

Dear Editor

February 5, 2026

I know you've been hearing from me a lot lately. But I'm pushing 90, and at this age you don't waste time when something needs attention.

I've also learned to pick my battles. I no longer argue with toasters, I don't bother with people who think turn signals are optional, and I've given up trying to explain why wearing flip-flops in the woods is just not smart. I can also say this with confidence: once you lose something precious — whether it's your hearing, your business, or the character of a rural town — you don't get it back.

We could lose North Truro as we know it because of the continued work of the Zoning Task Force. That's a battle we can't avoid. After watching the two January Zoning Task Force (ZTF) "listening sessions," I kept finding myself talking back to the screen in utter disbelief. As I have many times asked myself about some committee meetings over the last few years: *Am I hearing that right?*

Say, what the ZTF?

My ZTF doubts started when an official on the ZTF session described his vision for Highland Avenue and Pond Road in the Highland/Shore Overlay - the heart of North Truro - for it to look like **"Main Street in Orleans."**

That was when I realized the ZTF truly doesn't understand Truro at all - or it doesn't care that we live in Truro **as it is** by choice, not by accident. It's not that we lack what Orleans has — it's that **we don't want to be Orleans**. We are not, and have never wanted to be, **Orleans-by-the-Sea**.

Truroites are different, and we like it that way. That kind of vision for this part of Town (or any part of Town) tells me the ZTF's zoning plans and recommendations are coming from a template for a different town, and not from living in and knowing the real Truro.

Next came the talk about **creating a brand-new town center** in North Truro —while we can't keep the little stores in Central Truro open through February, including mine. When asked why, Town Land Use Counsel blamed "noise regulations." That's news to me — and it's nonsense. We close-up off-season because we're a small, seasonal town.

And then — amazingly — a ZTF member called on **"JANET Worthington"** to comment. *Who on earth is he talking about?* I wondered. And then I saw Jan on the screen.

Everyone in this town knows **Jan** Worthington. I babysat her. I knew her grandparents. No one has *ever* called her Janet. That's when it hit me: these folks don't know this town — not the people, not the history, and not the difference between Truro and Orleans.

North Truro is a community, not a commodity.

Meanwhile, tucked inside the North Truro Overlay District plan are changes that would shrink front setbacks from **25 feet to 5 feet**, allow multiple structures **on very small lots**, and raise building heights **to 45 feet**, right in one of the most historic parts of Truro traversed by a scenic roadway,, Shore Road. There's a lot more changes proposed, but this gives the idea. That's not revitalization — it's reinvention.

And on top of that, the ZTF is pushing a townwide bylaw that lets anyone convert a house into **four units by right**, with **only a minimum 3-month residency** and **no owner occupancy requirements**. How does that help year-round affordable housing? It's an open invitation to speculators and outside investors who don't know us, don't live here, and don't intend to. In fact, two men from P'town said as much — and were pleased Truro would make it easy.. These are not neighbors; they're profiteers— and they'll drive up assessed values for everyone else, making Truro *less affordable*, not more affordable. Who needs speculation condos?

Here's the part that truly made me sit up straight.

When asked about **water and traffic**, the ZTF again said those things were “**not in our purview.**” Either this is r bad planning or it is evasion – or both. Either way, this is a serious problem for us.

How do you plan any large-scale zoning changes in Truro without looking at water and traffic? Safety and the environment? Costs of every type on every level? How do you carve up a town like this without knowing what's really involved? And without being open with Town residents about it?

The answer is simple: you can't. If you don't plan for these related things, you're not planning — you're guessing.

So now we're guessing about major changes no one asked for in an historic part of Truro— all without a comprehensive plan for water, traffic, transportation, our wallets and without any understanding of what this means for the people who actually live there.

And let's not forget: **these are the same people who brought us the Walsh Overlay District.** We're only now uncovering WOD's problems because complicated zoning was pushed without honesty about real – and known - consequences. The water issues alone - driven by the really large-scale commercial and residential units allowed - have and will cost us time, money, and stress that could have been avoided if, for starters, these had not been avoided in developing the WOD Article last year because they were not in ZTF's “purview.”

What happens when a small town lets big ideas outrun facts? WOD is a good teacher on that. Since the Central Truro Overlay seems to be dropped, we should do the same on the proposed North Truro Overlay.

We need to take care of Truro's own — with modest housing, tax relief, more services, a much less expensive winter cover for trucks, and comprehensive planning. We need scale for Truro. We need better planning. What we do *not* need are new overlay districts. Really, we do not need the ZTF. It is out of control. For those who might want to say this is anti-housing, please get over that: **it is anti-nonsense.**

Which is why I am asking the Select Board — firmly, respectfully, with all the years as Truro resident and businesswoman and with the four generations of family in Truro behind me — **to stop the ZTF's work now.**

Please:

- Do not advance any ZTF overlay districts
- Do not advance a home conversion bylaw
- Do not put the ZTF's article(s) on the Warrant
- DO amend WOD to be consistent with the Walsh “Article 5” vote in 2024 – and honor voters' decisions to allow Walsh development on a strictly limited basis.

Meanwhile, I ask neighbors to also join me in urging the Select Board to create a comprehensive plan for Truro, grounded in Truro's real needs, real water r, real environmental protections, real traffic realities, real costs and taxes, and a real understanding of the Truro we are — and intend to remain.

Thank you for listening.

Roberta Lema,
Truro