

Wareham Planning Board
54 Marion Road
Wareham, MA 02571

April 1, 2021

Dear Mr. Buckland, Mr. Barrett and Members of the Wareham Planning Board,

I am writing to stand with 10 conservation organizations (Buzzards Bay Coalition, Sea Run Brook Trout Coalition, Southeastern Massachusetts Pine Barrens Alliance, Wareham Land Trust, Trustees of Reservation, Herring Pond Wampanoag Tribe, Northeast Wilderness Trust, Community Land and Water Coalition, Trout Unlimited and Wild lands Trust) in opposition to Article 1 of the Special Town Meeting within the Special Town Meeting on April 10, 2021.

As I understand it, the current iteration of Article 1, the proposed amendment to the Wareham Zoning By-Laws, seeks to add Article 17 to the current By-Laws thereby creating a new type of district ie "Redevelopment District." Additionally, it then adds a section entitled "Hospitality, Recreation and Entertainment Overlay District."

While the proposed zoning change may appear to offer financial benefits to the town, I and apparently many other conservation minded people believe that it does so at a great peril to Wareham's abundant natural resources. The Citizens of Wareham as well as Officials of the Town also believed this 756 acre section of East Wareham was ecologically sensitive when the Master Plan 2020 and 2017-2024 Open Space Plan were recently written. The Town, and presumably also the Planning Board, was concerned about the effects of large developments in that area when the zoning was changed from "Agricultural Watershed" to "Residential R-130" effectively limiting the amount of development to a single home on a 3 acre lot. This is in stark contrast to the article before us that would allow 75% coverage!

The proposed high density mixed-use commercial overlay district is inconsistent with the goals of the MA state Zone II designation and the Buttermilk Bay Water Resource Protection Overlay District. It is also inconsistent with the MA Natural Heritage and Endangered Species BioMap 2 designations. I would argue that while these designations so exist, they are inadequate to fully protect Wareham's and Onset's water supply since nitrogen appears to be the only contaminant of concern. The article speaks to the underlying districts but not to the enforceability of other already existing overlay districts.

Another point of concern is that while a property owner may choose not to develop according to the HREOD once they do submit a plan, there appears to be no option for project failure. "1720.2 ...Once a landowner exercises rights for a development subject to a HREOD Special Permit, the land shall only be developed and used for HREOD Special Permit uses and shall comply with the requirements and restrictions of this Section."

It is extremely concerning that this article was presented to the Town by an out-of-town developer who is most likely not interested in "what is good for Wareham" but rather "what is good for his business." It is important that Wareham defend the natural resources with which it has been entrusted so that future generations of people, plants and animals will continue to drink clean water and breathe fresh air.

I ask that the Planning Board vote not to support this article.

Respectfully submitted,


Nancy McHale
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