

Special Town Meeting - October 16, 2023

**Article 32 - Alum Treatment at Pilgrim Lake
Finance Committee Vote on 10/5/23: 4-2-1**

On Behalf of the Finance Committee “Nay” Votes: Elaine Baird

In last Thursday’s issue of The Cape Cod Chronicle, Andrew Gottlieb, Executive Director of the Association for the Preservation of Cape Cod, was quoted as being cautious about “touting alum as a solution for the region’s water quality woes. Alum can be useful when used as a broader strategy, but by itself,” Mr. Gottlieb said that alum “is a chemical band-aid that does not get to the root of the problem. “

The cyanobacteria bloom was caused by a spike in phosphorous. According to the 2019 Pilgrim Lake management plan, commissioned by the Town and available on the Town website, 76% of Pilgrim Lake’s phosphorous comes from wastewater from 19 properties; 13% from the decaying material within the lake itself. This same study proposed many other remediation techniques before using alum. Of course, sewerage is the most effective way to hugely reduce that 76% of phosphorous, and our plans are to have that in place in about 5 years.

But this study, also explained multiple other phosphorous reduction strategies before we just dump in the One-and-Done, it’s-there-forever, Alum. This Alum band-aid can’t be removed without dredging the lake. Could we please move more slowly and look at the report’s other recommendations? Chemicals can take years to show their effect. Think of the decades it took to convince people about nicotine.

Pilgrim Lake has had this one cyanobacteria bloom that closed it to the public. This bloom happened immediately after the huge rainstorm of August 7 -- 4” of rain in 2 hours. Skaket Beach also closed, for the first time ever, after the same rainstorm.

Is it standard operating procedure to run to the One-and-Done alum fix after one bloom? My colleague and I vote for caution. This is a forever choice.

Thank you.