

New Beginnings: Great Opportunity to Reset the DPW and Budget Priorities

February 11, 2025

Dear Editor,

Many of us in Truro are very pleased with some recent changes in Town management and now have a real sense of optimism that we can heal and get back on track. We have a fantastic opportunity to reset on taxes and spending NOW before we get to ATM.

The first and most pressing place to start is the DPW. The recent decision of just three members of the Ad Hoc Building Committee to choose the MOST EXPENSIVE option for a DPW on Town Hall Hill is doomed with the voters I know. We made it clear last year and I hope we do not have to again this year or next. The voters overwhelmingly said that we want a DPW on Town Hall Hill that is scaled to the population of Truro, to the staff size and equipment we actually have in Truro, and to the tax burden we will accept in Truro.

If the Town comes in with more than a \$20 Million DPW cost, the Town should not bother bringing it to a vote. We have nine DPW staff working in the current facility (and five on most days). We have 14-15 vehicles. Truro is a small town with a small DPW department. We cannot justify acting like Hyannis or Barnstable.

The OPM has determined that the cost of the “monolith” option selected is estimated at \$35.1M for a total cost of about \$65M when including debt service, using the formula that Town accounting used. Stop the spend! This is exactly what voters rejected a year ago. It is a guaranteed “NO” unless we change course ASAP.

The Asst Town Manager made a sensible suggestion on Feb 6th to the Ad Hoc Building Committee to extend the timeline so we get the breathing room we need to actually weigh design alternatives. Hitting the brakes on a previously fast-tracked design scheme is the surest way we might get a plan and a cost voters can trust and approve.

There are other important things the Town should be considering immediately, such as:

Scale back on programs to over-build. Our former Town Manager wanted to build, build, build -- more than Truro needs. Let's look with a fresh set of eyes at what we spend for what, and what we get for it as taxpayers. For example, let's stick with what the voters decided on Walsh -- 80 units to start. With Cloverleaf getting started, that number will take care of TRURO's needs and be affordable to those who already live here, not just those who will come to live here. Let's keep our water clean at Walsh and Town wide and avoid water wars with Provincetown as well. Start at Walsh by really considering what overbuilding there will do to the water supply in TWO towns. That will also mean we can forget about water towers, wastewater facilities and some other really, really expensive items that were being discussed under prior Town management.

Tell voters we count. When Bob Weinstein said at the January 14 Select Board meeting that voters do not count because the SB is “custodian of Town lands” it was exactly the wrong message to send. Voters count, especially on binding articles and at the ballot box. We’ve had enough of division.

ATM passed three articles relating to seniors and not ONE has been taken up. Why not? The most expensive would cost about \$110,000 to implement. Give seniors who want it what the voters approved: free stickers to the transfer station and beaches. Seniors who do not want it do not have to take it, but it will be a big help at little cost and much less than the vouchers we offer for childcare. Full and part-time seniors should be treated equally -- we all pay taxes and should benefit from town senior programs, again, to those who so choose.

Sincerely, Fran Johnson, Truro