

January 11, 2026

via email to [editor@truronews.org](mailto:editor@truronews.org)

Dear Editor,

I was encouraged by the Select Board's commitment to honoring the "Walsh vote" of May, 2024's delayed Special Town Meeting (Article 5) as part of implementing the 2025 ATM (Article 32) Walsh Overlay District (WOD.) I commend them for making this promise.

I have spent many months and much time following and sorting the complex but inter-related topics below and have had much sound advice to get here. While this letter is long, I ask for indulgence on this. I hope this will help readers who want to understand why Walsh holds both promise and perils for Truro and will give them a basis to take action to make sure the promise is fulfilled as voters intended and the perils diminished as much as possible.

To fulfill their promise, a currently unavoidable problem has to be overcome: these two actions on Walsh have **unresolved and irreconcilable limits and conditions that remain unreconcilable without a zoning amendment**. Thus, promising Truroites it will honor both votes is not only problematic, but also impossible. Here's what they said in a December 19 "Special Edition" of Truro Talks—on the second page it says:

"We continue our planning for the Walsh property in accordance with recommendations voted at 2023 Special Town Meeting (held in May 2024) and Truro's right to implement our community's vision as approved by voters at the 2025 Annual Town Meeting (Walsh Overlay District)..."

For the Truro Select Board and Town Manager to fulfill their promise to deliver on the Walsh 2024 vote *and* the WOD 2025 vote, there will have to be an amendment to the WOD first.

By way of example, the original Walsh article called for a cap of 160 units developed in a phased build-out: 50-80 units in the first phase and the remainder to be built if evaluation of need justifies them, up to a maximum of 160 total. Yet, the WOD makes no mention of phasing nor any maximum number of units. In fact, based on the adopted zoning specifications of the WOD **it is possible to build well over 1,000 units**.

This is touted as appearing unlikely, but it is inevitable it will happen because it is allowed to happen on the books, especially when no official cap on Walsh per ATM 2024/Article 5 has even been adopted by Select Board or Town vote. Why take this risk? Think about this: The most densely [populated municipality in New England is Somerville, MA](#), not surprisingly, the home to the consultant designing WOD (and our two proposed and potentially ruinous Overlay Districts up for vote in May). Somerville presently has an average density of about 15 housing units per acre. **WOD allows more than twice Somerville's density if developed as approved for Walsh A and B zones!**

A recent report issued by **Stantec** consultants advising the Town on the potential site and location costs for a new (and unnecessary) \$16M water tower **cited 260 units for Walsh and another 365 units anticipated**, mostly in North Truro. That's over 100 more units than voters approved in Walsh 2024 and for the entire Town, about 625 units in all. Commenters at the Stantec session questioned these numbers—mostly never approved—and learned that these were incorrectly provided by Town Staff.

Stantec is not alone in citing 260 units for Walsh: The **Zoning Task Force** and the **"Walsh 2" committee** used the figure of 260 units for Walsh as well. I am hardly alone in being concerned that Town leaders are already beginning to move the goal posts—and may think the voters either won't notice, won't care, or can be gaslit into accepting development at Walsh beyond what we approved.

It is not just the number of units to be built at Walsh—it is how, where, and for whom. Most centrally, because the Walsh Overlay District is a zoning article, it is binding and supersedes the Walsh 2024 vote. This makes it essential to amend WOD—because it is the top dog of regulation type when it comes to land use in Truro.

This is deeply troubling as it could have been avoided. In April 2025 before ATM 2025, voters were reassured by [Town Planner/Land Use Counsel](#) that the ZTF's WOD article was “entirely consistent with the Walsh Committee recommendations” (in Article 5). This is clearly not the case. In other words, voters relied on a Town official's statements. Likely most never read the detail in a 20-page article, trusting these were harmonized. Now we know they are not, by a wide margin. This is an egregious breach of trust.

### **Because the Walsh Overlay District is zoning, it is binding and supersedes the Walsh 2024 vote**

Voter-adopted recommendations by the Walsh Committee or even SB policy cannot trump the regulations in the WOD. Only the ZBA has possible jurisdiction and, as we saw with Cloverleaf, the terms of the article the citizens voted for were radically changed due to pressure from developers (e.g., 12-16 units described in the approving ATM article explanation was expanded to 43 units now; height below tree line changed due to a variance now making the buildings visible well above tree-line; unsafe tandem parking and limited on-site movement; and more). What will the ZBA do when confronted with pressure from developers in a project where potential scope allows for up to 1,000 units and large commercial spaces?

### **The Water War Driven by WOD**

Unquestionably, the excessive ambition for development at Walsh is fueling a water war with Provincetown. This dispute is serious and at the end of the day Provincetown will win as it has won for nigh on 70 years. The conflict with Provincetown is over water in the Truro aquifer—who gets it and who does not, in what volume, by what delivery method(s), and where supply wells are located in Truro. Provincetown asserts that any new well for Walsh is best located on Walsh and Truro says “no way”—if we do that we cannot build as many units as we want at Walsh.

This reached a head recently:

On **December 19**, the Select Board issued a “Special Edition” of Truro Talks that contained their December 16 letter to the entire Truro Community about water arrangements with Provincetown and water needs for Walsh. [Here's a link to that document.](#) On **December 22**, a member of the Provincetown Select Board issued an Open Meeting Law Violation complaint, presumably about this letter.

On **January 8**, the Provincetown Water and Sewer Board soundly challenged the contents of the “Special edition” letter, and in that meeting the Provincetown DPW Director, a Truro resident, rebuked the letter as misleading, misinformed and disingenuous. As I write, the Provincetown Select Board has placed this letter on its agenda for **January 13** and will likely express its consternation over the remarks and attitude the SB's special edition letter conveys about and toward Provincetown.

### **Over-Development at Walsh Drives Water and Walsh Conflicts: Stop That, Stop the Water War**

The entire argument within Truro and between Truro and P'town officials is over the scale of development at Walsh and the related water issues. Only a small group of devotees and state officials want Walsh developed at the scale we now know WOD would allow. Reduce the scale of development at Walsh to what voters approved in 2024 and almost all of the struggles in Town and between towns disappear.

### **The Remedy is an Amendment to the Walsh Overlay District at ATM 2026**

An amendment to WOD that reduces the developable area of Walsh, limits the number and types of units to those proposed in ATM 2024/Article 5 vote will allow two important water benefits: it will allow new wells and appropriately limited wastewater treatment to service Walsh in the scale that voters approved in 2024

AND it will protect the Zone 1 area needed to serve Provincetown (and the rest of Truro) as well. Both towns win.

Because the Walsh vote of 2024 is essentially eclipsed by the WOD in 2025, the only way to ensure that the voters'—and the wider community's—wishes are put into effect is to create a superseding Walsh Overlay District by amendment. No verbal promise, no vote by the SB, can change this legal reality or necessity.

A lot needs to be addressed to develop a WOD amendment that allows the Walsh 2024 vote to be implemented in a Walsh Overlay District. This includes phased development of 50 to 80 units with a zoned cap of 160 units max, using single and duplex units only—no apartment buildings, nothing above the allowed height of 30 feet; with some for rental, some built to own and some space for “build-to-own” with deed restrictions; with more recreational space uses; no commercial site waivers and commercial development limited to human service needs (like day care centers) so we do not drive local mom and pop operations out of business.

The amendment should also be specific and explicit in re-stating Walsh 2024 commitments that were omitted or changed in WOD: e.g., Net Zero and low impact development; allocation of promised seven acres to the School from developable land (not recreational land).

At the same time there are many **internal inconsistencies within the WOD** that need correction—dozens, but perhaps the most important (and potentially deceptive) is that voters are very clear on height limits not to exceed the current limit (i.e., below tree line) and while WOD text reflects that limit the **WOD Use Table allows for four-stories! Schedule C allows 45-foot heights.** This has to be reduced. (The Cloverleaf silhouette shows exactly why the uglification of Truro needs to stop.) Because WOD Definitions were not presented to voters properly—lacking bolding and strike-outs to show proposed changes from the existing bylaws—these need to be scrutinized carefully, harmonized and corrected to have less impact, not more.

Other examples can be given but it is probable that the voters thought that when they voted for the WOD they were just giving the ok to what they had voted for at ATM 2024, given Town Planner/Land Use Counsel's reassurances as noted above.

### **The sane and simple solution**

The sane and simple solution is to have the Select Board propose an amendment to the WOD in a Warrant Article to resolve these conflicts and/or omissions, including ambiguities, contradictions, and other problems in Definitions and Uses that were not made clear (as required) to voters at ATM 2025. Unless the WOD zoning bylaw guarantees that the Walsh 2024 vote is memorialized in regulations along the lines above, the Town's assertion that it will honor both are meaningless. An amended WOD will ensure that its terms comport with those of the original Walsh article and vision, as we were told in April 2025 they would. It will also re-assure the Town's citizens that it can trust its leadership at its word. It will help to restore trust with Truroites and with Provincetown—and eliminate future struggles over exceedingly high costs and impacts for what will become unneeded development and water infrastructure.

If this cannot be completed for ATM 2026, the Select Board by its vote should establish that no further planning or development at the Walsh site can proceed. This doesn't tie anyone's hands as future amendments can be made. It is time Town leadership made good on its promise to Truro about Walsh 2024 votes by making WOD comply. The Truro community should be able to rely on the intent of their vote and the word of Town leaders.

Thank you.

Pamela Wolff, Truro