



TOWN OF BARNSTABLE

SANDY NECK BOARD

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Sandy Neck Board Meeting

June 9, 2025

A regularly scheduled meeting of the Sandy Neck Board was held on June 9, 2025, at 7:00 pm in the Selectmens Conference Room.

Chair:

Thomas O'Neill

Vice Chair:

Peter Sampou

Board Members:

William Carey
William Monroe
Maureen Piccione
Rene King
Rich French

Council Liaison:

Gordon Starr
Kris Clark

Barnstable

PD Liaison:

Chris Kelsey

Roll Call:

Board Members present by roll call: Tom O'Neill, Pete Sampou, Maureen Piccione, Rich French, Bill Carey, and Bill Monroe.

Board Members absent: Rene King

Staff: Sandy Neck: Sandy Neck Park Manager, Nina Coleman, Natural Resource Officer, Jacob Turner and Operations Supervisor, Donna Bragg

Staff Member absent:

Council Liaisons present: Kris Clark

Barnstable Police Liaison:

Public: Wendy Paquette, Paul Berger, Tracy Hallett

Guest Speaker: Zak Mertz, CEO of New England Wildlife Center in Weymouth and head of Cape Wildlife in Barnstable. Margie O'Neill, volunteer, Cape Wildlife.

Act on Minutes: On a motion from Pete Sampou and seconded by Rich French, the Board, by voice and show of hands, voted to approve the May 12, 2025, minutes.

Notes from the Chair: Tom O'Neill addressed the Board. The past few meetings we have been discussing Sandy Neck Board efficiency, and the role of the Board going forward beyond the Coastal Resiliency project. He spoke about continued education opportunities. How do we take this Board forward? We have a mission statement that was produced in 2003 for the Board. Tom would like to add something to the agenda for next month. He spoke about the collective experience and knowledge of the Board members. Bill Monroe spoke about honoring Nate King who was on the Board for many years and has since passed. As we would not have done anything Bill would like to revisit the possibility of doing something. Nina suggested contacting the family about a plaque on the rock by the Gatehouse. Rich French said he would try to contact the family. Kris Clark said that there is a procedure to do this type of thing, and it goes through the Town Manager. Maureen pointed out that it should be sustainable and repeatable as she is sure there are other people who need to be honored. Maybe a plaque on the large rock with space to add people's names to. Tom reminded everyone that the July meeting will be the election of Board Officers.

Correspondence: None.

Staff Report: Nina Coleman addressed the Board. * See attached report.

- Nina introduced Natural Resource Officer, Jacob Turner. Jacob is a permanent part-time assistant NRO. Jacob comes from the Recreational Department. He is an EMT (Emergency Medical Technician). He is also a lifeguard who also trains and certifies lifeguards. Jacob has certified several MEA/Sandy Neck staff as lifeguards. We are very excited to have him as a team member.
- The Off-Road Vehicle beach, (ORV) is open 1.0 miles.
- Cottage Owners can access Trail 1, or an escort.
- Daytrippers are parking with their headlights facing the dunes.
- Camper spots are delineated via cones.
- Camper and Daytrippers have separate areas that are well marked.
- Gatehouse hours are daily, 8am-9pm.
- ORV Beach open 8am-10pm. Fires are allowed.
- The speed limit on ORV is 5mph.
- Up and coming events: 6/12 Sandy Neck Diamondback Terrapin Hike, 10am-Noon. 6/17 In search of Diamondback Terrapins Hike, 10am-Noon, 6/18 Sandy Neck Plover Hike, 10am-Noon, 6/24 Flora and Fauna Hike 10am-Noon. Junior Rangers starts July 9th. Sign up through the Recreation Department.
- Sandy Neck Staff Training: Cottage Colony, Barnstable Fire Department, multiple agencies involved. Police training through the Barnstable Police Department. CPR/AED/Stop the Bleed training through the West Barnstable Fire Department. Weekly staff meetings.
- Sandy Neck Safety. Three full-time Sandy Neck Staff hold Red Cross Open Water Lifeguard Certifications. NRO Turner, Certified EMT and Red Cross Lifeguard instructor. Assistant Park Manager, Ann Marie Luppino, is also an EMT. Sandy Neck Jet Ski is operational as needed. Police Department truck is stationed at the Gatehouse.
- Terrapin releases: 31 schools and other agencies participate with a total of 39 Diamondback Terrapins released.
- We had a storm come through with a very large tide on the Friday before Memorial Day weekend. We lost 85% of our fencing and 40% of our Plover nests. Staff worked hard to get the beach back into shape. We closed the beach on Friday and re-opened it on Saturday. Nina pointed out where the plovers are re-nesting. Nest 27 survived the storm has hatched and hatched out with four chicks and they are moving east. We have 3 nests that are due to hatch out early in July. Worst case scenario is we will be open half a mile for July 4th. Paul Berger said that Nauset is open indefinitely as they lost all their plover nests. We are up to 55 nests as of this meeting. The Tern colony is setting up between Trail 2 and 4, and then again past Trail 5. We have had quite a bit of coyote predation around Trail 4 and past the closure line.

Old Business:

Conservation and beach erosion along our coastlines.

- **Economic sustainability.** None.
- **Public outreach and public use & participation.**
Bil Monroe addressed the Board. An Eagle Scout candidate reached out to Ann Marie and Donna and wanted to be on this agenda. Donna said the agenda was packed and reached out to him to ask if he would like to be on next month's agenda. He was supposed to be traveling but he was not. Donna said he hadn't gotten back to her. Bill said he would reach out to him.
- **Sandy Neck Beach Reconfiguration Project Update.**
- The bids for the project went out and are now closed. We haven't awarded yet, so Nina couldn't speak to that. We received some good bids. The winning bid is a local company and came in with a very good price. If you want to see the numbers, you can go on the purchasing website and there is a spreadsheet with the numbers. The bids came in with between 5 million and 9 million. We are coming into the Coastal Zone Management Grant which we are starting to work on. We put in a letter of intent for the National Fish and Wildlife, (NFWF) grant, which is a federal grant which apparently still funded. That letter has been submitted. We may or may not be

invited as it is federal and there is a lot of competition. We are also coming into the time where the CZM grant we are currently working under is ending, which is July 1, 2025. As a reminder to everyone that grant was for permitting and end of project design. Bill Carey asked if he goes on to the town site if it is the lowest bidder who wins the contract. Nina said yes but they must be vetted to make sure they meet all the requirements.

- We had all the third graders from Hyannis West come to Sandy Neck for a whole day. We had so much fun with them and went all out. We had the taxidermy animals for them to see, Sandy Neck cranberries for them to taste, a sandbox where they learned about beach sand and beach grass hands-on. Natural Resource Officer Antonio Mancha had all the Sandy Neck vehicles out for the children to see and explore, including our jet ski, trucks and ATVs. They also had a mock Diamondback Terrapin nest that they dug up to see the “eggs”. Our consultants are working on educational signage about the project, and about ecology in general. This was funded through a grant. Many ideas regarding ecology are coming for future projects. All the educational information can and will be used in other settings. Nina has done a lot of presentations regarding the project including speaking at the West Barnstable Civic Association and teaching a Cape Cod Community College. She will be presenting tomorrow at the Nantucket Coastal Resiliency Project. A lot of interest and excitement has been generated regarding this education and outreach. We are keeping track of all this outreach and will be sending the information back to the grant provider letting them know we are fulfilling all requirements. Bill Carey said he thought the outreach project was wonderful.
- We did have a license plate reader at the Access Trail to keep track of vehicles going on the beach and coming off. It will also alert us to those people who do not have an Off-Road Vehicle Permit and cut back on people getting stuck in the sand. It is like the one at the Town of Barnstable Transfer Station. We are close to getting it completely installed. This is only for the Off-Road Vehicle Beach. Gate staff is keeping tally of those going up to the parking lot.
- **New Business: *Out of order. See attached slide show.** Tom O’Neill addressed the Board. Tom introduced the guest speaker, Zak Mertz, CEO of the New England Wildlife Center in Weymouth and head of Cape Wildlife in Barnstable. He also introduced Margi O’Neill, volunteer for Cape Wildlife. We are fortunate to have an organization such as Cape Wildlife as a partner in saving wildlife. Tom showed two slides with a clam clamped down on a seagull’s beak. *See attached slides. Tom turned it over to Zak and Margi to introduce the other special guest. Zak took out Loki a female Eastern Screech Owl out of an animal case and handed her to Margi. She was tethered so she would not fly away. Zak Mertz addressed the Board. Zak thanked Tom and the Board for having he and Margi to the Board meeting. Zac said they are truly grateful and there would not be as much biodiversity without Sandy Neck and its beautiful habitat. Zak asked Margi to introduce Loki. Margi addressed the Board. Loki has just celebrated her sixth Birthday. She was brought to Cape Cod Wildlife from Wareham, Mass when she was a baby. She had fallen out of her nest or was kicked out as a nestling, and she was 3 or 4 weeks old. She was missing an eye and her beak was misaligned. Because she was a baby, and hadn’t learned to hunt from the parents, she was determined that she would not be able to be released. Cape Wildlife received permission from the state to make her an educational animal. She is the first educational animal for Cape Wildlife and goes to a lot of school programs and other outreach to educate people about owls. She is the second smallest owl species in Massachusetts. She is a little more than half a pound and their wingspan can be up to two feet. Their hearing is very acute. They live in wooded areas and are mostly nocturnal. Mostly feeding on small rodents, birds and turtles. They also have another teaching animal Thor who is a Great Horned Owl. Loki could live twenty years in captivity, seven to ten years average in the wild. You can only tell the sex by blood work. If you are interested, you can put up nest boxes in your yard. Gestation is around thirty days. Zak Mertz addressed the Board. The New England Wildlife Centers are non-profit and run two hospitals. One in Barnstable is called the Birdsey Cape Wildlife Center, and the other in Weymouth called the New England Wildlife Center. Their focus, (mantra), is kindness to people, kindness to animals. It is not just about wildlife, but it is also about educating the public regarding wildlife. The center is about forty years old. They do free veterinary care for wildlife. They are the primary vet for Massachusetts Audubon. They lost all funding about eight years ago, but people saw the value in what they do. With a lot of effort, they had the property donated to Cape wildlife. Through many fundraisers, Cape Wildlife managed to stay open. They anticipated caring for two to four hundred patients in the first year but ended up caring for two thousand! Please see the slide show regarding animals they have treated as well as information regarding services. They treat over two hundred and twenty species of wildlife a year. A great majority come from Barnstable County. In any given year, they will see about five thousand wild animals between the two hospitals. About forty percent of patients last year came from Barnstable. Zak stated that it is a testament for Natural Resources, Animal Control, and Sandy Neck Staff in the work they do with wildlife. Sandy Neck is the heart of the ecosystem in Barnstable and is an incredible place. With its biodiversity, it is a place worth protecting. He showed a slide of the types of injuries they treat.

Bird flu has been a particularly difficult situation to deal with. Tom asked if they got any support from the state. Zak said not yet. The two hospitals have put around fifty thousand dollars this year into the Barnstable bird flu outbreak. They are also the only staff qualified to deal with oil spills. They have a large outreach program, teaching students about wildlife. Bill Monroe asked about funding. Zak said between the two hospitals, it costs three million dollars a year. Some money comes from grants, but most comes from donations. Unfortunately, the least amount of donations comes from people dropping off animals to the center. Kris Clark asked about the prevalence of bird flu on the Cape. Zak says it waxes and wanes throughout the year. December, January and February tend to be the highest numbers of infections. At this time of year, it is less. Rich asked where people can send donations. Zak said through their website, www.capewildlife.com or they can come to the center in Barnstable, 411 Main Street in Barnstable. Bill Monroe asked about volunteer opportunities as they have Eagle Scout candidates looking to do projects for community service. Zac said that would be great. They are launching a once-a-month open day for volunteers. Bill asked about supplies that could be donated. Zak said there is a “wish list” on their website and they also could use plumbers, carpenters, and electricians. Tom thanked Zak, Margi, and Loki for their visit and information provided.

Matters not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair: None.

Public Comment:

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 7:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Bragg, Operations Supervisor, Sandy Neck

Attachments:



June 9th – Staff
Report.pptx



SNK Cape Wildlife
talk_opt.pdf