

# LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

## Bridge to Nowhere

Noyac

August 8, 2022

Dear David,

Cautious optimism: two words which best describe my feelings about the recently adopted East Hampton Town Coastal Assessment and Resiliency Plan, or CARP.

In general, the product earns a thumbs-up, as a well-devised planning tool, which serves as the framework for next-step action items. A coastal management manifesto, if implemented with real purpose and political courage, will help ensure the sustainability of irreplaceable coastal resources — our recreational beaches.

The technical information contained in CARP is thorough and applicable. The mapping illuminates East Hampton's vulnerabilities to sea level rise and storm surge and is essential information with crafting coastal policy.

Addressing policy considerations, CARP correctly identifies the relevant issues: floodwater mitigation, improving wastewater infrastructure, instituting more adaptive zoning measures, and sand (inlet) management at Lake Montauk. Most important, CARP acknowledges the need for coastal retreat. And as a precursor, the transfer of development rights to help facilitate relocation of vulnerable establishments will be explored.

But all is not all rosy. The apparent willingness by the town board to pursue beach nourishment as the preferred coastal management strategy in the face of rapidly rising waters is reason for pause. The so-called “bridge strategy,” sand replenishment at the downtown Montauk beach and Ditch Plain will prove to be a bridge to nowhere — a perpetual expense to East Hampton taxpayers, a logistical nightmare with a host of environmental impacts being swept under the carpet by proponents of engineered beaches, not to mention the all but certain changes to a world-class surf break artificial beach fill would bring.

The greatest consequence of all: providing disincentive to front-line property owners to move back when sand replenishment is all but guaranteed into the foreseeable future and paid for with public dollars.

While voluntary buyout is the preferred approach, safeguarding the public’s coastal resources will require courageous actions by the town board — ready and willing to wield their authority with property condemnation. In the end, it’s probably the one thing that will make moving out of harm’s way happen.

The best-laid plans. . . . All-in town board, or just kicking the can?

KEVIN MCALLISTER