



TOWN OF BARNSTABLE

SANDY NECK BOARD
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Sandy Neck Board Meeting **March 9, 2026**

A regularly scheduled meeting of the Sandy Neck Board was held on March 89, 2026, 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, Bill Monroe, Rich French, and Bill Carey.

Board Members, absent: Rene King, and Maureen Piccione.

Staff: Sandy Neck: Sandy Neck Park Manager, Nina Coleman, Donna Bragg, Operations Supervisor.

Staff Members, absent:

Council Liaisons present: Kris Clark and Gordon Starr.

Barnstable Police Liaison:

Public: Wendy Paquette, Paul Berger, Tracy Hallett, and Christina, (Tina), Carrington, from the Recreation Department.

Guest Speaker: Pete Sampou.

Act on Minutes: On a motion from Bill Monre and seconded by Pete Sampou, the Board, by voice and show of hands, voted on the February 9, 2026, minutes. The vote passed.

Notes from the Chair, Et al: Tom O'Neill addressed the Board. As you know we have had Renee King from the Recreation Commission on the Board. She has been an excellent contributor. She has had a lot of family stuff going on and is living mostly in Arizona currently. Tom had attended the Recreation Commission meeting and discussed a potential resolution. Christina, (Tina), Carrington said she may be interested in joining the Board and is attending this meeting to see how the Sandy Neck Board operates. If Tina or anyone else is interested in being on the Board, Tom asked that the decision be made quickly as the process is long to fill vacancies on the Boards. If there is no one from Recreation Commission who is interested, it will go out to the public.

Correspondence: Tom received a letter from the public. Sandy Neck Assistant Park Manager responded to the letter. Nina felt that we should table the discussion until we meet in October to discuss regulation changes for Sandy Neck as the letter pertained to a potential regulation change. Tom said we would table the discussion for now and take it up at the October meeting on potential regulation changes. He asked Donna to ask her to inform the patron.

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

- Nina spoke about the blizzard.
- The 2025 Off-Road Vehicle Permits expired January 15, 2026.
- Gatehouse is closed due to construction.

- Off-Road Vehicle Permits will be mailed out until further notice. Not available at Gatehouse.
- Parking lots closed due to construction.
- Off-Road Vehicle Beach open only on weekends, weather permitting. NO campfires.
- For Cottage Owners, the Trails are tough. Tracy Hallet said Trail 2 is a no. Trail 1 has a bunch of debris at the mouth of the trail and some of the debris have boards with nails in them. Nina said she was working with Highway to address the debris at the mouth of the trails. Tom asked how Cottage Owners can get to their properties. Nina said they could try to get up the trails. The best thing to do is call the Gatehouse and get a report from Donna regarding the conditions. Donna said Paul Singley did go out to the Cottage Colony. Bill Monroe said he walked in from the front beach.
- We are updating our access information weekly on the Sandy Neck website <https://barnstable.gov/sandyneckpark/> letting folks know when the Off-Road Vehicle Beach is open and any other information that may be needed. We are also using the free My Barnstable APP, and Nina is emailing the Cottage Owners with updates.
- Sandy Neck Walks and Talks as well as Seasonal job postings have been posted to the Town of Barnstable website.
- Seasonal jobs include Gatehouse Supervisor, Gate Attendant, Shorebird Monitor, Natural Resource Officer, Facilities Maintenance, and Beach Aid.
- **Upcoming Events:**
- March 3rd and March 5th Cape Cod Community College, Sandy Neck Resiliency Presentation. She spoke about how Sandy Neck did well during the storms.
- April 14th Cape Cod Coastal Conference.
- March 19th Barnstable Innovation School Turtle Talks.
- March 11th and 12th Upper Cape Tech field workdays.
- March 20th AmeriCorps shorebird fencing event.
- April 18th Massachusetts Beach Buggy Association, (MBBA), workday. All are welcome to join.
- Nina showed a video of her walking up the new overlook. It is included in the report.
- Donna said the Gatehouse now has electricity and water. New ramp at the Gatehouse. Waiting for fiber optic wiring and we have limited wireless.
- Next big move is to get the pavement down and we are first on the list as soon as plants open and Nina is cautiously optimistic that we will be ready for opening.
- Bill Monroe asked about the dune grass plantings that can be seen from the observation deck. All the plantings are from Sandy Neck.
- Dogs must be always leashed.
- Plovers are back in Bourne, so they are on their way.
- Bill Carey asked if at a high tide will the Off-Road Vehicle Beach be passable between Trails 4 and 5. Nina said no, folks must keep an eye on the tides. It is spring and the beach should build back up as the season goes along.
- Kris Clark had a question about storm debris. She said she heard Tracy Hallet's concern about the debris on the beach and Kris has been fielding questions regarding storm debris from the public. She said she received an email from the Department of Public Works regarding their plan to address the debris. She said if there are debris on Sandy Neck, is it something we can contract out so it does not put further burden on the Department of Public Works. Nina said beach debris is something we take care of and we are using staff and interns to deal with the debris. Nina said we are working our way through all the challenges. Hidden in the seaweed is debris with nails so you must be very careful.

Old Business:

Conservation and beach erosion along our coastlines.

- **Economic sustainability.**

- **Public outreach and public use & participation.** Bill Monroe addressed the Board. The Eagle Scout project has been working on the Toy Lending Library and signage. Bill will be sitting on his review Board this coming week. He is all set. Bill will be sitting down with the Scoutmaster and share a list of potential projects at Sandy Neck that Ann Marie provided him. We have a few projects for scouts that are looking for some service work out at Sandy Neck. Bill will schedule a follow-up visit to the Board once the Eagle Scout project is complete.
- Nina said she could use a crew of scouts to help with some plantings if they are available. We salvaged a bunch of plants from Sandy Neck and heeled them in over the winter and are ready to put them out. Bill will put this on the list. It won't be an Eagle Project, but the Troop can help. Nina said it would have to be done during the weekends. Bill said perhaps the scouts could do an overnight at the Halfway House. Rich said there are some items on the west side of the Halfway House that need to be addressed.
- Pete said that right before the storm, there were two teachers that expressed interest in continuing to take Sturgis' students out to the Halfway House to work on projects.
- **Sandy Neck Beach Reconfiguration Project Update.** This information was included in the Staff Report.

- **New Business:**

- **Guest Speaker: Vice-Chair, Pete Sampou. Cape Cod Water Quality Report Discussion**

- Tom O'Neill addressed the Board. Tom said he read the water quality report that was published back in December 2025 and thought it would be a good topic for discussion. The report is a science oriented, and he suggested that Pete Sampou would lead the discussion. The report covers all Cape Cod including both fresh and salt water. So, what we decided to do was focus on the embayment's that are relative to Sandy Neck, which is basically Barnstable Harbor. Barnstable Harbor has eleven monitoring points. One of the things noticed in the report is the conservative rating system which at first glance looks horrible. If one of the eleven monitoring points needs work, they consider the entire eleven points to all need work.
- Pete addressed the Board. Pete said he would give a little background that applies to the entire water quality project. He said it was based on a eutrophication index, which is an excessive growth of algae, stimulated by nutrients, primarily nitrogen and phosphorus. Much like fertilizing your garden if you get these nutrients arising from runoff or groundwater seepage, it makes algae grow. So, the eutrophication index they use on this Association of Preservation of Cape Cod assessment of fresh and salt waters that if you have high concentrations of algae and or low concentrations of concentrations of dissolved oxygen, it hits this substandard eutrophication index.
- Pete said he had to dig deep into the raw data because the article we all saw didn't really explain where the problem was. How did Barnstable Harbor get a "Needs remediation as soon as possible"? Nutrients in the water on Cape Cod come from human excrement. Human waste, feces and urine. Primarily from septic tanks. The downtown Barnstable Village is on sewer and that's about it. Pete shared a picture with the Board of what we all think of as Barnstable Harbor. We are not correct. The picture doesn't include Dennis. It turns out that there are six monitoring points out of the eleven to sixteen points because there were more than eleven over the last five years. There are six monitoring points located in Chase Garden Creek. The creek goes into North Dennis and goes to a high-density residential area which is all on septic systems. Urine from septic systems contains urea which is a high nitrogen compound. When the urine goes into your septic tank, bacteria break it down primarily into ammonium. Ammonium is an inorganic nitrogen; it is a nutrient. Urine contains the dominant amount of nitrogen in human waste. Phosphorous is another nutrient that can stimulate phytoplankton growth, and it is the dominant stimulator in fresh water. In saltwater because of the geochemistry of the sediments, it breaks down into nitrogen which is the most influential in phytoplankton growth in saltwater. What comes out of your drainage system from a septic tank is primarily ammonium, and inorganic nitrogen. If it encounters any oxygen, it turns to nitrate, a different inorganic nitrogen. If flows with ground water, the soil doesn't hold on to

it. The takeaway from this is that septic tanks do nothing to remove nutrients from human excrement. So that is the sampling site that sinks Barnstable Harbor in located in Dennis. These nutrients are the bane of coastal pollution.

- In the study, if there is one embayment that is bad, all end up considered bad. Ninety-five percent of the estuaries are considered bad by the very conservative water quality testing. In the interior of Barnstable Harbor, where the boats are docked, there is very little movement of water, and they sample that also and it is not the best place, but it is the creek that goes into Dennis that is the problem. Everywhere else is good in Barnstable Harbor.
- Rich asked if the report was bad, wouldn't it impact on the oysters. Pete said we have the best oysters because of the water quality. Rich spoke about the sewer system and how that has a good impact. The flushing of the tides in the Barnstable Harbor system doesn't allow for buildup and it is flushed out to sea.
- Solutions: What is happening on the south side is sewer system. That eliminates the problem that septic systems cause. With the sewer you can treat nutrients in some manner and not allow them into the water systems for run-off. It is very expensive. Falmouth is piloting a urine diversion. There will be about fifty homes participating in the program. These homes are in nutrient endangered estuaries. They have toilets that separate urine from feces. The urine is collected in a tank underground or in the home's basement. Someone comes and pumps it out. The biggest problem in our sewer is you are treating gallons of water for a pint of urine. Once you separate out the excrement, the urine is valuable for fertilizer. This pilot program is an option for a town or community instead of having to use sewers. It is a lot cheaper. Tom asked if it was done anywhere else on the Cape. It is not. Gordon said it is being used in Vermont, Nina's mom's baby. She was in the beginning stages of the project in Vermont. They called it liquid gold. Gordon is working on this system for use in Barnstable. He said it is pasteurized at the base and then can be used as fertilizer. Gordon said to refit your house, this system is about eight to ten thousand dollars. To do an alternative septic system is about fifty to sixty thousand dollars. To get a sewer pipe in front of your house is one hundred-twenty thousand dollars.
- Tom asked if you take the urine, which is basically nitrogen and use it as fertilizer, doesn't it enter run-off? Nina said no, it goes up into your plants. Pete said your septic system puts the nitrogen below the plant roots which is of no help to the plants. The option of urine diversion is a great program. Gordon said the County supports testing different sewerage technologies. The testing is done over on the base, and they pump it through different proprietary systems, and they test them and tell them how well they did. The base has been working on this project for about twenty years. Kris said they are so progressive they received a grant from Bill Gates for the work they are doing at the base to help infrastructure and prove out the efficacy of these technologies. Gordon said urine diversion has not been approved yet. There was a discussion regarding where the water goes from Chase Creek. Pete said it is such a small creek and the volume of water going in and out makes it not a problem. Gordon said Town Council approved one hundred, seventy thousand dollars to do drilling on the north side under the highway from the Community College to Old Jail Lane looking for appropriate sites to put sewerage effluent into the ground. We can't expand the sewer like we wanted to because we don't have enough space now to put the effluent into the ground. Pete asked if the potential of pumping the effluent into the ground was that after nutrient removal. Gordon said yes. If the Environmental Protection Agency begins to ask about emerging contaminants in the effluent, we will have to go to reverse osmosis. At that point we would need a whole power plant. Gordon said there was a meeting next week looking at Board of Health looking at the comprehensive wastewater management plan. It is 3pm-6pm on Monday. Gordon said Rich had brought up the whole bowl of the jail and the courthouse, used to be served by two sewage ponds, basically behind Taverna, they are still there. Now they are hooked up to the storm drains. The storm drains into one pond and then to the next pond and then drains into the salt marsh. No one knows what comes out of the ponds. Rich said no one has looked at those ponds in probably ten years. Discussion regarding sewage never getting out to West Barnstable, there must be a better way. The conclusion from Pete was Barnstable Harbor is in good shape as the waters surrounding Sandy Neck. Pete spoke about oysters cleaning the water. Nina said while that was good it is not a silver bullet. Shellfish is a tool but not the whole answer to the solution.
- Tom thanked Pete for the interesting discussion and materials presented.

Matters not Reasonably Anticipated by the Chair: None.

Public Comment: Tina Carrington addressed the Board. She enjoyed the presentation by Pete. She thanked the Board for having her at the meeting and gave a little background about herself. Tina is not from the area, she is originally from Massachusetts, so she is called a wash ashore. She moved from Connecticut, her husband is still there. They have had a house on the Cape for over five years. She has been with the Army Corps of Engineers in Buzzards Bay. She has been on the Cape for a little over a year now. She wanted to get to know her town on the Cape and get involved. Tina said she would like to be a Sandy Neck Board Member.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 8:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Bragg, Operations Supervisor, Sandy Neck

Attachments:



Staff report.pptx