



November 8, 2018

Ms. Kristy Senatori, Executive Director  
Cape Cod Commission  
PO Box 226  
Barnstable, MA 02630-0226

Re: Cape Cod Regional Policy Plan Comments

Dear Ms. Senatori:

On behalf of the more than twelve hundred-member businesses and organizations in the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce, we thank you for your work on Regional Policy Plan revision and the opportunity to provide comments. We also would like to applaud the Commission in its diligent efforts over the past several years to become a more proactive and forward-thinking organization and taking a more wholistic view of what is needed to ensure Barnstable County is thriving today and tomorrow.

### **RPP as a fulcrum**

As we work toward the common goal of a healthy, resilient and thriving region, strong emphasis must be made on the importance of a balanced approach that weighs environmental and cultural concerns on one hand and, supports a vibrant economy on the other. This balanced approach must include flexibility that allows for innovation and creativity. The desire to Preserve and Protect in other words, needs to be balanced with the ability to Create and Innovate. As our regional planning framework, the RPP needs to be the fulcrum for this balance.

As a region, we need to be realistic about what we are not, while at the same time knowing what we are: medium to small business focused, innovative, a marine-based center of excellence with a self-contained workforce constrained by our water boundaries.

### **Blue economy**

For the past few years, the Commission has partnered with the Cape Cod Chamber to define, identify and grow the region's water-dependent, or Blue economy. This effort seeks to diversify and grow a sustainable and balanced future economy, focusing on protecting and promoting our water and coastal resources. It recognizes our water and coastal resources as one of our greatest native assets and seeks to both support existing and catalyze new growth opportunities, which will in turn provide year-around employment and complete wages for residents.

This segment of our economy has been growing significantly in the past decade. As examples, the number of blue establishments increased 42% (from 2,180 to 3,104), and the number of employees employed by blue business increased 50% (from 14,412 to 29,093). We believe there is significant room for new growth in the Cape Region's overall Blue Economy – and it represents an important economic opportunity.

Through our joint efforts, the region's "Blue Economy" has been recognized at the national and state levels and become part of the vernacular when discussing economic development in the Commonwealth. Evidence to a conscious emergence of the Blue Economy is reflected deeply in the draft RPP by use of the following words: water-274 times, coastal-51 times, marine-28 times, and maritime-19 times. However, the term "Blue Economy" is not referenced or defined at all. We suggest that there be included in the RPP, some description of the Blue Economy (perhaps in a Technical Guidance document) as a way to help define our region, and tie together the environmental and economic aspects of protecting and promoting our water-based assets and economy.

### **Use of Placetypes**

We appreciate the recognition of the many unique "areas" within the region this RPP identifies and defines as Placetypes and using them as organizing principles for planning and regulatory review. In particular, the identification of Maritime Areas and the development of harbor plans, support for working waterfronts, and the protection and expansion of public access to water are critical components in expansion of our water-based economy. Calling out the importance of Maritime Areas is a positive development in this RPP.

Of great importance to future development across all sectors is the ability to streamline local and regional regulatory processes, so they are not a barrier to business siting and growth. Also, we encourage the development of community incentives that will entice business entities we are trying to lure or that exist and want to grow here. Some considerations include:

- Zoning for blue business/organization enterprise zones and map shoreline access, region-wide.
- Zoning to amplify development around working harbors (incent pier development if rezoned).
- Establishing a regional strategy for towns to modify Chapter 91 regulations – create a site plan review process for water-dependent development
- Providing incentives for private commercial waterfront owners to grant working water access.
- Creating a program in public/private partnership to educate waterfront homeowners on the value and character of working waterfronts
- Developing a joint-review board that fast-tracks the siting process with towns for entities that fall within the definition of the Blue Economy

### **Technical guidance bulletins**

In an effort to build more flexibility into the RPP, we understand the use of technical documents, including bulletins, to set minimum standards for carrying out the goals and objectives of the plan. However, we recommend extending the deadline for public comment on the RPP to align with the comment period of the technical documents. This alignment will allow stakeholders to holistically assess planning efforts and craft comments appropriately.

## Future RPP updates

We recommend that for subsequent RPP updates, that the Commission consider a larger business community outreach or survey component to receive input and would be happy to work with you toward that end.

## Conclusion

In every aspect and from every angle, it is critical that Barnstable County remains competitive in both truth and perception in order to remain relevant and “real”. This means competitive in business opportunities and growth, housing costs and choices, wages and revenue, recreational opportunities and tourism to name a few.

To remain competitive, we also need to underscore the need for Regional Policy Plan inclusion of:

- Diversity in housing (small, large, rental, ownership) to support a diversifying economy, shifting wants or needs, and incomes
- Development of last mile broadband to support Blue Economy and other business, technology, and education centers
- Investment in our future workforce by building a stronger connection between our youth and the place they live, by showing them the vast range of professional opportunities that exist from traditional trades to ocean engineering
- Work with educational community and workforce development organizations to help them target curriculum.
- Flexibility in Local Comprehensive Plans so they can adapt to unforeseen changes that occur in the future, so we don't miss out on great opportunities

Thank you again for your efforts on behalf of Cape Cod.

Sincerely,



Wendy K. Northcross, CCE  
Chief Executive Officer



Larry Drago  
Board Chair



Eugene Curry  
Blue Economy Pillar Chair