

## *Why Article 97 is a bad idea and will harm Nantucket*

**By The Land Bank  
Commissioners**

We are your elected Land Bank commissioners. We proudly lead the current chapter in the 38-year history of this incredible, homegrown institution. Article 97 is a citizen's petition to take away 25 percent of Land Bank revenue and reallocate it to the Affordable Housing Trust. Please join us in opposing Article 97 at the 2021 Annual Town Meeting.

In 1983, via home-rule petition, the voters of Nantucket's Annual Town Meeting told the Massachusetts legislature they wanted a Land Bank. The legislature adopted the petition, thereby creating an organization and program unlike any other – the first of its kind in the nation – to preserve Nantucket's natural beauty for future generations.

It has worked and continues to work extremely well.

Land Bank founder Bill Klein's innovative idea of making public-land-preservation funding proportional to the rate of market-based real-estate development has served as a national model.

As market demand causes prices to increase, the funds available for preservation likewise increase. Many have observed the unusually large revenues experienced by the Land Bank over the last year, but it is sometimes overlooked that the prices we must pay to acquire these properties on behalf of the

public escalate just as fast.

Through the purchase of critical shorelines, special habitat areas and scenic landscapes, the Land Bank protects the island's water supply, balances development with preservation, and provides trails and outdoor recreational opportunities for all. Many have brought their children or grandchildren to one of our public playgrounds or golf courses. The Land Bank also preserves and promotes local agriculture through the acquisition of farmland, resulting in fresh food on our island tables.

Without question, programs that are inefficient or don't work should be modified. This is not such a program. Article 97 would radically alter the Land Bank's enabling legislation and severely impact our ability to deliver on our mission.

Twenty years of lost revenue represents a generation of lost opportunities for the Land Bank, and by extension, the Nantucket community.

Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard were fortunate to have Land Bank legislation passed when they did, as none were approved by the Massachusetts legislature thereafter.

Modifying the Land Bank Act as Article 97 proposes raises dangerous inferences which could be used to permanently damage a successful program that has served Nantucket well. We should not take a political risk in the legislature and put the Land

Bank in jeopardy when the town has other locally-controlled funding sources which can be directed toward affordable housing.

Article 97 seeks to reduce Land Bank resources at a time when population growth and corresponding public needs are increasing. Land Bank efforts result in expanded public access to the water, healthier ponds and watersheds, and help balance development density which plagues so many destination resort communities.

Impending effects of climate change also pose existential threats to our island, making it essential that we find means to mitigate erosion and flooding threats. Many feel the Land Bank will be among our most valuable tools as we confront this challenge because its stated mission includes the acquisition of marsh and shoreline resources which can provide natural buffers in our most vulnerable areas.

We recognize that affordable housing is a critical challenge for the island. We know that because we live here, too. The Land Bank has been doing what it can to help affordable-housing efforts, consistent with its statutory charge. We pledge to continue looking for opportunities and ways to collaborate.

This year's Town Meeting warrant contains several other proposals aimed at addressing Nantucket's affordable-housing needs. We encourage voters to consider

them. They are initiatives that can be implemented much more quickly than a home-rule petition which must be approved by the legislature and won't risk long-term harm to a valued community institution.

Both the Finance Committee and the NP&EDC have reviewed and unanimously voted not to recommend Article 97. The Land Bank's finances and needs were scrutinized throughout the review process. We are humbled and grateful that a significant number of community members took time out of their busy lives to voice support for the mission of the Land Bank during these proceedings.

The Land Bank model is strong and has delivered so much value to the island over the years. However, it has and always will depend on strong community support in order to survive. As commissioners trying to preserve and uphold this institution, we ask for your attendance at the Annual Town Meeting on June 5 and to vote against Article 97. Please help us protect something that is authentic to Nantucket and its people.

NEIL PATERSON, Chair  
KRISTINA JELLEME  
ALLEN REINHARD  
JOHN STACKPOLE  
MARK DONATO