



Welcome from Councilor Tom Keane

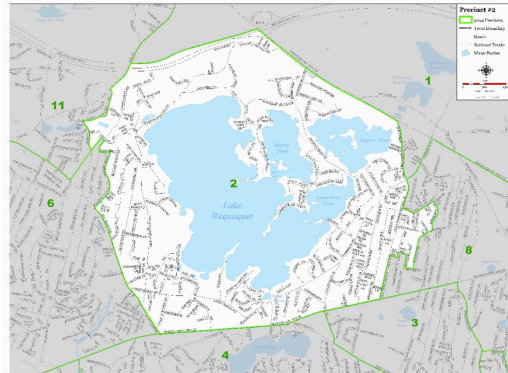
This is the inaugural issue of my monthly newsletter about news and events in Precinct 2, the Town of Barnstable, and around the Cape.

Have a question or an idea? Want to let me know your thoughts on an issue? Get in touch with me! I can be reached in three ways:

- *Office hours.* I hold office hours via Zoom every first Wednesday of the month from 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Please just click on this [link](#) to access the office hours.
- *Email.* Just email me at thomas.keane@barnstable.gov.
- *In person.* Have an issue you want to discuss privately or uncomfortable on Zoom? Email me and let me know and we can arrange a place and time to meet.

Thanks for reading!

See this month's stories below.



Council unanimously approves a debt-exclusion override

On September 3 the Council unanimously approved a debt-exclusion override to fund the Town's sewerage program over the next several years. The override needs voter approval; the vote will be held next spring.

The Town's chief financial officer made a thoughtful presentation to the Council that deserves a look. You can find it [here](#).

Here are the basics:

- The [sewerage program](#) (formally known as the Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan, or CWMP) is not only a good idea -- critical for cleaning up our waters -- but also required by the state. We have no choice, morally or legally.

- So far, the Town has appropriated \$391 million for the sewerage program. The Town's share of this has been funded by 30-year debt (also called bonds). Debt service on the bonds (interest and principal) is being paid off through local taxes on lodging, meals, and vacation rentals.
- From now through Fiscal year 2031, the Town is planning for eight more projects totaling another \$251 million.
- The Town figures that debt service for these projects will cap out at \$6.6 million each year.
- A debt-exclusion override means that property taxes would increase *only* to pay for that debt service. Taxes would ramp up over about 8 years as the eight projects get funded, stay level for the next 23 years, and then gradually reduce over the next 8 years as the debt is paid off. After Fiscal Year 2067 (admittedly, quite a while away), the tax increase will have disappeared entirely.
- At its peak, the debt-exclusion tax increase would cost the average year-round resident homeowner \$22.69 per quarter (or \$90.76 a year).
- The Council could lessen the sting of even this tax increase by increasing the residential exemption from its current level of 30% to, say, 32%. That 2% increase would not only completely offset the debt-exclusion increase, but would even save year-round homeowners some money. (Every 1% increase in the exemption saves year-round homeowners \$12.50 quarterly or \$50 annually.)

Should Barnstable Ban Cannabis Delivery?

You may have noticed there are no cannabis dispensaries in Barnstable. That's not an accident. Years ago, Barnstable effectively banned them entirely.

Now, due to a quirk in the laws regulating weed, the issue is coming again to the Town Council. Should it ban marijuana deliveries as well?

Here's the background. Massachusetts voters in 2016 approved a referendum question that legalized recreational weed. But the referendum question also said towns where voters voted "no" didn't have to allow dispensaries within them. Sure enough, that's what the Town Council did, effectively banning them in 2018 by restricting its zoning rules.

Back then, weed deliveries weren't permitted anywhere in Massachusetts. But the Cannabis Control Commission (CCC) recently loosened the rules and now, by default, deliveries are permitted everywhere...unless.

The "unless" is that towns like Barnstable that voted against legalization can petition the CCC to prohibit deliveries as well. Over the next several meetings, that issue will be before the Council.

As you likely know, one of the referendum questions on the November 3 ballot is an effort to overturn legalization. My hope is to delay any Town



Council decisions on deliveries until after we see the results of that referendum and, especially, see how the residents of Barnstable vote.

And if Barnstable voters turn out to now support legalization? My inclination would then be to allow deliveries. My inclination as well would be that we re-think our ban against dispensaries. Right now, we're a little like the dry towns in Massachusetts that used to ban alcohol sales, only to lose business (and tax revenues!) to towns next door that sold alcohol. Why is it that Town residents who partake have to drive to Mashpee? Your thoughts?



Flock cameras are gone. And good riddance.

Flock Safety has been having a bad few weeks. The [company](#) that makes the omnipresent License Plate Readers (LPRs) says it's making "better tools for safer communities" but a lot of people aren't so sure

-- including a host of folks from Barnstable and around the Cape. To their minds, it's George Orwell's [1984](#) coming true 42 years later; Big Brother, they fear, is amongst us.

That includes folks in Barnstable. The Police Department was also a user of Flock cameras. I say "was" because on September 4 the Council voted (7-3) to effectively ban Flock cameras. In doing so, it was following the lead of at least 20 other cities in towns in Massachusetts -- including next-door Dennis -- who have also banned the cameras. The cameras can be available tool in solving crimes. But the infringement of people's privacy and civil liberties outweighed that value.

That may not be a permanent ban, however. The Council made clear that "any future use of any type of LPR ... shall require prior Town Council approval." To my mind, the right way to use Flock cameras (or any other LPR) would be to require police obtain a search warrant -- just as is done when, for example, police want to track a person's movements through their cell phones.

You can find [here](#) a column I wrote for the Boston *Globe* about Flock cameras. (If you can't access it because of the *Globe*'s paywall, let me know and I can send you a copy.)

Fiscal Year 2027 Operating Budget tops out at \$295.7 million.

The new budget -- which covers the year July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027 -- is balanced. Although, in a concerning sign, it was balanced only by drawing down almost \$12 million in reserves.



\$236.8 million is for general fund expenditures (including schools, police, libraries, roads, employee benefits, and debt service). The balance is for the Town's nine enterprise funds (such as the airport, solid waste, and golf).

Enterprise funds are run like mini-businesses: they usually don't rely on taxes and instead support themselves from revenue from users.

Barnstable's Comprehensive Financial Advisory Committee has a great summary of the budget [here](#). And if you want to read the full budget -- it's 299 pages long and is excellent for insomnia -- you can find it [here](#).



The Zoning Board of Appeals approves a vastly improved Centerville Cove Project.

The project was proposed under a section of State law called 40(b) which gives developers wide latitude when a residential development has a significant number of affordable units.

The original project -- located between Route 28 and Great Marsh Road -- was for 56 units, including a three-story apartment building. After a series of thoughtful discussions between the developer and neighbors, the apartment building was eliminated and instead 36 single-family homes will be built. In addition, the developer modified the egress to the new development to improve traffic flow and safety.

The Zoning Board of Appeals signed off on the revised development on July 22, 2026.

Thanks for reading this issue. Please let me know your thoughts, good or bad by emailing me at thomas.keane@barnstable.gov.



Barnstable Town Councilor Tom Keane | Precinct 2 | Centerville, MA 02632 US

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