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MASHPEE AWARDED \$12.8 MILLION FOR CLEAN WATER PLAN

MASHPEE - The Town of Mashpee is two giant steps closer to addressing the problem of pollution in its bays and saltwater ponds. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection announced this week that the Town has qualified for a subsidized State Revolving Fund loan to help pay for its Clean Water Plan. On the heels of that announcement, the Cape Cod and Islands Water Protection Fund awarded the Town an additional subsidy of 25 percent of the total project cost, providing an estimated \$12.8 million to help pay for Phase 1 of the Plan. The final award will be adjusted to reflect 25 percent of the final cost once it is under contract.

The first of its kind action by the fund included similar grants for other Cape towns, with Mashpee receiving one of the largest single subsidy amounts. The Cape Cod and Islands Water Protection Fund Management Board, which oversees the fund, voted on the subsidy rate and awarded more than \$71 million in grants to eight Cape towns at its meeting Wednesday.

When combined with 3.3 percent principal forgiveness available on the State Revolving Fund loan, revenue from the local option rooms tax, and revenue from the Water Infrastructure Investment Fund Mashpee voters have previously approved, this latest grant would more than cover the \$54 million cost of Phase 1, without adding to the tax burden of the Town. Thanks to these revenue sources, the cost of Phase 1 is not expected to result in additional property taxes beyond what has already been authorized by voters.

“This is more good news for taxpayers, the environment and our community,” said Mashpee Town Manager Rodney Collins. “We have been conservative in our assumptions and this latest grant is larger than what we based our planning on, providing even greater assurance that this project won’t require additional taxes.”

“The Town has worked hard to find other sources of revenue for this work, all with the objective of making this project as affordable as possible,” said Mashpee Selectman Andrew Gottlieb, who also sits on the fund’s management board as the Town’s representative. “We have succeeded in our goal to finance this project without raising property taxes to do so. It is now up to the voters to allow us to move forward on a path to clean water.”

At the May 3 Town Meeting and at the May 8 annual Town Election Mashpee voters will decide whether to approve Phase 1 of the Plan, which includes the construction of a wastewater collection system and treatment facility. Approval of another article at Town Meeting is necessary to reduce the interest rate from the state loan from 2 percent to zero, a change that would equal \$17 million in avoided interest costs. Other parts of the Plan include the innovative use of shellfish to help clean the water and reduce the need for traditional sewers as well as the overall cost of the project.

The Cape Cod and Islands Water Protection Fund, created in 2018, is a dedicated fund within the state’s Clean Water Trust set up specifically for communities on Cape Cod and the Islands that are implementing water quality improvement projects. The source of funding is a 2.75 percent excise tax on traditional lodging and short-term rentals. The fund is administered by the existing Clean Water Trust and overseen by a management board that includes representation from every member town, including Mashpee.