

VILLAGE VIEW

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Unlike many previous meetings of the Osterville Village Association, the most recent one was held on an evening when the weather was bearable. It was comfortably cool in the elementary school auditorium and a good turnout of members filed in to hear the usual discussions.

Gripes were aired about the highway construction on South County Road, a neighbor expressed his dismay about plans of the New England Telephone Company for enlarging its building at the corner of West Bay Road and Lovell Road, and committee chairmen and officers presented their reports.

It's disappointing not to see represented more long-term village families; the Village Association is without actual power, of course, but it does present the only opportunity villagers have to express their views in public, learn what and whose opinions are influencing future directions the village may take, and, when issues come before Town Meetings, the position of the Village Association often carries weight with our voting body, the elected Town Meeting representatives.

The objections to the telephone company's expansion plan were overridden easily, even though it was brought out that the building is located in a residential zone and, as a non-conforming use, enlargement of the building's floorspace is prohibited. Doubtless you'll recall instances of other businesses proposing to expand and being stopped, dead in their tracks. It really does all depend, doesn't it?

The phone company needs more space to install a modern system and replace the antique equipment that's served our exchange for nearly fifty years. Osterville's was one of the first dial systems in the nation; it's obsolete; the new equipment will greatly improve service. Everyone agrees that's desirable.

In the present building there's no room for new equipment unless the old system is first removed. Since taking out the old and replacing it can't be accomplished overnight, like bridgework, and leaving us temporarily without telephone service is unthinkable, a new wing will be constructed to house the new equipment. Then the obsolete system will be removed, and the area it now occupies used by the phone company for storage.

No one suggested the phone company build a new building on business-zoned property and, when they're through with the present building, permit it to revert to residential use. The voices responding to the one objector were all supportive of the telephone company. It does make some of us wonder.

The only other discussion of real interest was that of the Waterways Committee. Concerned about the erosion of Dead Neck, the silting of harbors, and how dredged materials are handled, the chairman described the absurdity of the current process of disposing of dredged materials and rebuilding portions of beach that show signs of serious erosion.

He reported it is now the practice to load dredged sand, mud and silt onto barges haul it ashore, load it into trucks and cart it to "an upland site located off Falmouth Road"; and, when material is needed to rebuild an eroded beach, to load the same material into trucks, cart it to the water's edge, off-load it onto barges, and dump it back on the beach.

All this barging, loading and trucking, of course, comes at the expense of the taxpayer. It costs a pretty penny. Back in the dear dead days beyond recall, when sensible men were running things, dredged material from the bottom of bays, from channels, from harbors and marinas was immediately fed to some area of the beach that was washing away or where someone wanted a sandy beach instead of a muddy shoreline.

Someone asked why this is no longer being done; the Conservation Commission appeared to be the villain in this instance, but the Army Corps of Engineers may have a hand in it, as well. It's possible most Osterville residents don't care whether Dead Neck washes away, whether our harbors silt up or where dredge is dumped, but it should be remembered who pays the bill.

At the meeting there was no discussion of proposed new piers to be built in Osterville's waters; that surprised me. A rash of pier permit applications has erupted recently; many of these were probably triggered by the uproar in Cotuit when one owner of waterfront planned to replace a pier destroyed by a hurricane back in the fifties. The threat that future pier

permits might be denied spurred all those who think "some day it might be nice to have a pier" to try for permission immediately, just in case.

Nothing's surer to stimulate action than the possibility such action may be prohibited in the future.

If all the piers for which permits have been applied for are built, there'll be enough dredged material to double the size of Dead Neck, and Osterville's bays will bristle with piers. Old timers will wait patiently for the wrenching and tearing of winters' frozen waters and for another series of hurricanes to wipe the shores clear again. Those of us who've known this village since childhood and can look back fifty or sixty years have seen it all before. We know private piers are temporary structures, at best (or worst).

Public piers are something else; they'd have to be maintained and rebuilt after nature removed man's encroachments. And this at taxpayer expense. At least private piers take no dollars from pockets of people who own no waterfront property.

And at the meeting, once again, a public boat ramp at Dowse's Beach was mentioned as a desirable goal; there was no discussion. Why the town should encourage more boat-trailer traffic through its villages was not asked. Whether public recreation areas are compatible with residential neighborhoods was not questioned. Noise, litter and the expense of maintaining public landings was not discussed. Nobody at the meeting voiced a negative response on the grounds that there's insufficient access to the water to accommodate all the boat-trailers that stream down the Mid-Cape highway every summer's day, no matter how many boat ramps we make available.

It's hoped the lack of opposition at the meeting is not assumed to be consent and approval for more boat ramps in Osterville.

Annual meetings of all organizations include election of directors and officers for the coming year. The Osterville Village Association annual meeting was no exception. The Old Guard was reinstated without opposition. There were no nominations from the floor.