



## TOWN OF CHILMARK, MASSACHUSETTS

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To: Honorable Board of Selectmen  
From: Planning Board Subcommittee  
Re: Chilmark Master Plan, Menemsha Report, Part 2  
Date: December 12, 2017

The Planning Board subcommittee has completed the second part of the Chilmark Master Plan Menemsha Report and is pleased to submit this report to you for your review.

This Part 2 report addresses concerns in Menemsha that reach beyond traffic and parking issues; those were specifically addressed in the Part 1 report submitted to you on March 29, 2017.

The Part 2 report makes suggestions that address concerns raised in open meetings throughout late 2016 and 2017 by participants representing many perspectives.

We look forward to attending your Tuesday, January 2, 2018, 5PM meeting to discuss our suggestions.

### Chilmark Planning Board Subcommittee Members

  
Joan A. Malkin

  
Peter B. Cook

  
Janet L. Weidner



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# Chilmark Master Plan

## Menemsha Report, Part 2

December 12, 2017

Submitted by the Chilmark Planning Board Subcommittee  
to the  
Chilmark Board of Selectmen

## Introduction and Background

The Chilmark Planning Board has embarked upon an updating of the Town's Master Plan. The Planning Board's initial focus for the current Master Planning effort is Menemsha, with subsequent efforts to focus on the Town center and remaining portions of the Town. To this end, the Chilmark Planning Board subcommittee conducted a series of meetings with Menemsha stakeholder groups – residents, business owners and members of Town Boards and Committees which have a role in Menemsha – in order to gather input on concerns and suggestions for a vision for Menemsha.

Specifically, the Planning Board subcommittee met with the following entities:

Board of Selectmen	Beach Committee	Menemsha Residents
Police Department	Harbor Advisory Committee	Menemsha Business Owners
Fire Department	Parks and Recreation	Summer Residents
Harbormaster	Site Review Committee	Seth Karlinsky (Maintenance)
Coast Guard	Conservation Commission	Vineyard Transit Authority
Tri-Town Ambulance	Historical Commission	Martha's Vineyard Commission
Highway Department	Board of Health	Fishermen's Preservation Trust
Shellfish Warden	Zoning Board of Appeals	

In the course of these meetings, the Planning Board received many ideas and suggestions. Importantly, there was broad consensus that Menemsha reflects an appropriate balance of interests and activities, and efforts to preserve the character of the village have been largely successful. On a more granular level, those who participated in the meetings generally agreed about what is working well in Menemsha, as well as what areas need improvement. Consequently, our conclusions and recommendations do not call for dramatic changes to Menemsha.

As might be expected, much of the discussion focused on the busy summer months. We categorized all of the ideas/suggestions that we received into half a dozen topic areas: 'vision' for Menemsha, working waterfront ideas, commercial issues, vehicular traffic and pedestrian safety, comfort station and related topics, and other (for those things that just didn't fit in the other categories). We further divided these broad topic areas into long term and short term.

We met with the Board of Selectmen on November 15, 2016 and presented our initial findings with regard to traffic and pedestrian safety issues. We suggested that the Town pursue a number of public safety initiatives that we felt could be acted upon relatively quickly and which could be undertaken without limiting the Town's options for action on the overall issues in the future.

The Board of Selectmen agreed and placed an appropriate article on a Special Town Meeting Warrant. This article asked the Town to pay for improvements to the Menemsha Park and Ride parking lot at Tabor House Road, including improved lighting, better-defined parking lot layout and construction of a bus shelter. The Town voted unanimously to approve expenditures for these improvements at the December 5, 2016 Special Town Meeting.

In March 2017, we provided part 1 of a report to the Board of Selectmen. That report more completely addressed traffic safety and pedestrian issues. We also provided a copy of that initial report to Adam Turner, Executive Director of the Martha's Vineyard Commission (MVC). After discussion regarding how the MVC could assist and contribute to the town planning efforts, Mr. Turner hired William Brewster, an architect with Master Planning and Site Planning expertise. Mr. Brewster was engaged to analyze traffic flow and parking issues in Menemsha. He visited Menemsha twice in summer 2017 and provided his Draft Analysis and Recommendations to the Planning Board sub-committee this past fall.

Finally, Kevin Burchill, who is a summer traffic officer for the Chilmark Police Department, reviewed our preliminary report in the spring of 2017 and provided comments and suggestions. He recently issued an end of summer assessment as well. Kevin's comments were insightful and useful. We have forwarded his report to Mr. Brewster.

This document represents part 2 of our report. Divided into ten (10) sections, it describes concerns raised by meeting participants, in areas other than traffic and pedestrian safety, and includes specific suggestions which follow from our data gathering.

The Planning Board will update the Chilmark Master Plan in the near future. Whereas these Part 1 & 2 Reports provide specific suggestions and are operational in nature, the updated Master Plan will present a 'vision' for and 'future' of Chilmark as a whole, including Menemsha. The updated Master Plan will also include the feedback we receive from any survey we may conduct as well as from other forms of community outreach.

We request that the Board of Selectmen consider the following suggestions and assess whether implementation of any suggestion would be beneficial to pursue.

## **A. Trash Management and Cleanliness**

The Town of Chilmark lets a contract for trash pick-up. This general maintenance position is primarily for cleaning of the comfort stations and picking up the garbage from cans in Menemsha. The general maintenance position may also include some maintenance work for the harbor and beach department, and occasional repair of dock areas and the walkway areas.

In the last couple of years, the Town has made improvements in how trash is managed in Menemsha. The Town added four solar powered Wi-Fi/trash compactor units in Menemsha. These replaced two of the 55-gallon trash cans. The units appear to work well, and have been well received. These bins also include Wi-Fi connections. The Town has also added recycling bins to accommodate the recycling of plastic and metals cans and bottles.

### **Suggestions: Trash Management & Cleanliness**

- 1.A) Develop a “global” plan for trash units in Menemsha, considering the types of units available and the varying trash needs.**
  - Assess additional and/or different locations for trash cans or compactors, in light of possible changes to the parking lot layout and pedestrian walkways.
  - Determine the right mix of trash compactors and wide mouth trash cans. The trash compactors are cleaner than the wide mouth 55 gallon cans, as the trash is contained and doesn’t overflow, as it can with the larger cans. One downside to the trash compactors is that people occasionally put inappropriate articles in there (e.g. can of oil). This can damage the workings. Limited signage to indicate what is appropriate might be helpful. On the other hand, there is still a case to be made for the old style large units, particularly for the fishermen who sometimes have large items to dispose of.
  - Continue to provide opportunities for recycling. Recycling has become a way of life across the country. If people are presented with clearly marked receptacles for recycling, they will recycle. Understand that this equates to more cans.
- 2.A) Advertise and enforce carry in/carry out rules.**
  - Develop appropriate signage or maybe colorful posters – possibly run a contest like the Steamship Authority has done for carry in/carry out. (Not sure how the enforcement could be executed.)
- 3.A) Ask the local businesses to participate in a campaign to reduce trash.**
  - Support and encourage additional ways to reduce trash. The local businesses have largely eliminated Styrofoam containers for carry out and have migrated towards more environmentally friendly material such as cardboard. Ideas include elimination of straws; reduced packaging; giving bags only if a customer asks; no napkin dispensers.



- 4.A) **Add doggie poop bag dispensers.**
- Provide bags that could be used by people walking dogs on the beach (during those times when it is allowed) as well as for people walking dogs along the paved road.
- 5.A) **Install a water refill station at the comfort station.**
- Contribute to a reduction in the amount of trash to be dealt with in Menemsha by reducing the need for disposable water bottles.
- 6.A) **Provide a means for food separation.**
- Provide specific receptacles for food waste; the food waste can then be composted, and less trash is generated overall. This is a concept being pursued by various groups, in various venues, around the Island. We understand that this would require physical space, signage, a means to collect and deliver to some point, etc., and people would need to be educated. However, we think this should be on our radar.

## **B. Signage**

A number of suggestions were raised relative to signage. Acknowledging that providing some information is helpful, putting up too much signage is often counterproductive.

### **Suggestions: Signage**

- 1.B) **Consistent Design & Format of Signage:**
- The consultant hired by the MVC has made some signage suggestions and those will be included in the final report; Officer Burchill has as well. As a rule these relate principally to parking and traffic directions.
- 2.B) **Dog-related information:**
- Provide clear and consistent information, in multiple places, regarding when dogs are allowed on the beach (whether it is seasonal, before or after certain hours, etc....).
- 3.B) **Info board at comfort station.**
- Allow easy access to safety tips, information on ticks and tick-borne illnesses, and other safety information deemed appropriate.
- 4.B) **Sign at beginning of jetty warning of risks.**
- Encourage safe use of the jetties. Apparently, there was such a sign in the past that is no longer there.
- 5.B) **Keep Menemsha clean**
- Bring back "Keep Menemsha Clean" campaign, assuming that there was such a thing.

## **C. Commercial Issues**

Many meeting participants raised concerns about the livery vans which have become regular visitors to Menemsha. As these vans tend to unload many passengers at once, the result is often lines of people waiting at the comfort station facilities, overloading of the garbage receptacles and an influx of customers at the shops and restaurants.

A related issue is the van drop-off and pick-up locations as well as where they wait until the passengers are ready to be picked up. Some circle Menemsha while waiting for their passengers; others use a parking spot or tie up one of the yellow loading zones.

There was little appetite for allowing 'mobile' businesses (e.g. pop up businesses such as mobile art studios and food trucks) to solicit business in Menemsha. This was principally due to the limited number of parking spots in Menemsha (and the tendency for such businesses to take up a parking space to operate) as well as the concern over additional competition to existing take-out food businesses. (Note that these comments did not apply to the off-season food truck in Menemsha).

### **Suggestions: Commercial Issues**

#### **1.C) Livery Vans**

- Consider imposing conditions on livery vans, such as identifying one place for them to pick up and drop off; times of the day for operation; etc.

#### **2.C) Mobile/Pop-Up Businesses**

- Continue to enforce current restrictions against mobile/pop-up businesses during the summer months.

## **D. Conservation-Related Map of Menemsha**

A number of meeting participants felt that a large map of Menemsha delineating habitat and wetlands should be developed. Such a map might also help to identify medium- to long-term changes to these areas as well as the impact of potential development on habitat/wetlands. Such a map would also be a valuable resource as we develop a long-term vision for Menemsha.

### **Suggestion: Map**

#### **1.D) Habitat & Wetlands**

- Develop a habitat/wetlands map of the Menemsha area.

## **E. Zoning Issues**

A few, not many, issues were raised at our meetings relative to zoning. The first was a request to review the allowable height of buildings and the setbacks in Menemsha. Several townspeople also pointed out that temporary trailers seem to be turning into permanent structures (e.g. the trailer at the Fish House



and the trailer between Pandora's Box and Menemsha Blues.) and expressed concern about the aesthetics and whether such structures are permissible under the Town's zoning bylaws.

A third topic raised concerned noise; particularly in regard to commercial enterprises including refrigeration units, generators and heavy equipment such as is operated by the Menemsha Fish House.

### **Suggestion: Zoning**

#### **1.E) Comprehensive Review**

- Undertake a comprehensive review of the Town's zoning by-laws to determine what zoning controls are in place and how they affect Menemsha.

### **F. Working Waterfront**

Maintaining Menemsha as a working waterfront was a priority for most meeting participants. There was vocal support for the "Meet the Fleet" event which has become a fixture of the summer season. The Town continues to show its support through initiatives such as the recent move to allocate Town land off of Tabor House Road to fishermen for storage of equipment. A number of specific requests were voiced by the fishing community.

### **Suggestions: Waterfront**

#### **1.F) A boom for loading and unloading of catch & supplies:**

- Investigate the addition of a boom which could be used to offload fish from fishing boats and also for delivering supplies to boats in the harbor. Some changes would need to be made to the dock to anchor it. Pedestrian safety would be a consideration, also, as there is much foot traffic in the area. On a related topic, when the bulkhead is replaced in the future, if the dock were widened, it would allow better use of such a boom by making it able to reach further, to vehicles and to boats.

#### **2.F) Refrigerator units:**

- Investigate the need for and impact of refrigeration units in Menemsha. The fishermen have some storage needs that require refrigeration. It was suggested that coolers of some kind be put on the West Dock. This location would mean that the resultant noise would not impact nearby residents. An assessment of electrical and space needs would need to be done, as well as impact on parking spots for slip lessees.

#### **3.F) Shellfish-related Equipment & Space:**

- Determine the need for specific shellfish equipment and space. These include an upweller in Menemsha Creek for developing seed; a means of landing their catch, having it inspected by the shellfish warden and taking it to market; and shucking space (preferably stainless steel table with running hot water).

Implementation of any of these suggestions would likely involve the input of several Boards/Committees having Menemsha oversight. These could be considered by the Board of Selectmen with the Harbor Advisory Committee and other fishing industry interests (e.g. Fishermen's Preservation Trust) to better understand the needs of the commercial fishing industry, assess the pros and cons of alternatives and develop a comprehensive plan for instituting as many of these improvements as is considered appropriate.

## **G. Comfort Station**

The comfort station in Menemsha was a topic that arose in discussions with several Boards and Committees.

The topic of charging patrons for use of the facilities was raised. It is estimated that on busy days, the usage can be as high as 200 flushes per hour. This has a financial impact, in terms of the frequency with which comfort station pump-outs must occur. In weighing pros and cons of charging for use of the facilities, we arrived at the conclusion that this would not be a good approach. Apart from the costs of purchasing, installing and maintaining the equipment in good working order (a challenge in itself due to the likelihood of damage from vandalism and wear and tear), more importantly, there was a strong consensus that the Town should strive to make Menemsha a welcoming destination. In that spirit, charging for the use of the facilities seems out of character!

There were a couple of requests that arose in our meetings that don't seem as though they would require a major overhaul of the existing facility. These include adding urinals to the men's room and adding a foot-rinse tap outside.

The bulk of the discussion focused on larger changes to the existing facility, such as the possibility of expanding showers or other facilities, and longer term considerations such as the possible relocation of the comfort station vs rebuilding on the same site sometime in the future. Our sense, from these discussions, is that planning needs to begin sooner rather than later for the redesign of the comfort station. It does not seem as though it is worthwhile or even feasible to try to modify the existing structure to accommodate additional facilities. It also seems as though any effort to build a new comfort station, whether in the same location or in a different location, will require a significant amount of input from, and participation by, several town boards and committees. The lengthy design and permitting process should begin as soon as possible.

We have been considering alternatives for a VTA bus turnaround in a location other than the Menemsha Beach parking lot. The logical place for the turnaround seems to be in the vicinity of the present comfort station. There are some challenges, though. One of the suggested approaches had been to have the bus navigate in a semi-circle around the comfort station. This does not seem feasible due to the location of the septic tanks and the leaching field behind the comfort station. We are now evaluating a recommendation to establish a turnaround just north of the comfort station. The goal is to develop a plan for the bus turnaround that can be put into operation within the next year. This would allow the Town to evaluate its workability as the comfort station plan emerges.

### **Suggestion: Comfort Station**

#### **1.G) Comprehensive Plan:**

- Begin development of a comprehensive plan for a new comfort station as soon as possible.

### **H. Improve Availability of Menemsha Information**

While there is a great deal of information available on the Chilmark Town website (obtained by selecting the “Summer Information” button on the left side banner) regarding key aspects of what’s available and how best to use it in Chilmark and Menemsha, it seems as though that portion of the website could be better organized and expanded. Some examples of information to be added include satellite parking lot (hours of operation, location); beach rules and regulations; dog rules.

### **Suggestion: Menemsha Information**

#### **1.H) Town Website:**

- Review the information currently available on the Town website and determine the addition of content most useful to assist summer and year-round residents make the best use of Menemsha; review the design and organization of the summer information section of the Town’s website in order to improve user accessibility.

### **I. Menemsha Review Board (working title)**

The idea of a “review board” for Menemsha emerged through our many community meetings. There are many Town Boards and Committees which have responsibility for some portion of the running of Menemsha. There is some overlap among these groups and establishing some sort of “super committee” to oversee Menemsha might introduce efficiency as well as improve communication. We’ve considered this suggestion and have discussed it extensively among ourselves. We’ve come up with the following concept for such a group and how it might operate. The goal of any such committee or organizational structure would be to facilitate communication, cooperation and efficiency.

Town Boards and Committees which are charged with responsibility (from an operational standpoint) for particular physical portions of Menemsha include the Harbormaster and the Harbor Advisory Committee (responsible for operations within the Harbor, including the bulkhead); the Beach Committee (with responsibility for Menemsha Beach itself and the comfort station); Parks and Recreation (responsible for the business leases surrounding Town property); and the Board of Selectmen (overarching responsibility). However, while the physical jurisdiction of each of these groups may be clearly defined, they (and their constituents/customers) share an interest in common facilities – comfort station, parking spaces, trash facilities, Wi-Fi, etc. A Menemsha Review Board (MRB) could be

populated with one member from each of these Town Boards and Committees. We would also ask that the Planning Board be involved in the early stages.

Regular management items that a Menemsha Review Board might address include:

- Development of a common understanding of the authority of each Board and Committee and identification of areas of potential overlap.
- Development and coordination of an annual maintenance plan with a schedule for Menemsha to include items such as painting of parking area, routine beach and parking lot maintenance, installation and removal of the slatted walkway, maintenance and cleaning of the comfort station.
- Resolution of issues that arise which cross jurisdictions. Examples might include allocation of parking spots, comfort station functionality, and trash management – aspects of Menemsha which span the domain of more than one member Board/Committee. It would allow the member Boards/Committees to better examine an issue from the perspective of the other Boards/Committees and jointly contribute ideas before a decision is made. It would provide an opportunity for dialogue to occur.

We have noted that many of the issues identified in this document cannot be solved in a vacuum but rather through an integrated group approach. For example, in the working waterfront section, we mentioned that the implementation of the requests from the fishing community would likely require input from several town boards and committees. We feel that that is true of other areas as well.

As another example, when the Town replaces and/or relocates the Comfort Station, there will be differing perspectives as to size, location, and functionality. Having a team approach for evaluating alternatives and developing a plan could result in practical solutions with broad support.

### **Suggestion: Menemsha Review Board**

‘Test drive’ the Menemsha Review Board concept for an initial period and assess whether it adds value or just imposes additional meetings on townspeople who are already volunteering their time. Are there really issues that could benefit from the review of a larger group? Or is this asking too much of people to participate in yet one more meeting?

## **J. General**

There were a few topics that arose in our discussion that had general support. In fact, it was asked that the support for these items be noted. These are:

- Maintain the 18-18 rule for that small area of the floating dock.
- Continue to keep slip and mooring waiting lists current and updating them on the Town website.

**Suggestion:** No specific action is suggested at this time.