

# TRURO

## Septic setbacks to be reassessed by board of health

By Derek Barritt

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TRURO — Armed with a petition of more than 200 signatures, local real estate agent Deb Camusso, backed by area real estate and construction professionals and property owners, persuaded the board of health to reconsider two recently revised regulations at a public hearing.

The growing discontent with the board first gained ground over new regulations that went into effect Oct. 25 increasing the minimum well and septic setback from 100 to 150 feet. Camusso went before the board of health and the board of selectmen in the weeks leading up to Tuesday's meeting to bring attention to the issue. She brought her largest show of support with the petition as well as the 25 or more in attendance at the most recent board of health meeting. Many who voiced opposition to the increased setback regulation did so because they don't believe it's based on any science.

Board of health chair Dianne Eib didn't present any evidentiary explanation for the board's decision, but she did note that 180 municipalities in the state have adopted regulations that are more stringent than the state's. Regarding well and septic setbacks, the state requires only a 100-foot setback.

The other regulation that drew criticism on the back of the setback requirement is the new definition of a bedroom in Truro, which only allows for kitchen, living room and dining room designations, naming all other rooms that have "at least 70 square feet of floor area and a window" as bedrooms, according to board of health regulations. For example, "any dwelling with seven rooms shall be construed to have at least four bedrooms" with regard to septic capacity, also according to the regulations. The complain here is that now many properties in town are nonconforming and upon any future transfers, the septic system will have to be upgraded to meet the new bedroom count, even if those rooms were previously identified as offices, lofts, recreation rooms, etc.

Despite the board of health passing the new regulations last fall by a unanimous decision, one member, Lucy Brown, was outspoken in favor of those petitioning. However, she also placed responsibility on the shoulders of the protestors. In a prepared statement she gave at the meeting, Brown, who is also a local real estate agent, said she reached out to the public personally during the 17 public meetings that transpired in the process of the board of health changing the regulations. She said she also made 50 copies of the new regulations to distribute to realtors. Still, she said there was little interest until the regulations were passed and people began to see their impact.

"It was disappointing to me personally that there were

so few people at our final public meeting," Brown said.

Another shared complaint by many in attendance is the perceived poor dissemination of information in town. All are in agreement, including town officials, that the board of the health did nothing illegal or "wrong" in both process and authority in passing the new regulations. However, many say that unless they read a certain newspaper on the right day, they miss legal notices and announcements of public hearings.

Board of selectmen chair Fred Gaechter, who was in attendance, publicly acknowledged that the spread of information in Truro is a town-wide issue that the selectmen are working to resolve. Regan McCarthy, president of the Truro Non-Resident Taxpayers Association, who was also present, spoke for those who don't live in town year-round and shared their concern for not being fully current on town happenings. McCarthy said the TRNRTA uses its website to keep its members informed, and Gaechter suggested the selectmen are exploring a similar solution that could make the Truro website a hub of information regarding town matters.

Going into the meeting, Selectman Christopher Lucy, who signed the petition, said it's a big deal to get that many people in town to sign a petition, and that he hoped the board of health would take the matter to heart. Based on its actions — deciding to schedule a public hearing in at least two weeks — it seems the board did take the public grievances seriously.