

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

Fall 2017 eLetter

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After escaping the hurricanes that devastated Florida, the Caribbean, and Puerto Rico, Wellfleet shared in the unseasonably warm weather that broke records all over the East in September and October. The Cape was one of the few parts of Massachusetts that did not experience a return to drought conditions. Sadly, one of the rainy days fell on the Saturday of Oyster Fest. Last year's Oyster Fest was held just days after the state imposed a 21-day ban on shellfishing in Outer Cape waters. Only cooked oysters from other sources were served, and food vendors and arts-and-crafts tents replaced the shucking booths. Although the weather was perfect, attendance fell by about 25%. This year, attendance held steady at approximately 17,000. The two-day event benefits SPAT, Shellfish Promotion and Tasting, a non-profit organization devoted to sustaining Wellfleet's shellfishing and aquaculture industries.

Residential Tax Exemption

At their September 12 meeting, the Wellfleet Selectmen considered a recommendation from the Board of Assessors re: a tax exemption for full-time residents. During the discussion, Selectman Kathleen Bacon, a resident but not a homeowner, spoke-and later voted-in favor of the residential tax exemption (RTE), which she believes would help reduce the economic inequality that characterizes resort communities like Wellfleet. Similar comments were heard from members of the public concerned about the sustainability of the community. A different viewpoint came from others who questioned how a residential tax exemption would address one of the town's most pressing issues-the lack of affordable year-round housing. The

Selectmen voted 4 to 1 in favor of the Board of Assessors' recommendation not to implement a residential tax exemption for Fiscal Year 2018.

This result stands in contrast to the action taken in Truro in August, when, after two contentious public meetings, the Selectmen voted 4-1 to give year-rounders a 20% exemption, thus shifting the tax burden to non-residents.

Truro joins Provincetown, Barnstable, Nantucket and Tisbury as the only Cape and Islands towns offering a RTE.



State of the Town

On August 17, a full house at Preservation Hall listened to Town Administrator Dan Hoort report on the state of the town. Dan began with good news: Wellfleet's operating budget is in balance. The demands on the capital budget, however, are substantial. In addition to the critical need to dredge the harbor, the town will be required to contribute to the cost of major improvements to Nauset Regional High School and a new building for Cape Cod Regional Technical High School. It was unclear what impact the collapse of the dune at Cahoon Hollow after torrential rains on August 18 will have on the capital budget.

A high priority this year is the development of a town-wide parking plan that would encompass Town Hall, Main St., and the marina. The potential revenue from parking fees has to be balanced against the need for Wellfleet to remain a tourist-friendly destination. Other [goals for the year](#) were adopted on October 10.

The Town Administrator announced his plan for an electronic quarterly newsletter. He has already started a [blog](#).

At the conclusion of the meeting, Kathleen Weiner, the new Director of Development for [Outer Cape Health](#) introduced herself and briefly outlined OCH's plans for the near future. The Harwich Community Health Center will be renovated late next year. Next, the Wellfleet facility will be enlarged in phases, increasing the capacity on the current site by 50%. OCH's [newsletter](#) is available on line and in print.

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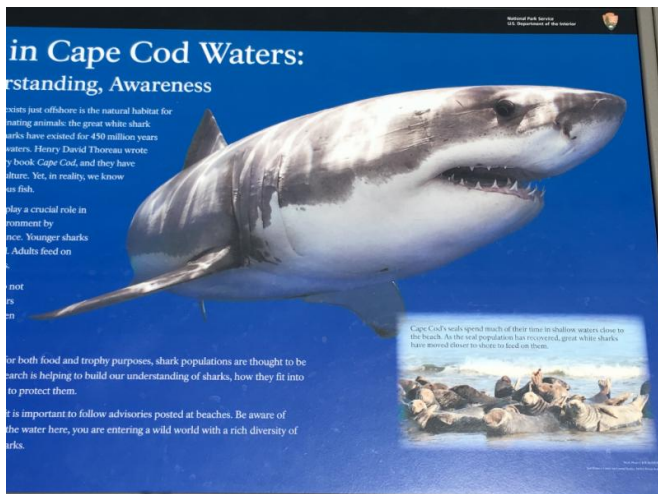
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State of the Harbor Conference

The 15th annual [State of the Harbor Conference](#) will be held at Wellfleet Elementary School on Saturday, November 4 from 8:30 - 2:00. It is free and open to the public. As you can see from the [schedule](#)

the program covers topics ranging from the impact of rising sea level, the latest research into horseshoe crabs in Wellfleet Harbor, and an update on local dolphin and whale strandings.

Shark Activity



Check out the interactive map of 2017 shark sighting and detection data collected by researchers on the Outer Cape published in [The Cape Cod Times](#). On August 11, [The Boston Globe](#) reported that there had been 19 sightings in four days, but state shark biologist Greg Skomal explained that there was in fact less shark activity than usual on the Cape this summer. The numbers on the [Sharktivity app](#), "are a result of its growing popularity with the public," he said. "It's getting used more and more, so sometimes that gives people the perspective there's more sharks." Nevertheless, people who swim on Cape beaches, especially where sharks are spotted-Orleans, Nauset Beach, and Chatham were especially popular the last two summers-should be "shark smart"-listen to lifeguards, swim in groups, and stay close to shore. "They should also familiarize themselves with wind and water conditions of the day, as riptides pose more of a threat than sharks do," Skomal told the [Globe](#). "They have killed more people than sharks have, particularly in this state."

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

All photographs by Ellen K. Rothman

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