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Towns would steer wastewater effort

Issues of governance debated by planners

By Edward F. Maroney

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The blue ribbon committee crafting an ordinance to create a Cape Cod Wastewater Collaborative agreed Wednesday on a structure that ensures authority would be exercised by the region's towns, not a central committee or a wastewater czar.

In the latest draft, a governing board of 15 members appointed by Cape municipalities, along with one

or two named by the county commissioners, would oversee the work of a steering committee of seven: four from the governing board and three appointed by the county commissioners.

This second body would work closely with an executive director hired to pursue the Collaborative's goals of maximizing regional cooperation, identifying financial support from all sources, coordinate infrastructure development, and educate the public about the need for wastewater management programs.

On Wednesday, blue ribbon committee members debated just how strong the steering committee should

be. Chatham's director of health and environment, Robert Duncanson, suggested a five-member group with a majority of governing board members that would serve as the principal lobbying arm of the Collaborative while John O'Brien, former CEO of the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce, proposed shifting the balance on a five-member board of directors to a majority of appointees by the county commissioners.

In O'Brien's proposal, the governing board was characterized as an advisory board, which concerned Barnstable Town Councilor Greg Milne.

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"The word advisory still troubles me," he said. "In trying to sell this, if (elected officials) see the word advisory ... some are very skeptical that there's still a county government."

Maggie Geist, executive director of the Association to Preserve Cape Cod, spoke of the need for

high-powered Cape Codders to serve on the steering committee.

"What we're looking for in this small group is statesmen and stateswomen," she said, "people who can get Falmouth and Mashpee to talk to each other" about water resources.

Tom Bernardo, Speaker of the county Assembly of Delegates, said he wasn't necessarily look-

ing for a new group of lobbyists.

"My lobbyist is (U.S. Rep.) Bill Delahunt and my senators," he said. "At the state level, it's elected officials. These are my lobbyists."

O'Brien warned against "jumping the gun. Let (the Collaborative's boards) worry about whether they have a lobbyist. Nobody's gonna pay me to see Bill Delahunt."

Members agreed that the

county Wastewater Implementation Committee should continue its advisory work, even though some said they expected it would "wither away" over the years as the Collaborative grows.

The blue ribbon committee will look at the redrafted ordinance at its next meeting, Oct. 6 at 7:40 a.m. at the Barnstable Superior Court House in Barnstable Village.