

# Hyannis civic drops bid for Barlaco land control

## Ratepayer control of entire purchase had been suggested

By Paul Gauvin  
pgauvin@barnstablepatriot.com

A plan that would have had ratepayers pick up the entire \$11 million tab for the Barnstable Water Co., and control of more than 100 acres of so-called Barlaco land has been dropped by the executive board of the Hyannis Civic Association.

Joseph Chilli, an association board member, said this week the executive board agrees with the town's original purchase plan that has ratepayers funding \$10 million for the water company while the town and land bank finance \$1

million for the Barlaco land, much of it in Cummaquid, that the town would control.

The civic association instead is proposing that all members of a water board yet to be named be comprised entirely of water service ratepayers and that any potential profits from the sale or use of Barlaco land in the future be returned to the water division for amortization of the purchase or infrastructure improvements.

Town Manager John Klimm said this week the Hyannis ad hoc committee that assisted in selecting a management team for the company is at work on the long-range capital plan and rate structure.

He said he is "working with staff on creating an administrative code amendment to create

a permanent committee to continue the work of the citizens' committee."

Critics of the town's purchase of the Connecticut Water Co., earlier this year, formerly Barnstable Water Co., charged the town overpaid for the water works at \$10 million and underpaid for the land at \$1 million.

The water system is henceforth the Water Division of the town's Department of Public Works. An enterprise account is an accounting method by which a municipal function pays for itself from rates charged to users. The goal is to operate such departments or services without funds from the general taxpayer.

The critics contended ratepayers were paying \$10 million for a \$5.5 million water company while the town was getting land valued

at \$5.5 million for only \$1 million — meaning water ratepayers were paying for the other \$4.5 million for the land rather than general taxpayers.

This prompted the civic group's board to propose that ratepayers fund the entire amount of \$11 million and get control of the Barlaco land in the process.

"But now we are uncertain whether the land is developable," Chilli said. "We just don't know." If it is in the future, then the association wants a guarantee from the town the proceeds will go to the enterprise account rather than the general municipal fund.

"My administrative code change will contain a provision that any and all revenue generated stay with the water division operation, which is something I feel strongly about," Klimm said.