



TOWN OF TRURO

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PRESS RELEASE

25 South Highland Road Walsh Cottage Unauthorized Demolition

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 9, 2024

The Town of Truro was notified that our General Contractor (GC), Cape Cod Builders, Inc., hired by the Town for the rehabilitation of the [Cottage House Relocation and Upgrades Project located at 25 South Highland Road](#), went outside the Scope of the Project and demolished the Walsh Cottage *without* consulting the Town or the Town's Construction Administration Consultant, Weston & Sampson Engineers.

Immediately upon notification from the public, the Town's Department of Public Works (DPW) conducted a site visit the morning of Monday, October 7, 2024. Staff and the Construction Administration Team approached the GC, and the GC identified concerns with the structure that the Town, via Weston & Sampson Engineers, had been made previously aware of. Based on [Weston & Sampson Engineers' Walsh Way Property Assessment Report from March 2022](#), the Town understood that the 25 South Highland Road Walsh Cottage required significant rehabilitation (*see page 57*). As a Sears and Roebuck Company kit home constructed between 1900 and 1940, the structure was meant for seasonal summer occupancy, having uninsulated walls and attics and lacking heat entirely. Lacking continuous occupation, upkeep, and needed repairs, it was not habitable without substantial repair and renovations. *Option #3: Phase Construction and Renovation*, of the Assessment was selected, as it was the most feasible, cost effective, and least environmentally impactful option (*see page 60*).

Cottage Housing Relocation and Upgrades Project History

Upon securing a \$900,000 MassDevelopment Underutilized Properties Grant for the project, the Town released a Bid Announcement on February 23, 2024, for sealed bids for construction of the *Cottage Housing Relocation and Upgrades Project* through March 13, 2024, at which time and place said bids were opened and read aloud. There were permit restrictions and requirements with the MA Department of Transportation (DOT), and work hour restrictions with Verizon, Eversource, and Comcast. Engineered plans were submitted by the utilities and became part of the permitting process with DOT. There were 11 agencies and offices involved in the relocation, including the Town's DPW, Police, Fire, Conservation, Building Commissioner, DOT, General Contractor, Verizon, Eversource, and Comcast. The Town invested significant staff resources into this project with the knowledge that a rehabilitation process for the cottages would still be the most advantageous option for the Town.

Town of Truro Employee Housing

The project concept was to use existing buildings (the most viable of the Walsh cottages and a privately-donated cottage) to create Town of Truro employee housing and to clear the Walsh Property to proceed with the recommended plans approved in May 2024 at Town Meeting. The Town presently has public

safety staff with immediate housing needs that would be remedied by the project. The site at 25 South Highland abuts a former burn dump that was originally thought to be unusable. Through an extensive environmental investigation of the soil and water from the site and the abutting former burn dump, it was confirmed that the Town can use this parcel by-right for housing.

Cottage Housing Relocation and Upgrades Project Next Steps

Currently, the demolition materials from the 25 South Highland Road Walsh Cottage are being delivered to MA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) permitted facilities. There are three permitted facilities on the Cape and one off the Cape. Typically, the smaller facilities on the Cape transport materials to an off Cape permitted facility. DPW found no asbestos insulation in the walls or on pipes and no lead lining in the chimneys. None of the material in containers at 25 South Highland Road is presently hazardous and will be tarped.

The demolition of the cottage has required immediate action from Town Officials to identify the impacts of the unauthorized project change and determine an appropriate path forward. Staff, with support from the Construction Administration Consultant, is working with the GC to obtain their proposed commitments to remedy the situation in writing. The staff is also working with the Building Inspector to evaluate the preparation of a new or amended building permit, and with Town Counsel to consider procurement impacts, contract amendments that may be required, and legal recourses. Additionally, staff is considering alternatives to the renovation, such as installing a pre-fabricated Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) in place of the Walsh Cottage. These considerations will be discussed with the grant team at MassDevelopment to ensure that the project will continue to be an eligible use of funds.

Jarrold Cabral, DPW Director, discussed the unauthorized demolition at the [Tuesday, October 8, 2024 Select Board meeting](#). Staff is anticipating presenting all of the findings at the next Select Board meeting so that the Board can make decisions on a path forward.