

## **APPENDIX A – VILLAGE HEARINGS**

### **Village Hearings 1989- 1990**

During late 1989 and early 1990, seven public hearings were held; one for each of Harwich's villages. Recreation, open space conservation, historic resources preservation, and the environment were heavily discussed topics at the hearings. The responses from Town residents regarding various issues at these hearings were as follows:

### **Pleasant Lake**

#### **Village Character**

Controlling development density and intensity of use were two widely held goals of residents at the village hearing for Pleasant Lake. Public sentiment suggested that the current density under zoning for residential uses (40,000 square foot minimum lot size) should, at the minimum, be maintained. Significant interest was expressed in lowering the overall density at full development by increasing the minimum lot size.

Based on the input gathered at the hearing, there is a need to preserve the rural appearance of the village by retaining the natural vegetation wherever possible.

Another issue in this category is a need to establish a policy relative to the conditions under which, if any, development will be allowed along unpaved roads.

#### **Environment**

Water Quality – The preponderance of surface water in the village makes pond quality an obvious topic of concern. Residents attending the village hearing confirmed this by expressing concern for the current and future health of various ponds. Specific observations were made about Aunt Edie's and Hinckley's Ponds as to roads being pitched toward the ponds so that polluted storm runoff will directly enter these ponds. The proximity of an existing stump dump to Aunt Edie's Pond was also identified as a water quality concern.

The presence of high residential densities up-gradient of groundwater flows to certain ponds represents a threat to future water quality of the ponds affected. More detailed study of the groundwater flows to the ponds is needed to determine the precise location of the contributing areas. Discharge of contaminants from boat and jet ski motors as well as vehicles launching boats also threatens pond water quality.

Concern was expressed for the need to more closely scrutinize the handling of hazardous wastes generated by industrial uses with the village.

Waterways – Protection of existing waterways linking several water bodies in Pleasant Lake was a need expressed at the village hearing. Specifically mentioned were the Herring River corridor and the sluiceway between Black Pond and Long Pond.

**Sanitary Facilities** – The lack of any public restrooms in the village prompted a comment at the village hearing that such facilities are needed to accommodate bike trail users as well as motorists exiting the highway. Many people from both categories have approached the Pleasant Lake Medical Offices and the Pleasant Lake General Store for use of their restrooms.

### **Open Space/Recreation**

Opinions expressed at the Pleasant Lake village hearing relative to this topic focused on the need to improve access to existing recreational areas and to establish new recreational areas within each new major subdivision.

### **Historic and Cultural Resources**

The Herring Runs connecting several of the ponds and the space available for cultural activities at the Cape Cod Regional Technical High School on Route 124 were named at two resources important to the village.

### **East Harwich**

#### **Village Character**

Given the visual prominence of the commercial area at Routes 137 and 39 in East Harwich, concerns were expressed at the village hearing relative to maintaining control over the appearance of this area. Concern was expressed for the eventual widening of Routes 137 and 39. It was stated that it would be preferable to have such widening occur only in the commercially zoned portions of these roads. Residents attending the hearing were generally in favor of retaining the rural character of the area as a whole.

While sidewalks were deemed necessary in certain areas of the Commercial District, opposition to sidewalks elsewhere appeared to be a consensus at the village hearing.

### **Environment**

**Groundwater Quality** – Concerns under this heading are summarized below:

1. Protection from excessive density.
2. Better control of road runoff and fertilizer use.
3. Proper maintenance of septic systems.
4. Adequate dispersion of affordable housing is necessary to minimize impact on groundwater.
5. Proper management of underground storage tanks.
6. Proper management of swimming pool discharges.
7. Mitigation if impacts of pollutant concentration in commercial area over the Drinking Water Resource Protection District (DWRPD).

**Surface Water Quality** – Concerns were expressed as to impact of acid rain on pond life as well as the impact of polluted storm-water runoff entering the ponds untreated. Nutrient loading in the ponds from high density residential uses threaten long-term water

quality. Preservation of the quality of the Pleasant Bay Area of Critical Environmental Concern is another surface water quality issue.

**Water Supply** – Water conservation was cited as a crucial element to management of the Town’s water resources.

**Debris** – Adequate controls on litter from commercial uses and illegal dumping in remote wooded areas are two important issues under this heading.

**Open Space/Recreation**

Concerns under this heading are itemized below:

1. Extension of the bike trail through East Harwich;
2. Proper maintenance of beaches;
3. Absence of conveniently located playgrounds and walking areas;
4. Insufficient access/parking for recreational resources, especially Pleasant Bay and the Town Landing at Round Cove.

**Historic and Cultural Resources**

While no comments under this heading were received at the village hearing, two issues appear to warrant further investigation. One, is consideration of the Church Street area as an area of special character worthy of preservation. Written support for this concept was received after the hearing. The other is protection of the old cemetery off Walker’s Pond Road which contains the remains of some Revolutionary War veterans.

**South Harwich**

**Village Character**

The opinions expressed at the village hearing indicated a strong desire among the residents to retain the existing village character. Along these lines, there was significant enthusiasm for the establishment of an historic district along Route 28 to protect the area from inappropriate development. Also expressed was a need to protect the village’s open space and quality of life now enjoyed.

**Environment**

The majority of the South Harwich Village is environmentally sensitive with DWRPD’s covering roughly seventy-five (75%) percent of the village, significant wetlands and shallow depth to groundwater between Oliver Snow and Route 28, Skinequit Pond and its wetlands to the north and south, and extensive marsh and wetland areas near Red River Beach and along Red River. The last three features provide for exceptional natural beauty.

Environmental concerns expressed at the village hearing include the following:

1. Protection of all forms of water resources; groundwater, ponds, wetlands, and salt water.

2. Prohibiting the filling of bogs and near wetlands to make land buildable.
3. Creation of an Area of Critical Environmental Concern running from the bog north of Skinequit Pond and south to the Red River salt marsh.
4. Preventing litter from commercial areas.

It was suggested that a conservancy overlay district could be established under zoning to further protect wetland resources.

### **Recreation and Open Space**

At the village hearing, a variety of observations were made under this heading. They are summarized below:

1. The supply of parking at Red River Beach is inadequate for such a large facility.
2. There is a need now more than ever for the gifting of land for beach use and permanent open space because of severe fiscal limitations on the Town and the State.
3. All of the Red River marsh should be protected through purchase.
4. Reserves of open space in nearby East Harwich and Harwich Center appear to be adequate to the extent that the Town need not purchase any more large areas to serve South Harwich.
5. The old railroad bed should be converted to recreational use.
6. Designated walking and bicycle paths are desirable.
7. Red River Beach should be treated with great care as it is an important asset to the Town.
8. The large bog to the north of Route 28 and south of Oliver Snow Road should be put to use as permanent open space.
9. All of the Town-owned land at Red River Beach should be identified and used by the Town.

### **Historic and Cultural Resources**

As stated under Village Character, the concept of an historic district along Route 28 was viewed favorably by hearing attendees. In addition to historic resources along Route 28, it was noted that any inventory of historic and cultural resources should be methodical and thorough so as to obtain information on buildings, places, and events. It was stated that a lot of history exists in South Harwich but it is not visible any more. Therefore, research into historic accounts of the area should be done to connect the places of significant historic events with the present. One structure specifically mentioned as worthy of preservation is the building at the corner of Quaker Lane and Route 28.

### **Harwich Port**

#### **Village Character**

The following is a summary of the issues raised at the hearing under this heading:

1. Front setbacks in the central business district between Ayer Lane and Bank Street.

2. Appropriateness of one story versus two story along Route 28 in central business area.
3. Proportions of new construction relative to existing scale of development.
4. Need for strong design controls.
5. Negative image of abandoned buildings in business area.
6. Screening of parking.
7. Need for more foot traffic through the central business area.
8. Retention of character promoted by the Harwich Port Golf Course.

It was noted that the introduction of a community sewage collection system in this area could threaten village character by increasing pressures for redevelopment on parcels which were previously unable to accommodate many higher use intensity due to septic limitations. Also, the solutions necessary to improve life-threatening hazards may impact negatively on village character.

### **Environment**

Various aspects of water quality were the sole focus of comments under this heading at the village hearing. The specific items of concern are identified below:

1. Storm Water Runoff – Concern was expressed for the continued discharge of polluted storm runoff into various surface water bodies, particularly Wychmere Harbor which receives the bulk of the storm water from the central business area along Route 28.
2. Lawn Chemicals – There appears to be a need to regulate the application of lawn chemicals and other pollutants/nutrients near the edge of wetland areas. It was suggested that indigenous plant species which do not require special treatment to survive be used wherever possible.
3. Nutrient Loading – The ongoing seepage of nitrogen and phosphorous into embayments and the ocean raised a concern over the management of septic systems near these resources.
4. Marine Pollution – It was noted that boat holding tank discharges, spilled fuel and lubricants, and bottom paints continue to enter the marine ecosystem unabated.
5. Pond and Embayment Recharge Areas – There is a need to provide an additional layer of protection for environmentally sensitive areas such as ponds and salt water embayments. It was suggested that an overlay delineating the likely area of groundwater recharge to such resources be made part of a new regulation as soon as possible and that more detailed study be done to fine-tune this approach as funds become available.
6. Summer Rentals – Concern was expressed for the practice of overfilling summer rentals which puts a strain on septic facilities and eventually impacts negatively on nearby environmental features.
7. Conversions to Year-round Use – Of great concern to Harwich and other Cape Cod communities is the trend of conversion of seasonal structures to year-round dwellings which increases the flow of septic system pollutants to the beach areas and harbors. An owner of a converted structure expressed concern for excessive regulation regarding this issue.
8. Housing Density – It was observed that recommended housing densities should not be exceeded in the name of affordable housing.

### **Open Space/Recreation**

The following comments were made under this heading at the village hearing:

1. Retention of the Harwich Port Golf Course would help maintain a balance in the supply of recreation and open space facilities in Harwich Port.
2. It was suggested that the Town or other conservation entity should purchase easements from owners of beachfront property to facilitate walking along the beach without having to be limited by private beach boundaries.
3. The supply of parking for and transportation to Town beach facilities appears to be inadequate.
4. Connecting Harwich Port with the bikeway system would be desirable.
5. Access to Grassy Pond could be greatly improved.

### **Historic/Cultural Resources**

A general discussion of historic preservation at the village hearing yielded the following observations:

1. There is a question as to whether or not current zoning helps or hinders efforts to preserve historic structures in that use regulations may make it uneconomical to restore and use old buildings.
2. It was suggested that incentives rather than regulations were needed to encourage owners of historic properties to retain and restore their buildings.
3. The general sentiment of meeting attendees was that the typical historic district regulations were undesirable in that they were too restrictive.
4. Placement of markers, establishment of exhibits such as the photo display at the Chamber of Commerce Booth, and other efforts to connect residents with the past were suggested.

### **West Harwich**

#### **Village Character**

Preservation of the existing character of West Harwich was strongly advocated at the village hearing. Large free-standing, historic-appearing buildings set back from the street are the current style characteristics which dominate the landscape along Route 28. Two stories were generally accepted as appropriate. Use of an historic district as a means to preserve character was enthusiastically supported. It was noted that recent developments in the vicinity of the Baptist Church on Route 28 were tastefully done and could serve as examples for others to follow. A suggestion was made to reward those whose improvements have maintained the traditional character.

Other issues raised under this heading were encouragement of parking in the rear of structures and concentrating new commercial development at specific nodes as ways to preserve village character.

## **Environment**

Environmental concerns raised at the village hearing are listed below:

1. Poor quality of town water during certain periods of the summer.
2. Acquisition of additional wetland and other land along the Herring River.
3. Giving due regard to the implications of sea level rise which will enlarge existing salt and fresh water wetlands.
4. Surface and groundwater impacts of existing high density development.
5. Poor beach appearance due to erosion control fences and other devices which have become damaged.
6. Use of ponds for additional water supply instead of establishing new wells.

## **Recreation and Open Space**

The following is a summary of the comments offered at the village hearing under this heading:

1. Better maintenance is needed for the Town's existing beaches, docks, boat ramps, and parking areas.
2. Restrooms are necessary facilities at all Town beaches.
3. Walking trails and a fit-trail could be developed at the Earle Road Recreation Area.
4. A good connection with the bike trail is needed.
5. Acquisition of additional land along the Herring River is needed.
6. Harwich Junior Theater should be promoted more.
7. A boardwalk to Belmont Beach is needed.
8. Biking and walking safety needs to be improved.

The issue of the lack of a public, year-round swimming pool was raised and discussed. It was noted that about then, ten (10) years ago, a pool was proposed and defeated due to questions about liability and staffing costs.

## **Historic Preservation**

As stated above, the current historic character of the village was deemed desirable and worthy of preservation. A show of hands at the village hearing indicated near unanimous support for an historic district along Route 28 in West Harwich. It was also noted that old cemeteries should be identified and protected.

## **North Harwich**

### **Village Character**

Comments under this heading were also focused on industrial uses in the village. It was suggested that existing poor industrial appearance be corrected and that landscaping standards be improved. Planting of trees by individuals or organizations on existing industrial property was offered as a means to improve appearances. It was stated that

aesthetic, traffic, and noise impacts from industrial uses be mitigated to restore/preserve the quality of life in the village. Retention of the existing residential character was also advocated.

### **Environment**

Protection of the Herring River corridor was of utmost concern to hearing attendees. Preservation of wildlife habitat, open vistas, and water quality in this resource area was advocated. Acquisition of marsh land and marginal upland was suggested as a means to provide the desired protection. Designation of the area as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern was supported by most in attendance. However, those opposed to such action due to the bureaucratic burden favored stronger local protection measures to accomplish the same result.

The area between the Herring River and Sand Pond was suggested as being in need of investigation for environmental hazards and appropriate permanent protection. It was also noted that the Town should guard against inappropriate development at the cleared land at the corner of Great Western Road and Depot Street due to the close proximity of the Herring River.

### **Recreation and Open Space**

The various comments made under this heading are summarized below:

1. At least one new playground is needed in the village.
2. Walkways should be established to Sand Pond.
3. A safe connection to the bike path is needed.
4. Open space should be established within affordable housing developments.
5. Existing open space should be permanently retained and never dedicated to another use.
6. Sand Pond parking and access need improvement.

### **Historic Preservation**

The area around the intersection of Depot and Main Streets was recognized at the village hearing as exemplary of a variety of classic old Cape Cod architectural styles. While the current character of these buildings was deemed worthy of preservation by attendees, the establishment of a typical historic district to maintain appearances was rejected as being more regulation than needed.

Several features of the past and present were identified as historic or cultural resources:

- A. Old mill site off Bell's Neck Road
- B. Old cemetery off Old Brewster Road
- C. North Harwich Cemetery at Depot and Main Streets
- D. Former stage stop north of Great Western Road
- E. Old Orchard House
- F. Two former Methodist Churches
- G. Two former post offices of Main Street

Dissatisfaction with the existing remoteness from a post office was a commonly held sentiment. Concerns over increased isolation because of movement of businesses from the center of Town.

## **Harwich Center**

### **Village Character**

The small number of comments received under this heading at the village hearing was indicative of general satisfaction with the current character of Harwich Center. It was noted at the hearing that the village is unique in that it contains a concentration of Town facilities. The poor condition of sidewalks was mentioned in terms of both safety and village character. A similar comment was offered regarding the need for better maintenance of private ways used by the public. Brett Way (adjacent to Christy's and Victorian Inn) was specifically mentioned as needing repairs. Another comment concerned the treatment of empty commercial buildings to the effect that such buildings should be guided to their optimum use for their location by means of private and public improvements. It was also suggested that incentives for property maintenance in the Historic District be developed.

### **Environment**

Conserving Harwich's natural resources dominated the hearing discussion on the environment. Residents supported the idea of providing developers with incentives to avoid excessive stripping of the land during site preparation. It was suggested that developers replant areas that have been cleared and not used.

Other concerns expressed at the hearing and in written comments include the following:

- A. Encouraging less water usage.
- B. Dedicating more attention and resources to hazardous waste removal.
- C. Increasing efforts to raise public awareness about the benefits of recycling.
- D. Promoting innovative septic systems.
- E. Reducing septic density and overall nitrate loading.
- F. Eliminating lead paint and asbestos from old buildings.
- G. Review of storage of combustible/hazardous materials in close proximity to dwellings, particularly historic structures.
- H. Professional assessment of health risks of power line expansion in developed areas.
- I. Requiring environmental impact statements for any major building or renovation project.

Hearing attendees were particularly in favor of establishing a conservancy zoning district which would provide greater protection of wetland resources.

(Section III – Planning District Analyses, 1990)

## **This Place, Our Place**

During 1990, a number of residents volunteered to assist in a program called “This Place, Our Place”, sponsored by the Center for Rural Massachusetts with the Planning Department and Planning Board. This study required volunteers to photograph and/or illustrate physical attributes of the Town which they found appealing and those which did not lend to the attractiveness of the community. The result of this survey was presented in a public hearing where approximately 100 citizens of the Town viewed a slide show of the photographs and were asked to rate each on its contribution to and representation of Harwich’s overall character. It was found that the general character of Harwich is one rich in historic value and wonderful natural resources, all of which should be preserved.

The input of these citizens led to the creation of some general guidelines and recommendations to maintain the character of the Town of Harwich and its villages:

### **Village Centers**

1. Maintain sense of individual villages. Harwich is known as a Town of seven villages; it is important to the character of the Town that these remain distinct and unique.
2. Preserve or create unique identifiers for each village center and/or provide uniform decorative signage format to announce gateway to each village. Graphic symbols for each village may be appropriate for each gateway.
3. Encourage mixed use development reflecting traditional patterns in existing village centers.
4. Discourage strip style development by promoting commercial development nodes with more depth than just one establishment.
5. Establish mixed-use “Designated Growth Centers” (DGC’s) in existing village centers to focus growth and reinforce a village center character and identity.
6. Create “Transfer of Development Rights” (TDR’s) opportunities related to DGC’s.

### **Open Space**

1. Maintain and create a Town-wide open space network. Link this network to larger, regional open space systems. Much of the rural feel of Harwich comes through the large expanses of undeveloped land: cranberry bogs, wetlands, woodlands, and ocean views.
2. Maintain open space networks, important views, rural road edges.
3. Identify key parcels, resources, and views.
4. Cluster development to preserve open space and to help maintain networks of open space.

### **Residential Development**

1. Clustering of residential development is strongly urged.
2. Cluster can be based upon village, country lane, and farmstead patterns.
3. Maintain local patterns of building siting and landscaping, including fences and hedges and relationship to road.
4. Reflect local architectural patterns in terms of scale, massing, relative proportions of building and features (such as windows), detailing and materials.
5. Establish and maintain a network of pedestrian and bicycle paths linking villages, residential areas, commercial centers, and open space.

(Section X – Historic Resources/Community Character, 1993)