

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A New Priority?

I write to inform the public about a delay in fulfilling my Freedom of Information Law request regarding an application filed with the Southampton Town Trustees by 65 Cliff Drive LLC.

While the required acknowledgment was received promptly following submittal, and there's been no transgression of FOIL standards, I am curious why 20 business days are needed to produce files where "inspection only" was requested. This response from the Town Trustees' office is in stark contrast with the town's Land Management/Environmental office, which produced the requested files within one business day. Moreover, both offices were given the heads-up of my automated filing with the town clerk.

More important is the substance of the matter. I was taken aback watching the Board of Trustees meeting some weeks ago where an applicant's presentation of the subject property/proposal — a proposal to reinstall bulkhead and backfill a wetland area with dredged material from the fronting tidal flat located in Payne's Creek — was met with what I perceived as a favorable response. It is an inroad to creating a navigable channel in an area that was afforded greater protection through prior land acquisition and the installment of a conservation covenant on the subject property facilitated by Marty Shea's office during the property redevelopment permitting process.

Board approval of such actions is at cross purposes with town conservation objectives. With growing concerns that the Trustees are prioritizing property-owner interests over natural resources protection, perhaps it's time for the Board of Trustees to reflect on its fundamental purposes and performance. Politicians overseeing environmental permitting is an inherent conflict of interest. If property-owner interests are, in fact, the new standard, then I strongly urge the board to consider relinquishing permitting authority over such matters.

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