

Special Town Meeting - October 16, 2023

Article 24 - Home Rule Petition for a Pesticide Reduction Bylaw

Finance Committee Vote: 3-3-1

On Behalf of the Finance Committee "Aye" Votes: Constance Kremer

We have a position as the Finance Committee to independently examine and analyze the Town's financial affairs, including proposed budgets, the Capital Improvements Plan, and all other proposals which would have a financial impact; and to inform the citizens of the Town of its findings and recommendations.

Recognizing that our community's seasonal and year-round economy is intrinsically tied to the environment, for the pleasures and recreation found in and around our Town's water bodies, the "aye" votes from the Finance Committee are focusing on the no cost to the taxpayers of such an action and the financial benefit of more rigorous regulation and enforcement in protecting our water's vital resource and our Town's longevity and growth.

If we are committed to more than a couple hundred million dollar investment of pulling back wastewater from polluting our watersheds, then it is logical for us to want to keep the additional pollutants such as pesticides, insecticides and herbicides from nutrient loading in our water bodies. Otherwise, what is the point of what we are trying so desperately to fix? We continue in a loop of paying for our missed opportunities to come together in adhering to what the scientists and studies have said will slowly cause more and more closures of our beaches, ponds and lakes. Also, we have to know that what goes in the ground, eventually shows up in our drinking water. Think about that.

This is a home rule petition that will be decided by the State. If approved here tonight, the Town would be looking to tell our legislators that we are serious about protecting our land and coastline, as well as its wildlife and their habitats. This is one more piece of legislation that costs us nothing, but has the potential to make a much bigger impact going forward. Pesticides affect bugs. No bugs means no pollinators, no birds, fundamentally degrading the wildlife and food life cycle.

The enforcement of Town bylaws like this petition is important to all members of the Finance Committee. Over the stretch of 40 years with Orleans' herbicide and pesticide bylaws dating back to 1981, we as a Town have not been clear with regard to enforcement. The "aye" votes want to believe that the Select Board and our new Town Manager are prepared to keep pressure on and petition the State's Department of Agricultural Resources, either to enforce these regulations on entities such as NStar and/or give our towns back the ability to enforce our own bylaws on public as well as private land. Approving this petition tonight and encouraging our neighboring towns to do the same, will tell the State that we are all serious about protecting the beauty of Cape Cod.