

## Promises on Walsh Are Not Enough

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Dear Editor:

April 2, 2026

I can remember when we could walk into Town Meeting with a tuna sandwich and a sweater and come out with a zoning bylaw that actually meant what people said it meant. Now we are in a difficult moment when we are trying to sort what the Select Board means when they express an intention to “honor” the Article 5 Walsh vote. I believe the Select Board is sincere. But I’m also really confused—**the Select Board simply does not have the power to fulfill that promise.** Nor does the Walsh Committee or the Zoning Task Force or the ZBA or the Town Manager.

**ONLY the voters can do that. Only a change in Walsh Overlay District (WOD) zoning can guarantee that this promise to honor our votes on Article 5 is fulfilled.**

I wonder if the Select Board, or Members of the Walsh and ZTF Committees, really understand this. I do not think so. Because if they do—and their intentions and promise are sincere (as I hope and believe)—then they should SUPPORT the two citizen’s petitions on Walsh to rescind WOD and replace it with a Walsh Residential District (not an overlay district like WOD) that will allow up to 160 units on the terms we adopted in 2025—and guarantees no more than that.

And if you want the Select Board to truly honor our Article 5 Walsh votes in 2024, then I urge you to support the two Walsh citizen’s petitions, too.

Instead, there is a serious campaign underway by the Walsh Committee and the Zoning Task Force to oppose these two citizen’s petitions. **But if these citizen’s petitions are defeated, the “160” promise becomes an empty promise:** While we can do 160 units to start, we could still have massive development at Walsh in the future because WOD zoning—and specifically the WOD use and dimensional tables—control development. Even the Walsh Committee chair has acknowledged this in their March meeting. No promise can stop large-scale development at Walsh if WOD zoning is still on the books. Only a voter-approved zoning change can.

This has all made me think about Aretha Franklin. In the 80s she put out a great, fun, but plainly worded song called ***Who’s Zoomin’ Who?*** Before COVID, the phrase *Zoomin’* had a different meaning. In Aretha’s song, it meant who’s fooling who, who’s playing who for a fool, who’s taking somebody for a ride – in other words, who’s gaslighting who.

The FACTS about allowable development at Walsh confirm that the two Walsh citizen’s petition articles are accurate, necessary, and practical ways to correct the major “oops” hidden in the WOD use tables. The facts show that the Town’s pushback to keep WOD in place is more than confusing, it is impossible in light of their “promise” to build only 160 units in a manner that honors Article 5. Under WOD, the Walsh property can be developed to way more than 160 units at any time in the future. So, I ask this plainly and sincerely about the Select Board’s promise to develop the Walsh property as we approved in Article 5: **Who’s Zoomin’ Who?**

The pushback by some Town officials speaking at the last two Select Board meetings and at the most recent Walsh Committee meeting is intense and unsettling. Phrases labelling our neighbors who call for common sense as *divisive, mean-spirited*, and using *misinformation and disinformation to fragment our community*; creating *us vs them*; and stating *falsehood and half-truths* were spouted as if they are true when they are not true. Who's "us"? Who's "them"? **Who's zoomin' who?**

What I actually hear and see is VERY different. I hear brave neighbors calling for a REAL conversation of **the WOD zoning facts** and **better planning** so we get what we want on Walsh and ensure that it stays that way.

Last week, I listened to Pamela Wolff give one of the clearest, calmest, most fact-based presentations I've heard in years. She wasn't dramatic. She wasn't political. She was just doing what she's been doing for months in *Truro News* and elsewhere: explaining, patiently and publicly, what the Walsh Overlay District zoning regulations actually say—and what they don't say. And why, given what WOD actually says, we have to re-do the Walsh property zoning at THIS ATM to get what we approved in 2024. That's not divisive. That's public service. I thank her for it.

We can trust the Select Board to honor its word and at the same time recognize that **they have no power to do anything about that promise**. This is not about trust - IT IS ABOUT ZONING. I think it's called "Trust but verify." Pamela's citizen's petitions are the only way to **verify that we get 160 units max for good**.

Pamela's petitions don't shrink housing, or block housing at Walsh. They simply make sure that the housing we build is the housing voters approved—right-sized, right-zoned, and right for Truro's people, water, roads, and town character. That's a big "YES" to housing in Truro that works for Truro—responsibly.

I've lived here long enough to know that Truro can do great things when we do them together. But together doesn't mean uncritically, silently, or passively. Together doesn't mean nodding along while being told that disagreement is "misinformation" and concern is "divisive."

Together means showing up. Together means staying informed. Together means voting our values. Together means remembering that **we** — the voters — are the legislature. **We** write the zoning rules.

So, if you want Article 5 honored, if you want Walsh built at a scale that we can sustain, if you want water protections that actually protect our water now and for the future, if you want zoning that says what it means and means what it says, then come to Town Meeting on May 16. Bring your sweater. Bring your energy. Bring your common sense.

And let's make sure no one is zoomin' anyone this year.

Thanks for your time.

— Roberta Lema, Truro

PS: Here's a link to Aretha performing "[Who's Zoomin' Who?](#)" if you want some fun while you consider my truly serious recommendation to support the Walsh Citizen's Petitions.