

TOWN OF SANDWICH

THE OLDEST TOWN ON CAPE COD

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BOARD OF
SELECTMEN

TOWN
MANAGER

August 24, 2012

Barnstable County Commissioners
3195 Main Street
Barnstable, MA 02630

Assembly of Delegates
3195 Main Street
Barnstable, MA 02630

Cape Cod Commisison
3225 Main Street, P.O. Box 226
Barnstable, MA 02630-0266

Cape Cod Water Protection Collaborative
3195 Main Street, P.O. Box 427
Barnstable, MA 02630-0427

Re: Town of Sandwich Input on Cape Cod Wastewater Planning Efforts

Dear Distinguished County Recipients:

The Sandwich Board of Selectmen unanimously voted at its August 23, 2012 meeting to forward this letter.

Recently, there has been much written and said about the role and potential actions of the County relative to addressing Cape Cod wastewater management. Sandwich is currently in the middle of developing our Comprehensive Water Resource Management Plan (CWRMP). Like other towns confronted with the effects of nitrogen loading in our watersheds due to rapid Cape-wide development since the 1970s, we have continued to move forward in addressing our water issues. We cite some examples later in this letter. At this time we want to be clear about concerns and observations we have regarding regional wastewater planning efforts in consideration of the year-end deadline for a recommendation from the Cape Cod Commission (CCC) and the Cape Cod Water Protection Collaborative (CCWPC) to the County Commissioners regarding a formalized plan. That is why we are writing this letter to the entities that have policy making and advisory roles in this process.

Like virtually every town on the Cape, Sandwich has been working for a number of years towards solving the problems in our community associated with embayment areas, providing sufficient water for a rapidly increasing population, and contaminations affecting our water supply, many of them unique to the Upper Cape towns that abut the Massachusetts Military Reservation (MMR). Here are some facts specifically related to Sandwich:

- Over 30 years ago, our shellfish beds at Old Harbor and surrounding areas were closed because of contaminations. The Town has funded many drainage and stormwater improvement efforts through appropriations and grants to solve this problem, resulting in the re-opening of the beds 3 years ago.
- The Town worked with the State to correct tide “flushing” problems at Scorton Creek.
- When Textron was forced to pay damages for contamination on the MMR and offer grant opportunities from the settlement funds to impacted public entities, Sandwich’s Water Quality Advisory Committee (WQAC) successfully obtained a \$400,000 grant that is funding the Town’s ongoing CWRMP work.
- In addition to the Textron grant award, the Town has funded more than \$50,000 in additional planning work to address more immediate wastewater issues than those covered in the CWRMP.
- In 2004, Sandwich agreed to participate in the Estuaries Program through the University of Massachusetts and provided more than \$200,000 in direct funding. The program results concerning nitrogen loading in two of our primary estuaries have been delayed time and again, but we anticipate receiving definitive results from our work in the near future.
- The Town has presented several zoning changes and land use initiatives directly related to our wastewater planning efforts at many Town Meetings, setting aside land for future wastewater treatment and disposal needs, and taking other positive planning measures. Sandwich residents have overwhelmingly supported every one of these actions.
- Most recently, the Town has been working with several business owners on their plans for expanding economic development and redevelopment that involve a shared wastewater treatment component, which we think can be a model for the rest of the Cape.

Like other Cape towns, Sandwich has continued in good faith to face the responsibilities of our wastewater issues and plan for wise, reasonable solutions. We have remained informed through our representatives on the CCC and CCWPC of the Cape-wide conversation and issues. We understand the complexities that surround the issues of wastewater planning for the Cape as well as for our own town. We have also had direct discussions with abutting towns that share impacted embayments and realize we have a responsibility for these shared water bodies.

However, at this time we feel it is important to send a strong message to the County entities involved in decisions and direction regarding this issue, particularly as a December deadline looms at which time a recommendation will be presented to the County Commissioners regarding regional wastewater planning. Much has been written and said recently about the future role and actions of the County relative to the CCWPC and CCC. The

Town of Sandwich wants to be proactive at this time in commenting about what comes next. This is an immensely critical issue from a number of different perspectives. We want to provide our thoughts, ideas, and current position as we view this critical discussion.

We offer the following for your consideration:

- A positive, continued role for both the CCWPC and the CCC is that of an educational resource and source of technical assistance to the towns of Cape Cod.
- A role for both would be as the research arm for issues of wastewater management and verifying resources for technologies that will help us solve our region's wastewater problems.
- We feel it is important for the CCWPC, the CCC, the County Commissioners, and the Assembly of Delegates to continue to support regional wastewater planning by helping coordinate the town-by-town and watershed-by-watershed approaches and solutions being developed by individual communities and smaller groups of towns that share embayments and estuaries.
- County Government, through the entities working on wastewater solutions and planning, needs to respect individual town accomplishments and planning while encouraging collaborations between towns for shared work toward remedies regarding shared watersheds. One way to do this is to continue to develop the tools that will make the road to partnerships and inter-municipal agreements smoother and more timely.
- We feel strongly that County Government needs to recognize that regional planning which may lead to regional solutions needs to be taken seriously into account and that it may not be best to attempt one grand plan through a regional authority for all towns and embayments.
- We fully support the idea expressed both by the CCC and the CCWPC that a major consideration in regional planning is making sure the recommended solution(s) represent the most effective method(s) at the lowest cost to taxpayers.
- We do not support planning for a solution that would include the power of the County to tax for this initiative.
- We strongly urge continued public outreach and serious listening on the part of the County decision-making and advisory entities.
- We recognize the importance of a Cape-coordinated approach, especially in terms of securing any potential funding that could help the entire Cape face the huge cost of addressing these issues.

- We understand the challenges faced when science and public policy interface and support a consistent focus on scientific facts.
- We urge the County entities to be respectful, but professionally strategic, in considering the input of outside groups who raise issues.
- We advocate for timely and consistent attention to a complex process that will understandably take a significant amount of time to resolve.
- Lastly, we encourage as much public transparency as legally possible concerning all information associated with this discussion.

Thank you for your consideration of our input. We greatly respect the efforts you have all made to address such a complex and, at times, controversial issue that impacts all of our communities and residents. We know you will continue to work diligently and intelligently to help us find ways to address our wastewater problems and we offer our full support in helping you accomplish this. We look forward to the continued collaboration on this and other Cape-wide issues.

Our environment is not only our unique and beautiful home, it forms the basis of our economy. We want it to remain safe and beautiful. We want it to continue to provide health and comfort for ourselves and future generations, and we want it to remain the economic engine to one of our nation's greatest natural treasures. The environmental legacy we all inherited is far too important to destroy and we know that working together, we can address our wastewater problems in a smart, reasonable manner. Thank you again.

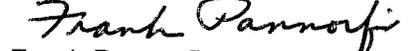
Sincerely yours,

Sandwich Board of Selectmen


John G. Kennan, Jr., Chairman


Ralph Vitacco, Vice Chairman


Linell M. Grundman


Frank Pannorfi


James W. Pierce

cc: Town Manager
Director of Public Health
Sandwich Water District Superintendent