

Osterville Village



Introduction

The attractive seaside village of Osterville, rich in history and cultural heritage, was founded in 1648 as “Cotachaset”. It was primarily a seafaring village, the home of sea captains, shipbuilders, salt-workers, cranberry growers and oyster men. The name of Osterville did not come into use until 1815.

Osterville is one of the seven villages of the Town of Barnstable. The village center was developed to service the needs of its residents. Osterville as a summer residence and visitors’ destination resulted from its location and the beginning of rail service in the mid 1850’s. The rail station of West Barnstable was linked to Osterville by a carriage line that transported the visitors overland along Osterville West Barnstable Road.

Osterville’s popularity evolved from its location, the extensive coastline, charming convenient village center and attractive neighborhoods and resort areas. The village instilled both residents and visitors with a sense of peace and tranquility. As tourism expanded, picturesque streets and buildings were thoughtfully planned and developed. Noted architects and landscape architects plied their trade, first in the 1880’s at Wianno followed in 1920’s at Oyster Harbors.

Today Osterville’s 5.8 square miles preserves its association with the sea and its traditional summer resort quality. Osterville’s distinct areas include the more rural northern area along Bumps River Road, Tower Hill, East Bay, the village center, Seapuit, Osterville Harbor and the historic area of Wianno and the island communities of Little and Grand Island (Oyster Harbors).

The village attributes include the 5 mile Nantucket Sound coastline and the 17 mile shoreline along the coastal bays and river estuaries. The shoreline encircles 1300 acres of protected waters and the coastline has 102 acres of protected barrier beaches.

Thirteen inland ponds and lakes total 75 acres of surface water. Open land totaling 305 acres is held in the public interest to protect the natural environments in and around Osterville. Two private golf courses retain an additional 228 acres of open space.

Osterville’s year round population when measured by Precinct 5 is 3,353. This includes children and unregistered voters. This number does not reflect the entire village of Osterville but does include some portion of the villages of Marstons Mills and Centerville.

The Osterville Village Association has a 50 year history of active civic involvement. It represents the aspirations of its residents in that it strives to protect and preserve the village character, maintain a balance in growth and change, and hosts treasured community activities. Village Day and Christmas Open House are two of the most popular events.

The village center provides a blend of retail commercial, professional services, institutional and community uses, banking, and a collection of small quality shops, galleries and offices. For the village residents, it meets most of their needs. Some quality multi-family apartments and townhouses are scattered around the center expanding housing options within the village.

Only 10 designated historic buildings remain in the village center. Another 11 are considered significant for designation. These structures date to the 18 and 19 century and reflect agriculture and maritime life of the village. Wianno and Seaview Avenues, which reflect the turn of the century summer resort heritage, have the distinction of being designated a National Historic District. Eleven roadways are attractive enough to be designated Scenic Roads. They total 15.26 miles of linkage to historical sites, open space and community institutions.

Today, Osterville is faced with several major village issues that need resolution. These resolutions will require attentive work on the part of the village residents to see them to a successful conclusion that respects the aspirations of Osterville residents.

Issues facing Osterville

Section 1 Land Use

Main Street Business A Zoning District:

One of the highest concerns is the Main Street Business A zoning district between Pond Street and Osterville-West Barnstable Road. Of the 26 acres within the zoning district, 10 acres are in private ownership. It is estimated that full build out of this district could create 90,000 square feet of retail/office space. This build out would highly impact traffic, roadways, utilities, existing user patterns and the village character.

Goal: Maintain our BA zoning which seems to work for our Main Street goals. General consensus support the retention of business in the downtown center (BA zone). We want to preserve the character of our downtown area. The village requests a study of zoning from Pond Street to Osterville West Barnstable Road. Professional type business may be found acceptable given that this area is recognized as being in the well-head protection zone.

Strategy: Osterville Village Association, in conjunction with the Planning Department, prepare parameters for a study that would have the best use of this land (Pond Street to West Barnstable Road) with attention to set backs, height restrictions, egress, proper access, traffic considerations, green belts, and no three story buildings.

Action: Ensure a study is undertaken by OVA with public input, for a complete and thorough review of the area. When completed and approved, (the study) should have attained the strategy and goal for this area.

Darby Property

The 106 acre “Darby Property,” formerly a portion of the Kennedy Horse Farm, is a contiguous tract of town property encompassing Joshua’s and Micah’s Ponds. Acquired in 1985, it was generally accepted by the Town Meeting that the acquisition was to prevent development and preserve the site for conservation and general municipal purposes. Today approximately 40 acres remain in conservation and 66 acres is held in municipal title. Besides the land’s historic significance, it is part of the “Finger Link” open space plan, contiguous with Osterville Elementary School, the 132 acre preserve of Massachusetts Audubon, and the 28 acres of the Association for the Preservation of Cape Cod. COMM has completed water studies of the parcel. COMM has requested a well head zone of 600’ in diameter on the tested portion off Old Mill Road.

Goal: The Village desires that the Darby parcel be preserved. No land bank purchases for open space parcels occurred within the boundaries of the village. This raises the urgency to preserve the Darby parcel in its entirety.

Strategy: To impress upon our Town Manager and Town Council and remaining Town Council body of the need to preserve this valuable asset. A multi prong approach for preservation should provide long term public water supply protection, continued passive recreation of the area, and ensure conservation protection in perpetuity.

Action: Deed restrictions for the purposes of public water supply and passive recreational use are needed. After placement of deed restrictions, a conservation restriction in perpetuity would be placed on the entire balance of the parcel. A management plan is needed that will protect both the ground and surface water resources, along with the archeological and historic significance, and one that will preserve the aesthetic qualities of the walking, equestrian and bicycle trails.

Coastal Lands and Waterways

Much of the coastal bays and estuaries around Osterville are occupied by moorings, piers and docks. Public access to the coast is limited, water quality continues to deteriorate, and commercial shell fishing has vastly decreased. Water quality is deteriorating mainly from surrounding uses of the land but also from marine use. Run-off from paved roads and parking surfaces is a known contributor of pollutants of the coastal lands and waterways flushing into the inland bays. The bays and estuaries are a town- wide resource

Goal: To obtain more Ways to water to ensure public access to water

Goal: The creation of a coastal protection district should be explored, encompassing both land and water surface. We need to preserve marine, boat building and boating service facilities. We need to increase recreational shellfish harvesting, and fin fishing opportunities. On shore we should strive to increase the amount of public access to these bays and estuaries.

Goal: The Town should address known run-off situations and road run off contaminants in the village that directly pollute our bays. From past practice run-off from roads have direct impact to our bays and

ponds. A study to eliminate road run off effects on coastal bays and ponds should commence.

Strategy: Existing ways to water are obscured by vegetation and impeded by lack of proper signage. We recommend that the DPW become involved in the process of identifying existing rights of way to the waterfront. Working with the DPW, the village residents should be able to have greater access to public waterways.

Action: Complete the review process contained in the strategy with the help of DPW for a categorization report of all public access points throughout the village and also containment issues throughout the village. Upon completion of the report a realistic schedule and timetable for addressing these problem areas and reaching the goals outlined above must be established.

Community Character

Protection of Village Character:

Retaining and protecting the visual and architectural charm established over the 360 year history of Osterville is seen as one of the most pressing issues. Concerns exist for the high land values in the village, pressuring property owners to maximum build out and height. Fortunately over the last few years development and renovation has worked to protect the charm of the village. With at least 7 condominium developments within the village center (all within approximately 1/2 mile of each other) the village has shown mixed use development- in its-commercially-zoned -areas. - General consensus is that current zoning and the streetscape of the village is attractive and therefore must be maintained. The Village residents have discussed the two elementary schools in Osterville and viewed these schools as an integral component of our community. The present use of these buildings and community center, along with the ball fields, should remain intact. In a report "Historic Neighborhood Schools in the Age of Sprawl: Why Johnny can't Walk to School," published by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the Trust contends that "schools have been at the heart of American communities. . . . Schools anchor a neighborhood and both students and residents benefit. We can serve our students better by

revitalizing our historic neighborhood schools. It's responsible, thoughtful and fiscally sound."

Goal: Recognizing that the Bay School is the oldest elementary school in Barnstable, we would like to see the building retained. The Bay School is viewed by the village residents at large as a positive asset. Using funds available through the Community Preservation Act, we can accomplish this goal and revitalize the Bay School for future generations.

Goal: Protect the village character with continued enforcements of zoning regulations. In order to maintain the village character, it is essential for the two story zoning to remain and that the third story option not be considered. Parking is an issue that should be improved in the downtown village area also.

Strategy: Osterville Village Association and Town Council and the residents should take appropriate action to monitor the zoning changes in the village.

Action: To monitor development plans that will ensure that zoning regulations are honored in practice and in future proposed developments. Obtain land bank and Community Preservation Act funds be directed toward our need for improved parking in our downtown area, as well as the renovation of the Bay School.

Section 2 Natural Resources

Septic and Wastewater Treatment:

At this time there is concentrated development in the Tower Hill, village center, boat yards/marinas, and the Wianno areas. The low lying nature of the areas and proximity of the latter three, to wetlands and coastal zones, present a problem from septic systems discharge and contaminated paved surface runoff.

Nitrates, nitrogen, phosphates and organic compounds accumulating in the groundwater eventually find their way into the surrounding bays. Also of concern is the density of development which has dictated excessive amounts of paved surfaces. Those surfaces

contribute to heavy run-off pollutants. Both septic discharge and surface run-off is impacting the marine and freshwater environments.

Goal: To minimize adverse septic system effluents and contaminated paved surface runoff within the areas referenced, thereby improving the quality of ground water and coastal waters and environment.

Strategy: Relative to surface runoff, we request that the DPW study and communicate with local village residents to identify surface runoff locations that contribute contaminants to ground water and coastal environs and further to recommend progressive drainage design plans to mitigate unacceptable sources.

We request the Town conduct a study to identify those specific areas where septic systems are adversely discharging wastes into coastal areas and ground water and to propose mitigation actions. The Town should also carefully review any new development within the referenced areas relative to septic system discharge and adverse surface runoff.

Lastly, new techniques in septic treatment — including individual and common septic disposal systems should constantly be appraised as to how they might be adapted to lessen impacts on village ground waters and coastal environment.

Action: The DPW should implement their recommended mitigation design plans to reduce to the extent practical surface runoff and septic system discharges that contribute contaminants to ground water and coastal environs.

Section 3 Economic Development

Economic Viability of the Village Center:

The village center of Osterville is one of the more popular small shopping areas. The commercial area serves not only the village, but also its unique retail businesses and professional services and its quaint village setting attracts customers Cape-wide and beyond.

Goal: Existing structures should be preserved and reused, new additions must retain existing scale, height, materials and settings in character with the Village. Compatible and complementary new businesses should be encouraged to locate in the Center. DPW should upgrade and extend village sidewalks and public parking within the village center.

Strategy: Preservation is seen as a major objective for the village center.

Action: To monitor zoning enforcements to ensure the existing zoning laws are upheld. OVA to maintain open communications with the DPW and town representatives to be appraised of the planning, design, and action plans for sidewalk constructions. DPW Capital Improvement program should be instituted for sidewalks from Wianno Avenue to the intersection of Sea View Avenue. Sidewalks should be built along Main Street to continue from Swift Avenue to the Centerville Village line and the entire length of Parker Road.

Strategy: To ascertain an accurate count of the units that qualify for affordable housing classification within our village bounds. Owners of existing two family units should be encouraged to register for the amnesty program to provide affordable housing.

Action: To work with the Town Housing Committee to develop a true and accurate list of qualifying units within the village boundary. With the recent passage of the Community Preservation Act, affordable housing designated funds need to be spent in conjunction with the BHA on their 2 sites currently owned in the village. The Village needs to support affordable housing developments, taking into consideration location and neighborhood density.

Section 6 Heritage Preservation

See Local Comprehensive Plan Section 6

Section 4 Capital Facilities and Infrastructure

See Local Comprehensive Plan Section 4

Section 5 Community Housing

Affordable Housing:

At present, two sites totaling 4.33 acres are owned by the Barnstable Housing Authority and are dedicated to the development of affordable housing in Osterville. These sites have remained dormant for well over a decade and today remain vacant awaiting much needed family housing. Osterville under its existing and past zoning, provides diverse options in housing. Most multifamily units are located within convenient walking distance to the business center. Land and housing costs are very high in the village. Although a highly valued village, a large majority of its residents are retired and most live on fixed incomes.

Goal: The Barnstable Housing Authority should (must) develop the two sites they currently own for affordable housing before the Town develops any other sites.