



# Truro Talks

## TRURO'S OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

December 2022 Edition

### **The Essential Need for Workforce Housing**

*Town Manager, Darrin Tangeman*

Over the last several years, it has been increasingly difficult for the Town of Truro to recruit high-demand permanent positions due to housing availability and attainability. The town has lost a minimum of five finalist applicants in critical town positions due to housing over the last 18 months. We have also observed difficulty in staffing seasonal recreational and safety positions due to housing availability. Discussions with seasonal applicants and current employees demonstrated a demand for between 10–15-bedroom units required to optimally staff our lifeguards and summer recreation programs each year. We believe we need a mix of long-term, transitional, and seasonal housing to adequately meet the varying demands of town staffing. It is also important that the town maintains control of how these housing units are utilized because it is highly unlikely the town could compel private developers to maintain flexibility and availability of housing units as recruitment demands arise.

In February 2022, the town's engineering consultants, Weston & Sampson, conducted an in-depth architectural assessment of the eight existing wood-framed Sears and Roebuck cottages on the Walsh property to determine their viability for future housing needs. The result of the report demonstrated that renovations, repairs, and septic installations for all eight cottages could be completed for hundreds of thousands of dollars less than constructing similar new buildings. Additionally, by retaining the existing buildings the town could significantly reduce the environmental impact and carbon cost of demolition.



*25 South Highland Road - View from Road*



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A formal request was placed with the Walsh Property Community Planning Committee (WPCPC) to maintain the cottages in their current location and renovate them for town workforce housing. The request was delayed by the committee indefinitely until after the hiring of a master planner to develop a more comprehensive plan for the property and its recommended uses.

As a result, the town administration raised concerns about the remaining useful life of the cottages before their viability expired. Rather than wait several years for a decision by the WPCPC as the cottages fall into disrepair, the town administration chose to move forward with alternative locations and uses. In August, the town underwent a review of town-owned properties and was able to identify several parcels that met the minimum requirements for workforce housing development. One of the town's developable properties located at 25 South Highland Road was determined to be a suitable option for the most structurally sound Walsh cottage and a recently donated accessory dwelling unit. Once a comprehensive cost analysis was determined for moving and rehabilitation, the town administration requested and was approved for \$433,824 by the Affordable Housing Trust.

The town is currently conducting environmental testing prior to selecting a moving contractor to transport the structures to the future site at 25 South Highland Road. The town will also secure the necessary local approvals to relocate the buildings and conduct public outreach prior to finalizing construction plans. The town anticipates completing this project by the spring to early summer of 2023. Ultimately, the addition of these housing structures will provide two new units with a total of 4 bedrooms that will serve as an essential recruiting tool for town staff in the future.

Sincerely,

**Darrin K. Tangeman, ICMA-COM**  
**Town Manager**