

Truro Needs A Growth Management Bylaw Now

Dear Editor,

April 7, 2026

For several years now, Truro has been making major development decisions without integrated planning. Projects are approved in silos—housing, zoning, wastewater, water supply and related infrastructure—without understanding their interactions and combined impact on our wells, aquifers, roads, debt and taxes, or rural character.

This is especially concerning because **Truro had a Growth Management Bylaw**. In 2021, the Planning Board unanimously supported extending it, 6-0. Town Meeting voters approved it 67-47 but it narrowly missed the two-thirds threshold from **historically low turnout due to COVID concerns**. The Planning Board itself noted the pandemic had “halted this essential planning process.” In other words, Truro never chose to abandon growth management—it lapsed due to COVID.

We have an opportunity to correct this now: the **Citizen Petitioned Article for a Growth Management Bylaw**. With so much development being rushed into motion in Truro now, we should not miss this chance to restore and improve the coordinated planning framework that the Growth Management Bylaw was, and is again, designed to provide.

As someone with graduate training in Environmental Law & Policy and Environmental Sciences, and years of work on sustainable growth, I’ve seen many communities learn this devastating lesson: **Growth management is not a luxury—it is fundamental to environmental protection, fiscal stability, and community resilience. Having a Growth Management Plan is not only important; it is essential if Truro is to be a viable, vital, and sustainable small community.**

It is also crucial at this time. The evidence that Truro is exceeding its limits is mounting.

- Retired CDC executive Dr. Ron Fichtner warned in January that we’ve reached a “critical tipping point,” exceeding environmental and economic carrying capacity. He states, “The town’s Comprehensive Wastewater Management Program (CWMP), now under development, requires Truro to reduce nitrogen and nitrate levels in local waters by **25 percent**.” That’s clear evidence we’re already beyond what we can sustain.

Meanwhile, in just the past 10 years

- Truro’s operating budget has increased more than 50%, now at \$27.7M and likely to exceed \$30M in FY2027 for the first time. Yet, Truro is the smallest town on the Cape.
- The average tax bill has also risen more than 65%, from about \$4,800 on average to about \$7,800 now.
- Debt has grown 12-fold. In FY2017, the Town Warrant projected a Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) five-year debt principal of \$4.88M. In the FY2026 Warrant, it projected a five-year CIP debt principal of \$60.18M—and this does not include debt service interest. There are new projects proposed that are not in the last CIP as well.

Combined, we can anticipate if all capital projects in the FY2026 pipeline are approved, that the average 10-year total tax tab per household of about \$59K (2015-2025), will rise to \$99K (2025-2035) and \$124K from 2025-2045. These reflect a 69% increase and 111% increase over the past 10 years' tax tab.

These are systemic-level warnings.

Provincetown, our neighbor and water partner, operates with a Growth Management framework—plans are presented, reviewed, and voted on. In sharp contrast, **Truro is moving forward without a Growth Management Plan**. And discrete plans are not integrated with other plans. For example, Provincetown has waited over a year for Truro's wastewater plan. We are now told it may take another two to three years before Truro's plan even exists, delaying critical decisions.

Some have pointed out that the Chair of the Walsh Committee is a retired hydrologist. That is wonderful—but it means nothing if water and wastewater are not in its purview. Expertise unused offers neither insight nor protection. Without a Growth Management Plan, even strong knowledge has no usefulness, and basic feasibility work falls behind—not just at Walsh, but across current and possibly proposed Overlay Districts.

Why are we approving new projects without understanding the impact of those already underway? Why aren't we assessing effects on our environment, infrastructure, budget and taxes—and sustainability?

The **Citizen Petitioned Article for a Growth Management Bylaw** on this year's Town Warrant is the first step toward restoring common sense in growth management. It reinstates the planning discipline we lost when the Growth Management Bylaw lapsed during COVID. It requires the Town to integrate water, wastewater, infrastructure, environmental limits, fiscal realities, and land-use goals into a single, coherent Growth Management Plan.

Supporting this article will **not** delay anything. And it will improve much. It will ensure that:

- Truro moves forward with full information, proper sequencing, and a clear understanding of environmental, fiscal, and infrastructure impacts.
- Truro supports projects only when both residents and Town officials have the information they need to execute plans responsibly and sustainably.
- Neighboring communities can plan with Truro, knowing Truro is in command of its processes, current in its data, and open with its citizens.

Truro is at a defining crossroads. We can continue making growth-related decisions in isolation or we can choose a path grounded in planning, data, and stewardship. Supporting the **Citizen Petitioned Article for a Growth Management Bylaw** ensures that we get things right and protect Truro's future. It ensures we plan better.

Respectfully,

Connie Mather, Truro