

Wellfleet Seasonal Residents Association

Promoting community involvement and communication



Spring Edition, 2023

***It's time to pay your 2023 dues –
please do so [online](#) or by mail***

Marta Reese Flanagan

Upcoming Events: July 6 (Water/septic) & August 10 (State of the Town)

WSRA is sponsoring two hybrid (attend either on Zoom or in person) meetings this summer. In person at the Wellfleet Adult Community Center (a/k/a the Council on Aging) 715 Old Kings Highway, at 7:30 pm. Zoom links will be sent out closer to the meetings.

The first meeting on Thursday, July 6th will address the crucial issue of water quality and possibly required septic upgrades. We will have representatives from the town's health and conservation commission, the town's water consultant, and an alternative septic proposer. Requirements to upgrade our septic systems will affect all of us. This is a chance to have your concerns registered and questions answered.

On Thursday August 10th, the town administrator and members of the Selectboard will be on hand to discuss how things are going with the town's administration and finances. This is again your chance to make your worries/concerns known. We will also make this the annual meeting of WSRA to elect officers and our board of directors.



Alas no herrings yet in the sluiceway between Gull and Herring ponds.

Results of Town Meeting and Annual Town Election

On April 29, 2023, voters were back in the Wellfleet Elementary School gym (after the COVID years on the ball field) to discuss and vote on 53 items on the town warrant. Those of us who are not registered to vote in town are relegated to the backless bleachers without voting cards. The net result of all the voting, according to town administrator Rich Waldo, is that a home assessed at \$790,000 will pay an additional \$366 in taxes during the next fiscal year.

The meeting started on the high note that after several years, the state had finally certified \$4,514,126 in what is called “free cash,” thereby allowing the town to stop taking money out of its stabilization and ambulance funds to meet town expenses. There was an almost audible sigh of relief at the meeting when Rich Waldo revealed that this news had arrived just the day before. The almost all-day town meeting, well handled by Dan Silverman, the town’s stalwart moderator and former fire chief, led to lively debate on many of the items that in the end all passed (see <https://www.wellfleet-ma.gov/>). Because several of the items required an override of Proposition 2 ½, a Massachusetts law that limits the increase in the tax levy to 2 ½ percent of the total full and fair cash value of taxable property in the town, some of these had to be voted upon two days later on May 1st. So while everything passed at the town meeting, the voters turned down funding for a housing and community preservation act specialist, replacement of water meters, an adult community center addition feasibility study, a new marina pick-up truck, cost to develop a marina master plan, the White Crest Beach restroom upgrade, and additional Wellfleet Scholarship Program funding.

Old and new thinking about how to run the town’s government was on full display at the meeting. As town resident and historian John Cumbler put it, “the town could do it the old way: not pay now and have to pay more later,” or try to actually meet the modern obligations of funding our services. Former Selectboard member Helen Miranda Wilson argued, in contrast, that the town had managed with volunteers and consultants on housing for example and didn’t need someone full time. Other volunteers stood up to say it could not be done by volunteers alone any more. While the funding warrants all passed at the open town meeting, the wish to not spend money now won many others over more quietly in the privacy of the voting booth two days later.

Despite the fact that Wellfleet has 3,087 registered voters, at one point in the afternoon the

meeting had to stop for a frantic half an hour so that more people could come, or come back, to make the needed quorum of 186 (5% of eligible voters). Parents of school aged children, many workers, and shop owners complained that the Saturday meeting made their participation impossible. With neither food nor water available (except for some cookies that the fire department provided), it was a long day. The town may go back to evening meetings in future years. In contrast, the voting on Monday May 1st that ran from noon to 7 pm brought out 891 individuals. The quick turnaround between town meeting and voting, however, left little time to educate voters who had not come to the meeting nor the pre-town meeting session run by the Wellfleet Community forum. And in the one contested election, Selectboard chair Ryan Curley was re-elected.

WSRA members, because we do not register to vote in Wellfleet and do not own or rent primary homes here, cannot vote at town meeting or at the election. With permission of the moderator, we can speak to various issues at the meeting and did so this year on the need for a housing coordinator. However, neither our argument nor that of others, made a difference as this particular warrant lost by 17 votes in the Monday election. If you really want to get a feel for the issues in town financing and governance, do come to town meeting. There will be another one in September.



Taking off from the White Crest parking lot.

Addressing the Housing Crunch

Wellfleet and neighboring Outer Cape communities face the same workforce challenge: the high cost of residential real estate and the scarce supply of year-round rental housing make it difficult to find and retain candidates for critical municipal and service sector jobs.

Local communities are encouraging the development of new multifamily affordable housing to address the issue, although it is a slow process given the urgency of the problem. Still, significant projects are on drawing boards, or getting close to breaking ground, in Provincetown, Truro, Orleans, and Eastham – in addition to Wellfleet, where the planned *Residences at Lawrence Hill*, a 46-unit development across from the elementary school is in the works. All these projects, however, depend for their financial feasibility on governmental subsidies to achieve affordability.

The largest share of those capital subsidies comes through a federal tax credit program administered by the state. Each year competition for this finite source of funding is fierce, and proposed projects rarely receive an award the first year their developers apply. That's exactly what happened to the Lawrence Road development. The Commonwealth failed to award it funds this year, although it will be reconsidered this summer and can reapply for

funds next year.

There is some good news, however, to come out of recent funding rounds. Projects in Provincetown, Truro, and Orleans, which will together produce 120 housing units, received funding commitments and construction will likely begin in the next twelve months.

Cape Cod communities -- especially those on the Outer Cape -- are cooperating to remove some of the extraordinary costs associated with building out here. The same housing cost barrier to filling positions for other essential workers dictates that builders must rely on construction workers from off-Cape. This, and the lack of sewage systems to tap into, translates into especially high construction costs. Consequently, these housing developments need to raise more than the state makes available.

The Residences at Lawrence Hill is slated to receive \$1 million from the town's Community Preservation Committee and \$500,000 from Wellfleet's Housing Trust Fund. Neighboring communities are chipping in, too. Brewster has committed \$50,000 to the Lawrence Road housing; Provincetown has allocated \$75,000, and Orleans is devoting \$20,000.

An even more ambitious development is envisioned for Maurice's Campground on Route 6 just north of the Wellfleet-Eastham town line. The town of Wellfleet has purchased the 20.5-acre campground and the Selectboard has appointed a 9-member Planning Committee, including two WSRA members – Carl Sussman and Emily Achtenberg. The Campground will continue to operate for another six years while plans for a new residential neighborhood on the site are drawn up.

The Maurice's Campground Planning Committee (MCPC) has prepared a request for proposals for a firm to facilitate a community engagement process and prepare a master plan. The hope is that it will be possible to address a broad range of housing needs, including, affordable homeownership, seasonal workforce housing, and affordable year-round rental units.

While the town of Wellfleet showed strong support for affordable rental housing, at the town election earlier this month (as noted above) voters narrowly defeated a proposal to fund a new town housing planner position, despite the Town Meeting's endorsement of the move. This means the town will need to continue to rely on overburdened volunteers to advance the town's housing agenda.



Birdhouse Auction: May 28th

Wellfleet Preservation Hall is partnering with The Wellfleet Affordable Housing Trust for the Hall's annual Birdhouse Auction. The goal is to increase awareness of the town's housing initiatives. The auction's proceeds will be used to help both organizations.

This event is Sunday, May 28 from 11:00 to 1:00. It will include free finger food, a cash bar, and, of course, a live and silent auction for fabulously crafted birdhouses and garden art created by Wellfleet's creative community as well as opportunities to bid on vacation rentals, a harbor cruise on a catamaran and more.



Birdhouse & Garden Art Auction
There's No Place Like Home

Live & Silent Auction

Cash Bar,
Light Refreshments

Offerings include:
Weekend Getaways, Vacation Rentals,
Wellfleet Harbor Catamaran Cruise, Garden
& Birding Gift Baskets & MORE!

Sunday May 28th, 11am-1pm
335 Main St. Wellfleet • 508 349-1800

PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT
The Wellfleet Affordable Housing Trust
& Wellfleet Preservation Hall

Dues and donations, please

WSRA counts on its members to pay dues without receiving an annual invoice. Dues and individual donations are WSRA's only sources of funding-- \$25 for a single membership or \$35 for a family/household membership per calendar year.

To pay by PayPal:

- Renew your [Family Membership](#)
- Renew your [Individual Membership](#)
- Make a [Donation](#)

You may also mail your payment to:

WSRA
P.O. Box 1323
Wellfleet, MA 02667-1323

If you would like more than one member of your household to receive email from WSRA, please [email](#) us!

THANK YOU!

Wellfleet Seasonal Residents Assoc. (WSRA) | PO Box 1323, Wellfleet, MA 02667

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