

CPA Committee Rejects Hinckley's Pond Remediation

by William F. Galvin

HARWICH — The town's comprehensive wastewater management plan recommends the town take steps to reduce phosphorus in Hinckley's Pond to improve water quality. Poor water quality in the pond has led to several algae blooms, some dominated by cyanobacteria, a toxin that can have debilitating effects on animals and humans.

Town officials hoped they could put a management program in place over the next year, possibly through an alum application or mixing alum with an oxygen circulation system to inactivate the phosphorus and prevent algae blooms. But an attempt to secure community preservation money for the project failed when the community preservation committee voted to reject funding.

Several years ago the blue/green algae bloom in the pond was so severe the health

department posted pond closure signs and warned residents not swim, boat or allow dogs to swim in the waters. In 2012, CDM Smith, Inc., the company putting the town's comprehensive wastewater management plan together, cited the need to reduce phosphorus concentrations in the pond by one-third to lower the probability of nuisance algae blooms, which often lead to fish kills.

But the report pointed out there are limited state and federal funds available to aid in lake management, and funding would more likely have to come from local sources. "The Community Preservation Act provides the most viable option of funding lake projects these days, and has been used in multiple commonwealth communities to make improvements."

The Hinckley's Pond restoration project is one of the early initiatives recommended in the town's wastewater plan, so Town Administrator Christopher Clark and

Natural Resources Director Heinz Proft made a pitch to the town's community preservation committee for \$500,000 this fall to implement the management plan.

Under the Community Preservation Act, the local committee weighs applications for funding in four categories: affordable housing, historic preservation, open space and recreation. Funding is generated by a 3 percent surtax on local property assessments that are matched to varying degrees by the commonwealth. Only those proposals approved for funding by the committee get placed on the annual town meeting warrant for a vote on funding.

The town administrator told selectmen last week there had been a straw poll of committee members taken after the presentation. Clark said he received an email from Robert MacCready, the committee chairman, asking whether such a use of the funds is legal.

Clark said he pointed out the town of Eastham recently used CPA funds for an alum application, which binds phosphorus in ponds. The town administrator said he followed up with town counsel and was told it is an acceptable use and received follow up material from the state Department of Revenue citing this type of project as an acceptable use of CPA funds.

"It's a legally allowable use. I don't want the taxpayers to pay for something that can be done with CPA funds," Clark said. "It's my understanding they (the community preservation committee) have the funds to do this project."

But the committee, Clark told selectmen, voted 2-5-1 not to support the Hinckley's Pond restoration application. It's a new concept, the town administrator said, and the town should hold off until next year and seek the funding again.