



Ezra & The Mouse: The Search for Lafayette

Set in Duxbury in 1822, inspired by actual events, and written by Duxbury native and popular children's author, Victoria J. Coe. Delight in seeing Duxbury's shipbuilding past come to life!

Public Book Launch 10/24; info/orders at duxburyhistory.org



Duxbury Clipper

Wednesday, October 13, 2021

"Shoot for the moon. Even if you miss, you'll land among the stars." – Norman Vincent Peale

VOLUME LXXI NO. 41

Saving our beaches

Duxbury plans for a future that's already beginning to happen

By SUSAN HUNTER
CLIPPER REPORTER
FIRST IN A SERIES

On a beautiful autumn day, small waves wash over the sand on Duxbury Beach as a warm sun shines from a blue sky. Couples walk along the water's edge, and flocks of shorebirds wheel out over the ocean.

But behind the scenes, and behind this tranquil scene, many people in Duxbury and

in towns along the Massachusetts coastline are working daily to save beaches, beach homes, bays and harbors from an ever-rising sea level, more frequent and powerful storms and the surges they produce.

"It's something that's happening now," said Cris Lut-tazi, executive director of the Duxbury Beach Reservation the non-profit that owns about

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THEY GO LOW. Physical education teacher Leisa Nissi is there to assist Emmy Lalonde with her limboing as Lucy Sellitto, Ava Palmisano and Lis Mazzilli Bogliolo wait their turn during the Dragon Dash at the Alden School. See more photos on page 14.

Photo by Karen Wong

Almost at the 80 percent mark

DHS getting closer to hitting number needed to lift mask rule

By MATTHEW NADLER
CLIPPER EDITOR

Duxbury High School is inching closer to the day when vaccinated students and staff won't have to wear face coverings while at

school.

As of last Wednesday, 76 percent of DHS students were vaccinated, Principal Jim Donovan said. Seventy percent of staff, including

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Night School is open

In Brian Lies' latest, a little bat takes center stage

By MATTHEW NADLER
CLIPPER EDITOR

The first day of school can be scary for man and beast.

In Brian Lies' latest picture book, "Little Bat goes to Night School," a bit character takes center stage as he heads off to school for the very first time.

Lies describes the book as a kind of spin-off of his other bat books. In previous books,

a little bat who wears a set of yellow water wings can be seen lurking in the background. Finding him, Lies said, was a sort of game for readers. After a while, he thought that maybe Little Bat should have his own adventures. This is the fifth book by Lies that features bats engaging in human activities after the sun goes down and all the people are asleep.

Some of the book was inspired by his own experiences as a child. "I remember being really excited and intimidated on my first day of kindergarten." His sister, two years older than him, took him to his classroom. "It's about experiencing things for the very first time and the impressions we get." It's also about deal-

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Planning for a future that's happening now



Rising Crisis: The impact of climate change on Duxbury

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four miles of the 7.5-mile long Duxbury Beach.

According to the science, sea level rise goes hand in hand with intensity of storms and more storms, Luttazi said.

Global sea level is rising at an average rate of 1.2 inches per decade due to changes in climate, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Currently, sea level is rising about one-eighth of an inch per year but is projected to rise another 1 to 4 feet by 2100.

The melting of glaciers and ice sheets, along with warming oceans, account for the trend in rising global mean sea level, according to NOAA, but how much the ocean rises depends mostly on the amount of heat-trapping greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide, are emitted into the atmosphere.

"The Town of Duxbury is at center stage," Luttazi said. "It's happening more and more. High tides are impacting the beach now. The beaches are getting smaller and smaller. Some folks think it's a far away problem. It's going to get worse."

Luttazi said her goal is to

maintain the barrier beach, so that the town's coastline doesn't get damaged.

Duxbury Beach ranges from a half mile to two miles from the mainland.

Without the protection the beach offers, waves and wind would travel unimpeded over distances ranging from 19 to 200 miles, she said.

The beach now absorbs the effects of this "fetch" or distance of uninterrupted travel.

The town needs a flexible plan to combat climate change, she said, and officials are trying to figure out where the most troublesome areas are.

Pinpointing these areas makes the process of gaining permits and doing construction easier, she said.

The DBR now has permission to do most of the work on beach nourishment and restoration and holds permits along four miles of beach on the bay and ocean sides.

The aim is to be proactive, she said, rather than reactive.

On the ocean side, sand and vegetation need to be added to the dunes to hold them in place. "We need to plant more plants with robust root systems," Luttazi said, such as

American beach grass. "Grass is king," she said, and she urges beachgoers not to walk on the beach grass.

On the bay side, cobble berms or ridges of small boulders, are needed for maintenance, and plans are afoot to

elevate a small portion of the road and add drainage.

Duxbury beach has more than 900 acres of salt marsh, which are also threatened by rising waters. "The plants can't be submerged all day," she said.

Some planners, scientists and environmentalists steer away from using "hard" structures like walls and jetties to protect beaches. "When water hits [a wall], the energy moves straight down, and the sea wall

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Saving our beaches

Continued from page 4

plates fall over," Luttazi said. "Walls don't break up the energy." It's also her opinion that "putting houses up on stilts is only going to last so long."

An aim of the DBR projects is to achieve coastal resiliency, or the ability of a natural area to bounce back after a storm and recover. The DBR has received permits over the past two years for grass and planting protocol, and the group is waiting for three more permits. "We'll do the projects as quickly as we raise the money," Luttazi said. "We can do the work whenever we want, if we have the funds." Since it's a private organization, the DBR raises money through grants and fundraising, she said. The projects range from \$30,000 to \$1.8 million, depending on the size. "People moved to Duxbury because of the beach community," she said. "They need to support it. We need everyone to be on board."

And the coastal towns need to work regionally," she said, in terms of projects and procuring grants. As an example, the DBR worked with the technical education department at Silver Lake High School, which serves Kingston, Plympton and Halifax to grow beach grass. According to the agreement, the students planted grass as part of their horticulture curriculum, and the DBR purchased the grass at low cost.

Protecting the beachfront

"A lot of coastal communities are looking at how sea level change will affect them," said Valerie Massard, Duxbury's former Planning Director, who continues to consult for the town.

Marshfield and Duxbury were awarded a coastal zone grant, working with the Woods Hole Group as the consultants. The grant pays for the design and permitting of beach and dune nourishment and stabilizing the beach on the ocean in front of the seawalls, Massard said. The aim is to build out or reconstruct the beach, making it wider and higher, using sand, gravel and cobble, or small boulders. "Waves break onto the walls now at high tide," Massard said, "We're obligated to maintain them since we built them 50 or 60 years ago."

"In 2018, some of the wall failed, and we just finished repairing part of the wall last year. We need to reconstruct it," she said, at a cost of "millions and millions of dollars. We're hoping to make the wall last 30 years."

Officials are looking into other structures and ways to dissipate wave action and focus on the rocky coastlines prevalent in parts of Marshfield, where beach nourishment can't take place.



Beachgoers enjoy a late fall afternoon on Duxbury Beach. Officials say the beach is getting narrower due to rising sea water levels and more intense storms, and they're working on plans to restore the beach and the dunes.

Photos by Susan Hunter



Ongoing efforts are underway to repair and replace aging and damaged seawalls in front of beachfront homes. A portion of the wall has been repaired, and officials plan to stabilize the beach in front of the wall.

Alicia Babcock, chairman of the Duxbury Seawall Committee, sees the seawall as a necessary life-saving and property-saving structure. There are 3,500 linear feet of seawall, which runs in front of the homes along the ocean front.

The severe storms of March 2018 severely damaged about 950 feet of the wall, she said, and residents advocated for seawall repair. The Seawall Committee was formed by Town Manager Rene Read shortly after.

At the March 2019 annual Town Meeting, voters approved spending just over \$6 million to repair the 850-foot of wall that had been destroyed a year earlier. About \$3.4 million of that was reimbursed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, while \$1 million was paid for with a state grant and the rest through betterments on property owners in the area of the seawall. The work was completed this past year, but there were some "tenuous winters," Babcock said, for homeowners who had to wait over two years before the work was done. "The rest of the wall is in critical condition," she said, and for the past several years "it's been in dire need of repair. The challenge is to get the walls replaced so they're bigger and stronger."

Babcock concurs with others that the waters are rising. "The DBR can mitigate in different ways," she said. "If there's no wall, houses will wash away." People blame seawalls for causing erosion, she said, but the problem is "multitiered. We need to protect property and people. It's in the town's interest to see that the houses stay intact. It's a flooding issue. Our only line of defense is the wall." Bringing sand onto the beach will "hopefully keep the tide back and protect new seawall work," she said.

Once an application for a permit is filed, seawall construction and beach nourishment can happen, she said. The Seawall Committee is working with the town to find a way to

do the rest of the construction work in one season.

A particularly troublesome area is the seawall at Bay Avenue, which has started to shift and is cracking, she said. The town has permission to use armor stone that had been set aside to install in front of the wall.

"It's a race against mother nature," Babcock said. "We need to get word out to people in town so that they fully understand the need for this. It's a town problem. It's about educating them."

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