

# Beach building options

## Ideas to fix parts of shoreline presented

By MATTHEW NADLER  
CLIPPER EDITOR

Duxbury and Marshfield are sharing a state grant to study the best way to maintain the stretch of beach that runs from Rexhame Beach in Marshfield to the section of Duxbury Beach along Gurnet Road.

Leslie Fields of the Woods Hole Group presented her findings to residents and officials at an online meeting last week. The goal, she said, was to find sites where beach and dune nourishment can augment what the towns are already doing. Fields' work is being funded by a \$175,842 grant to the two towns from the state's Bureau of Coastal Zone Management.

The best option, Fields said, is to start a program of replenishing the beach and dunes with sand. The initial cost would be \$5 million, but the process would have to be repeated every three to five years.

Duxbury was required by CZM to develop a beach nourishment plan in order to get the department's approval to repair the seawall that was destroyed in 2018. The wall protects the homes along the portion of the beach that is not owned by the Duxbury Beach Reservation. The DBR has received its own grants from CZM to do beach replenishment work.

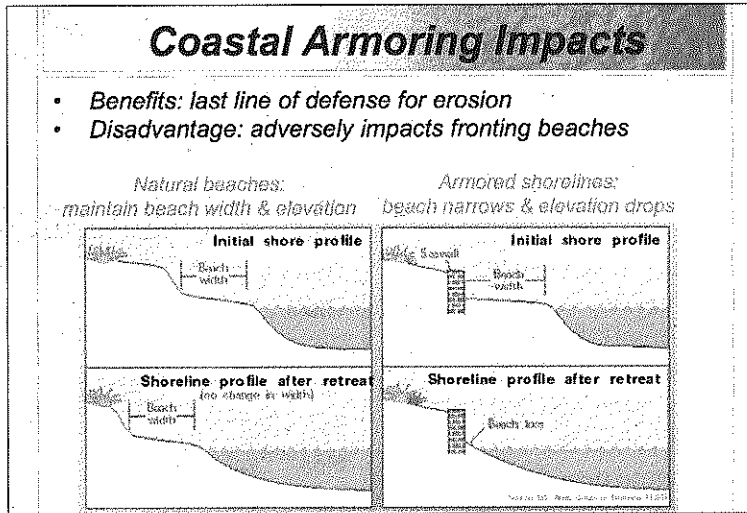
Fields explained that while a concrete seawall serves as the last line of defense against erosion, over time it erodes the beach in front of it. In turn, that means deeper waters resulting in larger waves, which can go over the wall, damaging the property it was supposed to protect.

Fields estimated that if the town does nothing to maintain the beach, it would cost Duxbury \$26.4 million over the next 30 years. That figure includes the cost of repairing the seawall, paying out property claims by FEMA and the cost of public services related to any storms.

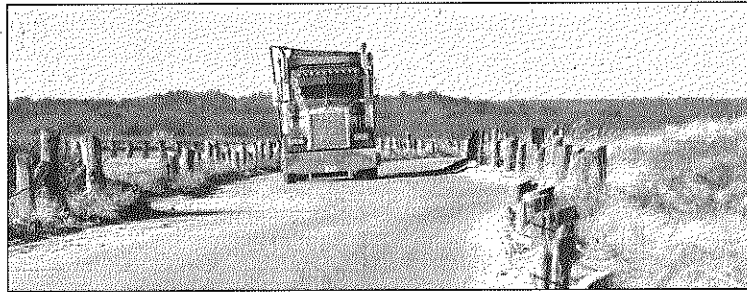
The typical choices for maintaining a beach are beach or dune nourishment, and building a cobble berm. All of these options, Fields said, need to be done regularly. Other options, including building breakwaters, man-made reefs and building boulder fields Raising or moving buildings away from the eroding shoreline was also considered.

According to Fields, making the Duxbury seawall higher would cost \$28 million and provide no benefits.

The best option, Fields



Over time, a seawall can lead to the erosion of the beach in front of it.



A truck carries sand down Gurnet Road as part of the Duxbury Beach Reservation's dune nourishment program in 2018. A similar program is being considered for parts of the beach near the seawall.

Fields said, is to start a program of replenishing the beach and dunes with sand. The initial cost would be \$5 million, but the process would have to be repeated every three to five years. Fields is also proposing that the town consider raising the 57 houses that sit directly behind the seawall and also moving buildings back from the shoreline. This would be a long-term project, taking place over the next 30 years and costing over \$50 million.

This idea is something that the town and homeowners need to discuss, Planning Director Valerie Massard said, adding that some people are already raising their homes. While it's still a ways off in the future, at some point, the cost of beach nourishment

won't keep up with the storm damage, she said. Both Duxbury and Marshfield would look to securing grants to buy property along the beach, she noted.

Fields admitted that the idea of moving houses, what she called a "managed retreat," would be a "hard pill to swallow," but needed to be considered for areas that are expected to be flooded over the next 30 years.

In order to do the beach and dune replenishing, the town will need to get easements from all the property owners on the beach. In return, the property owners will have to allow the public to use the beach. The process of securing those easements is expected to begin this week.

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Brian J. DesRosiers  
Esq., LL.M.  
bdesrosiers@dtattorneys.com



James M. Tierney  
Esq., CPA, LL.M.  
jtierney@dtattorneys.com

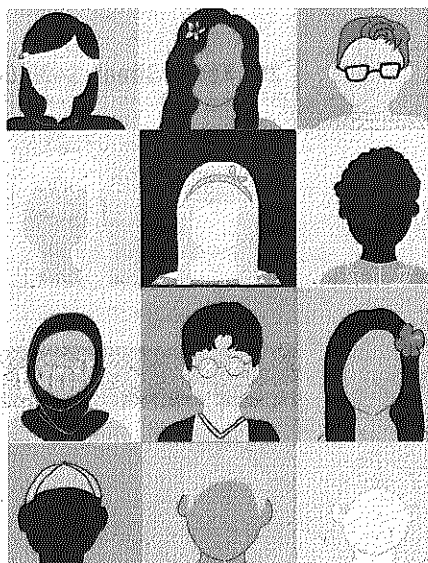
**And Our Newest Attorney:**  
Frederick K. Hayes, Esq., fhayes@dtattorneys.com

## DesRosiers & Tierney, LLC

21 Railroad Ave. Suite 2, Duxbury  
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