

Dear Editor

April 29, 2026

The Walsh Committee recently asked: *What is the basis for overdevelopment concerns at Walsh?* and *Can't the Town be trusted to cap Walsh at 160 units?* Here are the facts.

Zoning Trumps Intent

The current **Walsh Overlay District (WOD)** controls development through its Use and Dimensional Tables. Under these rules, "by right" allowances could permit **well over 1,000 units**—far exceeding the 160 units originally discussed. With reduced setbacks, no building size limits, and co-living options, the WOD enables high-intensity development that voters never envisioned in 2024.

Why RFPs Aren't Enough

Town officials suggest that Requests for Proposals (RFPs) are binding. This is partially correct. This approach relies entirely on trusting officials to write—and keep—expressly binding terms (e.g., never more than 160 units). RFPs are risky because they can be amended or reshaped later, as seen with Cloverleaf. **This is why a zoning change is better than an RFP** – it is cleaner, safer, permanent, and voter-approved.

One RFP May Not Be The Only RFP

Even though an RFP can be binding, as long as WOD zoning is on the books, the Town can issue additional RFPs for future expansion of units. They certainly have the space and the allowances within current WOD zoning. This is why “trust” is so inappropriate to ask of us. As long as Town officials insist on maintaining WOD zoning, there is no effective limit through a single RFP to future expansion on Walsh.

WOD vs 40B Is A False Choice

Some officials insist if we rescind WOD, we are forced into a 40B situation (stripping away zoning limitations). Not true. Town-owned land is not automatically subject to 40B regulations. The Town has to agree – it's called a “friendly 40B” – like Cloverleaf. If the Town does not agree, then there's no 40B, just WOD zoning.

Trust is Not a Plan

While current officials may intend to stop at 160 units, their intentions are not final and, in reliance on an RFP we again have to trust the RFP creators – why? Worse, **there's nothing stopping the Town from issuing additional RFPs while WOD zoning remains in effect.** They certainly have the space and the rules to do that under WOD. RFPs are NOT subject to voter approval; only zoning is. To ensure Walsh reflects the community's will, we must ensure that the Town cannot issue more RFPs for future Walsh development. Zoning changes can do that, not one RFP.

The Solution is Straightforward

To honor our 2024 votes, we must **rescind and replace the Walsh Overlay District** with **zoning** that codifies ALL Article 5 conditions in zoning, including a firm 160-unit cap and other important conditions we intended to adopt in 2024 but were not included in WOD zoning. Making these permanent, binding and FINAL, in turn, will allow Walsh Committee members - and citizens - to truly support Walsh development as intended in 2024 and begin real planning immediately. Until we do so, we won't enjoy the same level of support that we did when we came together to pass the Walsh recommendations.

I have submitted two citizen's petitions to do just this. These petitions are well-crafted, enforceable, and allowable under law. They meet all requirements and good-faith expectations for Town Meeting, contrary to some officials. They pass muster. They are meant to give voters the opportunity to say thanks to the Select Board, Town Manager, and the Walsh Committee for their good intentions and also ensure we get what we voted for in 2024 — permanently and easily.

We don't need assurances, however well-intended. We don't need to gamble. We need a bypass-proof legal framework. Changing Walsh zoning does that.

Thank you. - Pamela Wolff, Truro