet, "Cam" Hilbert left the library the money she had saved in her teacher's pension fund.

"This is the most generous gift the library has ever received," Reatha Ciotti, chair of the library's board, told the *Provincetown Banner*.

Wellfleet police station to be renovated and modernized

A much more elaborate building project may soon be underway in town- renovation of the police station at a cost currently estimated at \$6.8M. The Wellfleet Police Station was constructed in 1983 as a combined police and fire facility. The Police Department took over the entire building when the Fire Department moved into its new facility in 2009. While the 10,680-SF building is large enough, the space is not well organized to support police operations.

In addition, the building does not meet current state and federal codes and is badly in need of repair. The exterior siding has reached the end of its useful life, with damage and cracks in numerous locations. Wood trim is rotted or missing, allowing for water and mice infiltration. The HVAC system is deteriorating, inadequate, and inefficient; the electrical system is original to the building; and there is no sprinkler system.

The current facility will be taken down to the studs and rebuilt on the current site to meet the needs of the town. Trailers placed near the elementary school will serve as temporary quarters for the police force for the 10-12 months it will take to complete the project.



Both the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee have endorsed the project. It will go to a Special Town Meeting in mid-November and a budget override will be voted on a few days later. Work could begin as early as January 2017.

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 on line, please go to <http://wnrta.org/join/>. If you prefer, you may send a check to:

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