

North Truro in the Cross-Hairs – Target for The Highland Overlay

To the Editor:

May 2, 2026

For over a decade, my neighbors and I have worked diligently to protect our water and preserve the historic character of Pond Village as well as large swaths of North Truro. We have been constructive and active on the Cloverleaf project development, stormwater and groundwater concerns, working with the TCT to create the Pond Village Preserve, as well as serving as integral contributors to the restoration of the Chapel on the Pond. Our efforts have made a positive difference to the entire Town.

The Zoning Task Force (ZTF) is putting a comprehensive and irreversible plan before voters at ATM, called the *North Truro “Highland Shore” Overlay*. This overlay would transform North Truro into a dense, suburbanized, more commercialized, and more overbuilt community. Article 37 on the Warrant for Town Meeting (Saturday, May 16) targets three zones in North Truro as segments of the **proposed Highland Overlay District (HOD)**. If adopted, Article 37 will forever change North Truro. This is not an exaggeration. **The HOD is a complex 17-page plan addressing or altering 90 regulations applicable to Principal Use, 24 regulations applicable to Dimensional Requirements, and 47 regulations addressing Parking and Curb cuts.** I have linked a [map issued by the ZTF](#) to show just how far-reaching these proposed changes would be.



Here are the most serious impacts on North Truro:

- **Changing North Truro to “Main Street, Orleans.” Is this YOUR vision for North Truro?**

In an interview this winter with *The Independent*, the Chair of the Zoning Task Force stated that his vision for Pond Village is for it to look like “Main Street, Orleans.” Many in Truro are appalled by this prospect.

The proposed Highland Overlay District (HOD) would include much of North Truro’s Shore Road, the Highland Road Commercial District, a section of Route 6, and a portion of Pond Road. This proposal allows for significant increases to density and building height, decreases to lot size and setbacks, and allows for mixed residential + commercial/retail uses in newly created overlay zones as well as permitting a variety of multi-family units. If adopted, the HOD will transform the main arteries of North Truro into a dense suburbanized area with greatly increased traffic but also with greatly diminished parking and yard/green space.

This ZTF vision for North Truro is in sharp contrast to the expressed results of the 2022 Town Residents Survey which asked us what we most valued about Truro. A cumulative 92% percent of the respondents supported open space, the natural environment, and prioritized the town’s

coastal character. Two-thirds cherish the town's rural character, and well over half value our sense of community and Truro's "small-town feel."

- **"By-Right" Zoning Denies Current Rights to Protect Our Properties**

"By-right" zoning is a part of this new plan. It means **no special permits, variances, or committee approvals are needed concerning the newly allowed zoning provisions.** This "by-right" zoning would deprive abutters of a meaningful right to appeal any harm from modifications made under the new HOD zoning. Or as per another of the new regs, your neighbor could "by-right" turn their front lawn into a boatyard, and you would have no means by which to voice your opposition or get relief. Our Town Land Use Counsel explained and confirmed these limitations to me in a private conversation right after Pre-Town Meeting on April 30. If Article 37 passes and you have an objection to a neighbor's planned development or use, your only recourse is to go to Court. In North Truro, we are best served to leave current zoning in place.

- **Water Impacts Are Deeply Concerning and Damaging**

The proposed greater density will strain our general wastewater systems, and the proposed smaller lot sizes could impact abutters' access to clean drinking water by overworking and compromising small septic systems on small lots. The increased density allowed by the HOD would increase the wastewater effluent discharged directly into the groundwater supply that is the source for North Truro's well water.

Pond Villagers worked hard to minimize the pollution impacts from the wastewater effluent discharged from the 43 units at Cloverleaf, yet we now face another threat to the quality of our drinking water from this proposed intensive development. In addition to increased wastewater discharge, the expanded areas of impermeable pavement resulting from the proposed commercial and residential density will increase the toxic runoff of pollutant-carrying stormwater into the Village Pond, into our wells, and into our drinking water supply.

The Zoning Task Force expressly refused to consider these impacts when developing HOD, declaring that primary elements such as water quality and traffic/safety are "not in their purview." The lack of integrated growth management planning and the glaring absence of a comprehensive Town water feasibility study has led the Provincetown Select Board to register its alarm at the potential future risks for both Provincetown and Truro.

Voters who care about the well-being of North Truro's people, character, water quality, and our community's peace of mind, should vote **NO on Article 37** to the North Truro "Highland Shore" Overlay.

Thank you for your consideration.

Karen MacDonald Ruymann
Pond Village, North Truro