

Town and County of Nantucket
Board of Selectmen • County Commissioners

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C. Elizabeth Gibson
Town & County Manager

*AGENDA FOR THE MEETING OF THE
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FEBRUARY 22, 2017 - 6:00 PM
PUBLIC SAFETY FACILITY COMMUNITY ROOM
4 FAIRGROUNDS ROAD
NANTUCKET, MASSACHUSETTS*

- I. CALL TO ORDER*
- II. ANNOUNCEMENTS*
 1. The County Commission Meeting is Being Video/Audio Recorded.
- III. PUBLIC COMMENT**
- IV. NEW BUSINESS**
- V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES AND WARRANTS*
 1. Approval of Minutes of January 25, 2017 at 6:00 PM.
 2. Approval of Payroll and Treasury Warrants for February, 2017.
- VI. OFFICIAL BUSINESS*
 1. Request to Send Letter to Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries in Regards to Mobile Gear Closure Request.
- VII. COMMISSIONERS REPORTS/COMMENTS*
- VIII. ADJOURNMENT*

**Identified on Agenda Protocol Sheet.*

County Commission Agenda Protocol:

- **Roberts Rules.** *The County Commission follows Roberts Rules of Order to govern its meetings as per the Town Code and Charter.*
- **Public Comment.** *Public Comment is for bringing matters of public interest to the attention of the Commission. The Commission welcomes concise statements on matters that are within the purview of the County Commission. At the Commission's discretion, matters raised under Public Comment may be directed to County Administration or may be placed on a future agenda, allowing all viewpoints to be represented before the Commission takes action. Except in emergencies, the Commission will not normally take any other action on Public Comment. Any personal remarks or interrogation or any matter that appears on the regular agenda are not appropriate for Public Comment.*
- **New Business:** *For topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance of the meeting.*
- **Public Participation.** *The Commission welcomes valuable input from the public at appropriate times during the meeting with recognition by the Chair. For appropriate agenda items, the Chair will introduce the item and take public input. Individual Commissioners may have questions on the clarity of information presented. The Commission will hear any staff input and then deliberate on a course of action.*
- **Commissioner Report and Comment.** *Individual Commissioners may have matters to bring to the attention of the Commission. If the matter contemplates action by the Commission, Commissioners will consult with the Chair and/or County Manager in advance and provide any needed information by the Thursday before the meeting. Otherwise, except in emergencies, the Commission will not normally take action on Commissioner Comment.*

February 13, 2017

Dr. David E. Pierce, Director
Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries
251 Causeway Street
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Dr. Pierce:

Nantucket has a rich fishing history, from the whaling days to present. Over the years, the industry has changed. Due to overfishing and regulation changes we no longer have an active commercial fleet based out of Nantucket. Only two draggers call Nantucket their home port; however, because there is no commercial ice house or fuel dock they fish the waters outside Nantucket and unload most of their catch in other ports like New Bedford and Hyannis. The commercial rod and reel fishery has been put out of business by regulations and over fishing. There are no more cod that come close to the island like in the 1960's and 1970's. The shore-based commercial fisherman is only allowed to sell two Striped Bass per day and only for a small period. The commercial Sea Bass and Fluke fishery is closed so that no one can obtain the necessary permits. Our commercial fishermen have turned to shore guiding and charter fishing during the spring, summer and fall and bay scalloping during the winter months. Shore-based sport fishing, guiding and charter fishing are important parts of the local economy. People come from all over the world to fish the shores and inshore waters around Nantucket. The rip and beach at Great Point is a world-famous destination for Striped Bass, Bluefish, Bonito and False Albacore fishing. The Town and County of Nantucket has made every effort to enhance the quality of the waters and shores around the Island. Nantucket was one of the first towns in the Commonwealth to pass a no discharge zone and strict fertilizer regulations. Recently the Town approved a multi-million dollar sewer project to reduce the amount of nitrogen discharged into Nantucket Harbor.

Over the last several years we have seen a depletion of the forage fish around the Island. The once abundant schools of herring, butterfish and now squid have disappeared. That decline has resulted in a decrease in the amount of shore-based fish caught by our recreational anglers and charter guides. During that same time, we have seen an increase in the amount of otter trawl fishing for squid and herring in the waters around Nantucket. In the Technical Report – Loligo Squid Fishery in Nantucket and Vineyard Sounds – authored by D.J. McKiernan and D.E. Pierce, the executive summary stated “Squid is in danger of being overfished region wide. Each year the spawning stock consists of only one cohort supporting inshore and offshore fisheries”. This report was written in 1995; it's now 2017 and nothing has changed, if anything there is even more pressure now as at present there are 202 boats with coastal access permits of which 140 hold squid endorsements. The majority are either out of state boats or from

other ports other than Nantucket, ports that have the protection of a closer in state waters from May 1st thru October 31st.

It has been said that there is no science to back up this proposed closure; that there are other factors that have caused the decline in fish stocks from 20 years ago. It is a sad day when we just accept the outcome of poor management by necessity instead of management by caution. Imagine how bad the state of the near-shore fisheries will be if we continue along with the status quo for the next 20 years. Otter Trawl fishing is the market gunning of the 21st century. The damage done to the bottom benthic community and spawning areas is untold. We have been told that this is a clean fishery yet per federal data the bycatch mortality rate for the small mesh squid fishery is 35%. If it is such a clean fishery why does the fleet want to increase the allowable bycatch of scup to 10,000 pounds? Meanwhile, a recreational fisherman is not allowed to take even ONE river herring, not ONE, and the Fluke and Black Sea Bass quotas for rod and reel fishing are being cut again this year.

For years Nantucket has stood by and watched the waters around our Island be heavily fished has had no say in the process. Well, not anymore. We are only asking for the same protection that the majority of the coastal towns in the state have. It has been said that this will affect the fluke and conch draggers that fish north of Tuckernuck. However, since there is no longer a buy boat that comes to the Island to off-load, most of the fluke fleet fish the other side of the sound or outside the three-mile line. We want the ability to enhance the near-shore waters around Nantucket, not destroy them. We want to see the amount of fish around the island increase not decrease. Once this protection is in place we plan on starting the permitting process to install artificial reefs and fish habitat all around the island.

It is our understanding that this matter will go to the Massachusetts Marine Fisheries Commission for a vote. We have been told that one member of the Commission stated that we are nothing but a bunch of rich elitists. Nothing could be further from the truth. We are working class people who happen to live in a town where elitists vacation. Chairman Kane it is our understanding that several of your commission members have financial ties to boats with coastal access permits. The Town and County feel that they must abstain from the vote on this item. If they do not, we will have no choice but to contact the State Ethics Board and file a complaint.

Sincerely,

Robert R. DeCosta
Chairman, County of Nantucket