

December 30, 2021


Newburyport Conservation Commission
60 Pleasant Street
P. O. Box 550
Newburyport, MA 01950

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is John Powers and I own property at 163 Old Point Rd. on Plum Island in Newburyport. I recently was notified of a conservation commission meeting that was held and attended by some of my neighbors at which my property along with my neighbor's at 3 Q Street which abuts my property were discussed. I was told the discussion was about action I had taken to stabilize the seawall to which I had just made extensive repairs approximately three years prior, believing that my property as stated on my deed extended to the former wooden bulkhead and a portion of my property being taken by the surf along the northern most end of my lot. This was never questioned previously by the conservation commission when I sought permission to repair a very dangerous situation where the wall that was originally built through emergency permission after the No Name Storm was in dire need of repair. I received permission to replace the wall where necessary as some blocks weighing as much as 1,500 pounds were cantilevered hanging over blocks that were deteriorated from shifting and undermining from behind the wall from varying tides, icebergs, etc. As I monitored the wall over the past two years, I again noticed shifting and undermining taking place. I decided that putting some small rocks on the backside of the wall would dissipate the water runover and sea splash and stop them from undermining the blocks of the seawall. The small rocks were being washed out, so I then installed a 5" wide veneer cement façade to stabilize the blocks from shifting as was again taking place. It was at this time that I asked my neighbor (Mark Drago) if he would like to participate and continue the wall across his property as it would save it from falling into further disrepair. He agreed and paid half. I didn't and do not believe this necessary move has had any adverse effect on any natural migration of sand on that side of the wall as it has been grass for over 40 years that I know of. Sand on the other side of the wall has been accumulating rapidly over the years with no snow fencing necessarily as it does not hold up more than 60 days and creates a huge hazard for people walking on the beach and their pets as wire from the fencing gets twisted up and sticks out the sand creating a minefield of razor-sharp wires sticking out of the sand randomly. This beach has grown extensively, naturally, over the past 40 years. You used to be able to drive a boat all along the sea wall and tie up at the Ashworth property. In fact, cleats for boats are still on their deck. That is some 100 ft of beach from where it exists today with no man-made interference (snow fence).

Had I even thought that trying to stave off complete relapse of the just-repaired wall's failure, I certainly would have gone to con comm to show my plan but since siding of wall was not something I thought would raise this much controversy and I apologize for that. I have spoken to Julia Godtfredsen who was very helpful in steering me to the Assessor's Office to review old maps as every survey I look at on Plum Island seems different. As it turns out, the City does own a sliver of land that abuts the wall and

goes over to land previously owned by Mr. Steeves which no one knew about until Carol Tracey sold her property (3 Q Street) to Mr. Drago, and Mr. Steeves came out of the woodwork to claim a previously abandoned lot on the beach. I only wish he and people at City Hall were so anxious to claim this land as their own before I spent thousands of dollars to replace and maintain this wall as it was a safety hazard. I am more than happy to sit down with sit down with the conservation commission or whomever and discuss this. However, I di not appreciate the tone of the conservation meeting held on December 7, 2021, of which I was not notified, and then acting like I did something wrong by just trying to keep this beautiful island safe for all to enjoy. Threatening to send city workers down there to tear off the wall, not on my property, but that I have spent so much time, effort, and money to keep safe for everyone was uncalled for, especially without even discussing this with me first. There was no malice intended on my part. Thank you for hearing me out. I have enclosed pictures of what happens when the wall is left to nature. These pictures are of the City's property in disrepair and of the wall done correctly when I repaired it with conservation commission's permit.

Sincerely, 

John Powers
163 Old Point Road
Newburyport, MA 01950
(978) 621-0675

Alternate address
11 Warrenton Road
Haverhill, MA 01832

P.S. Pics are of lots 190 192 205 204 city owned T.Y.