

Another NIMBY challenge in Nantucket, this one challenging public waterfront access

Article By:

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The Boston Globe is reporting on NIMBY opposition to a clam shack on Nantucket's Straight Wharf. It seems that residents of the adjacent North Wharf are concerned that the clam shack will increase noise in the neighborhood and, according to the article, the North Wharf residents already have to hire police in the summer to protect themselves against too much "revelry" on Nantucket's waterfront.

Now it is one thing when NIMBYs on Nantucket are merely denying us the renewable energy we desperately need (see my January 25 [posting](#)) but this most recent NIMBY challenge could deny us fried food and soft ice cream and that's a bridge, or should I say wharf, too far.

Here are the facts. Straight Wharf, the site of the promised clam shack, was constructed in 1723 to support Nantucket's booming whaling industry. The adjacent North Wharf was constructed about 50 years later in an attempt to keep up with Nantucket's still expanding industrial waterfront needs. By 1830, Nantucket was the third largest city in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts (only Boston and Salem were bigger). It isn't hard to imagine the character of the "revelry" on Nantucket's wharfs then.

Today Straight Wharf continues to be home to one of the two large ferries serving the Island (the other comes and goes from the other side of North Wharf), many restaurants and shops, and the Island's largest marina. In recent years, as the cost of a home in Nantucket has continued to skyrocket, what were fishing shanties and workshops on North Wharf have become cottages valued at ten thousand dollars per square foot.

I guess there's nothing wrong with someone paying 25 million dollars to own a former fishing shanty in the middle of a working port. But there is something wrong with that person expecting peace and quiet in that working port because they've paid 25 million dollars to live in the middle of it. Our ports are meant to be bustling places and, at least in Massachusetts, Chapter 91 secures for all of us the right to enjoy our tidelands, including those filled with wharfs. Those who would prefer to avoid the hustle and bustle of an active urban waterfront should turn their attention elsewhere. But I'm looking forward to enjoying my clam roll and ice cream in June with the appropriate amount of revelry.

Maybe the billionaires will sue everyone and then #occupynorthwharf and we will make 'Clam Guevara' T-shirts," Frasca [quipped](#). "Or my hope is that maybe instead we will get a chance to run a community-minded, respectful restaurant. And then maybe someday they'll just

come over and have a clam roll. They're really delicious. And they calm the soul. Particularly when paired with a glass of wine."

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