

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Charlotte Striebel, Speaker, Barnstable County Assembly of Delegates  
Brad Crowell, Chairman, Cape Cod Commission

**FROM:** The Barnstable County Commissioners

**DATE:** April 25, 2007

**RE:** 21st Century Task Force Report

The Barnstable County Commissioners have completed our review and evaluation of the 21st Century Task Force Report. First, we wish to express our thanks to the Task Force members for their hard work and thoughtful analysis. The group met more than 15 times between May 5, 2006 and December 1, 2006 and held 3 public hearings in Mashpee, Barnstable and Eastham as well as a special public hearing for town officials. The Task Force heard presentations from a variety of groups and individuals representing business, preservation and conservation, town government, housing, Cape Cod Commission members, Commission staff, attorneys, developers and planners. Deliberations were held to discuss the testimony presented. The final Task Force Report was submitted to the County in early December 2006, and included both majority and minority recommendations.

In addition to considering both the majority and minority recommendations, during the review process the Commissioners sought out and welcomed the views and comments of many diverse groups and individuals to obtain a broad perspective on the Cape Cod Commission and its activities. We want to thank all of the people who shared their thoughts and ideas.

The Commissioners appointed the Task Force in the Spring of 2006 in order to examine the following questions:

- 1. How can the Cape Cod Commission effectively address its three-pronged mission: regional planning, regulatory review and technical assistance?*
- 2. How can the Commission and the towns achieve implementation of Local Comprehensive Plans (LCPs)?*
- 3. How can the Commission and the towns better reconcile differences between regional and local interests in both planning and regulatory matters? How can coordination and communication be improved?*

There are several broad themes identified in the Task Force report with which we concur. First, there is a need for better coordination and communication between the Commission and town officials in each of the 15 Cape communities. Second, the Commission should put more emphasis on planning and technical services to towns. Third, the Commission should strive to make the regulatory process more transparent, predictable and user-friendly. In addition to these themes, the County Commissioners believe that there needs to be close coordination with towns in modifying the thresholds for Commission review of development projects. We also find that there should be stronger consideration of economic development in weighing the benefits and detriments of proposed projects, in particular the creation of livable wage jobs. Finally, we believe that the Selectmen in each town should be made aware of any development projects in their towns referred to the Commission, and have the opportunity to provide input on the merits of those projects to the Commission.

**Implementation Process:** We believe that the County Commissioners and the Assembly of Delegates should play a strong role in overseeing the implementation of the Task Force recommendations. Other key players include:

- A Commission Steering Committee to guide implementation (Commission members, staff, County Commissioner and Assembly reps)
- Meetings with Towns and Community Groups
- A series of in-house working groups to address specific recommendations
- Consultation with other advisors (former applicants, attorneys, consultants, town officials)

**The County Commissioners support the following specific changes:**

**Communication and Coordination with Towns:**

- On-going training for staff in customer service and negotiation skills
- Annual meetings with Boards of Selectmen in each town (service reports)
- Redesign of Commission web site-note new Task Force page ([www.capecodcommission.org/taskforce](http://www.capecodcommission.org/taskforce))
- Regular meetings with town staff (e.g. Town managers, Planners, Engineers, Economic Development and Housing officials, etc.)-Frequency determined by each town
- Periodic meetings with key town boards (e.g. Planning Boards, ZBAs, Conservation Commissions, Historic Commissions, Economic Development and Housing Committees)
- Speaker's bureau for community groups
- Training programs for Commission members and local officials
- Roundtable meetings of key groups (Town Planners, CPA Committees, Historic Commissions, Economic Development Committees, GIS Users, etc.)
- CCC Officer Participation in Cape Cod Selectmen and Councilors' Association

## **Planning:**

- Cape-wide Land Use Mapping:
  - Working with Town Planners
  - Mapping Workshops with towns to identify:
    - Regional Economic Centers
    - Village, Highway, and Industrial Redevelopment Areas
    - Resource Protection Areas
- Maps used to specify both:
  - Level of CCC review (differing thresholds and standards)
  - Possible local zoning changes
- Regional Housing Needs Study to determine:
  - Types and Price ranges of housing needed in each town
  - Locations to accommodate the needed housing (tie to mapping)
- Rewrite of the Regional Policy Plan
  - Reorganize-Separate Planning and Regulatory sections
  - Restructure mitigation requirements based on maps
  - Restructure how to calculate needed mitigation-impact fee approach
  - Identify potential areas for regional DCPCs (tie to mapping)
  - Develop new section that measures progress in meeting RPP goals
  - Update the RPP as needed, not limited to the Five Year Review

## **Regulation:**

- The Commission should work closely with towns to modify DRI thresholds- *Examples of possible changes:*
  - *Measure building footprint instead of gross floor area*
  - *Varying thresholds for different map or zoning districts (e.g. higher in growth centers, lower in sensitive natural resource areas)*
  - *Impact-based thresholds (e.g. trip generation or wastewater flow)*
  - *Higher thresholds for light industrial/office uses*
  - *Higher thresholds for affordable housing*
  - *Discretionary referrals only*
  - *Varying thresholds for different towns/regions*
- The Commission should notify Boards of Selectmen of DRI referrals and solicit their comments on the benefits and/or detriments of proposed projects
- Create Limited-Scope DRI Review Process
  - Screen/Scope DRI referrals for regional issues (based on maps)
  - Limit scope of Commission review to only areas of regional impact (e.g. transportation, water resources, etc.)

- Allows for faster, less expensive, more focused review
- Establish Process for Joint Review with Interested Towns
  - MOUs with towns to enable joint scoping/hearings-similar to CCC joint process with MEPA
  - Will need to consult town counsels to explore legal constraints
- Make more use of existing tools for Pre-permitting: Growth Incentive Zones (GIZ) and Development Agreements.
- Procedural Changes
  - Project schedules
  - Meeting notes
  - Post-DRI Follow-up-Customer Service survey (feedback on how to improve the process)

**Next Steps:**

The Cape Cod Commission will be drafting proposed changes in its Enabling Regulations and updating the Regional Policy Plan over the coming months. The Commission should continue to meet with towns, chambers and other interested groups as this work proceeds. The Commission should provide updates on implementation efforts in its newsletter (The Reporter) and on its web site.

The Commissioners have requested that the Cape Cod Commission Executive Director provide monthly oral progress reports to the County Commissioners. We also direct the Commission to provide a written progress report to the County Commissioners within 10 days following the close of the fiscal year (June 30, 2007).

We note that any changes in the Enabling Regulations or the Regional Policy Plan will require public hearings by both the Cape Cod Commission and the Assembly of Delegates. Approval of such changes will be accomplished through adoption of one or more County Ordinances. We look forward to working with the Cape Cod Commission and the Assembly of Delegates to complete this process.