

Below are the two items I would like to bring before the Selectmen next week. I include the Rationale and Examples for context, should the Selectmen have the time or inclination to understand why I'm making these asks at this time:

1. **What is the Town's status in terms of authority over Noman's Land**, and what is the current official position of the Town regarding the Navy's current Remediation Plan?

Rationale for this item: I am not aware any Chilmark Selectman was at the 9/29 virtual presentation by the Navy, in collaboration with representatives from Fish & Wildlife and the MassDEP, so it's unclear what the Town's level of engagement is. A timely understanding of the Town's position (ideally, as a result of special item for voters to consider) is crucial, given the Navy's current stated intent is to try and publish a "Record of Decision" within months. This timeline is far too aggressive from the point of view of a number of citizens, who due a lack of public information in advance of the Navy's announcement have not had time to review the history of the Noman's cleanup and management and to respond with something of a consensus to fulfill the "public acceptance" piece of the decision-making process. A group of citizens is working on a coordinated response to the Remediation Plan, and the Navy has indicated its flexibility in terms of adopting the alternative to spend the available funds (with potential additional financial contributions TBD) to perform a more thorough cleanup of subsurface unexploded ordnance (UXOs) beneath the ground and on the ocean floor. In order for this citizen group to proceed as effectively and efficiently as possible, we need to know the parameters of interest and investment within the Town of Chilmark to ensure any citizen-directed communication effort with the Navy is part of a coordinated response that does not inadvertently work at cross-purposes with the interests of other stakeholders (our understanding is that the "public" is considered a stakeholder, according to the available Noman's remediation documentation).

2. **Will the Town consider creating a role of Public Information Officer as soon as feasible?** The purpose would be to ensure ALL Chilmark residents and, to the degree appropriate, other interested individuals, are kept informed in a timely manner of significant news, upcoming warrant items, and all other Town business affecting themselves and their families. The new website is a great step forward from several years ago, when I offered to provide website design enhancement consulting services to the Town; however, maximizing the effectiveness of the website as a portal for reliable information, including an online Calendar with event listings that are complete and up to date, is something best accomplished by a distinct role that removes the burden of associated tasks from other Town roles that may not be officially responsible for public-information tasks and that may not be able to ensure such information is:

- a) **updated to be current** and complete on a daily or at least weekly basis, and
- b) **available with sufficient lead time** for residents to review in advance of Town meetings.

Given the expanding off-season population due to COVID-19, the Town should expect a **greater representation in the voting population of pre-retirement age residents**, many of whom expect as a general rule to find pertinent information on not just one official website but also via announcements and alerts on social media, such as a Town Facebook page and alerts posted to the Facebook group "Islanders Talk." The Town will ideally make it a priority to establish a presence on social media to meet more voters where they get their information. I understand that some voters may be on a Town email listserv to receive alerts on Town business; if so, a Public Information Officer would advise the Town to make sure that option is made clear to voters on its Home page.

Rationale for this item: From my conversations with other Chilmark residents, there is a need for more timely posting of public information and relevant documents so that busy families can have time to consider Town business that affects them. This has been an ongoing issue that can potentially have the

unintended result of disenfranchising voters -- especially younger voters (pre-retirement age) who may not have the same amount of free time to spend reviewing relevant information as retirees may. Warrant issues in particular may require more "advance time" than has often been afforded by the Town to benefit from public notifications about relevant issues.

Example 1: The **absence of public information related to the Noman's Remediation Plan Public Comment Period and virtual meeting with the Navy (9/29/20)**, despite **repeated requests over a period of weeks** leading up to that meeting to a) get the meeting ON the Town Calendar and b) ensure the notice was placed "above the fold" on the Town Home Page as an upcoming event (the standard presentation on a website calendar is to have the items listed by date, with older items lower down and items that are already obsolete removed entirely).

Example 2: The Town meeting several years ago, to vote on FINALLY putting the Squibnocket Causeway issue behind us: While information was on display at the Community Center that night, it's not clear it was made available weeks in advance of the meeting, to give more people time to absorb the issues and context. Most significantly, **despite a large number of younger residents** - such as parents with young children who took time to get to that meeting EARLY, being galvanized to attend out of a desire to have the Causeway issue resolved - the "Town fathers," instead of applying situational awareness and having the issue discussed and voted on as the **first order of business**, chose instead to have the gathering vote on whether to run through the entire list of warrant articles first or discuss and vote on the Causeway first. Despite public input at the meeting petitioning the Town to address the Causeway issue first, **specifically to allow for greater inter-generational voter representation in the vote**, it was decided to shelve the issue until after all the "regular business" was dealt with: a process involving, as I recall, **more than 30 warrant items, with related public discussion and votes, which lasted until around 11 p.m.**, at which point the Causeway issue was presented with a substantially diminished voter presence. My own older parents were barely able to hang in there, well past "Chilmark midnight," and voted on the first part of the Causeway warrant issue unaware that the second part was a separate vote. They left before then, and those of us who stayed til the end JUST BARELY got the votes needed to put the issue to rest in the Town's favor. The meeting wrapped up close to midnight, and I'd guess that at least a third of the younger voters who wanted to participate in those votes were prevented from doing so due to an arbitrary decision that failed to prioritize a warrant item that had been publicly promoted as a significant Town matter to be voted on. It was frankly mystifying.

This second example may point to the need for **greater representation** (i.e., more seats, potentially representing greater diversity in terms of generation, gender, etc.) within Town leadership. However, that topic is not [art of my mission today. Hopefully, it will be food for thought moving forward.

Regards, Annie Cook