



PRESS RELEASE

Cape Cod Regional Government - Assembly of Delegates

Barnstable County Assembly Considers Regional Transfer Fee

Delegates hear unanimous support for bold action from Housing Working Group, Chamber of Commerce, Housing Assistance Corporation, and Community Development Partnership

Barnstable, MA — At a recent session of the Barnstable County Assembly of Delegates, members heard from housing experts, business leaders, and community advocates regarding a proposed regional luxury real estate transfer fee designed to fund year-round housing on Cape Cod.

A luxury real estate transfer fee is a surcharge on high-value property sales—often above a set threshold such as \$2 million—with proceeds dedicated to funding affordable and attainable housing. The proposal under discussion would apply the fee regionally, modeled on the existing Cape and Islands Water Protection Fund.

County Administrator Michael Dutton emphasized that the Housing Working Group, established after the County's housing crisis declaration in April, unanimously supported the idea. "Interestingly, they also thought that pooling funds regionally was a good idea," Dutton added.

Paul Niedzwiecki, CEO of the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce, stressed the economic stakes: "Nearly 30% of the region's workforce now commutes to the Cape each day. We are going to turn into something very different if we don't make aggressive and transformative moves to protect the middle class." He noted that a regional transfer fee could provide the necessary scale to address the crisis and pointed out that the Cape Cod Chamber was the only chamber in Massachusetts to support a transfer fee during the Governor's Affordable Homes Act debate. "The tax works in more rural areas, especially seasonal areas like the Cape and Islands," he said. "I don't think it would add anything to your bottom line," he added, referencing the successful model of the Cape and Islands Water Protection Fund.

Rob Brennan, Chief Legal Officer at Housing Assistance, made a case for urgent, structural intervention. "This is no longer a cyclical shortage—it's an existential crisis," he said. "Without a permanent, predictable source of funding, we cannot support housing that working Cape Codders can actually afford." He added, "There's no way out of this crisis without bold, systemic solutions." Brennan noted that Housing Assistance has never received complaints from buyers deterred by the fee: "The \$2,000,000 home becoming \$2,040,000 doesn't stop second-home buyers."

Delegate Daniel Gessen posed a pointed question: "In April, the County declared a housing crisis on Cape Cod. Do you see any chance that without bold action, like a regional luxury real estate transfer fee, that we get out of this crisis on Cape Cod?" Brennan's answer was unequivocal: "No. In a word, no."

Ella Sampou, a community organizer with the Lower Cape Community Development Partnership, shared her lived experience as a lifelong Cape resident and renter working in the nonprofit sector. "My American dream doesn't include owning a home unless my life path radically changes," she said. "A transfer fee is not a tax on regular people—it's a way to reallocate some of the wealth

from second or third home buyers to support the people who make this community what it is.”

Delegates responded with thoughtful discussion, raising questions about legal feasibility, program administration, and state legislative pathways. Some expressed concerns about timing and implementation, while others stressed the importance of following through on the County’s earlier declaration of a housing emergency.

Assembly Speaker Randi Potash encouraged an open-minded approach: “This idea is in its embryonic stages, and as with other topics that we’ve had here, I would encourage delegates to have an open mind and have a thoughtful discussion on the issue.”

The Economic Affairs Committee of the Assembly of Delegates and the County’s Housing Working Group will continue meeting in the weeks and months ahead to develop further the home rule petition necessary to propose the regional transfer to the Massachusetts General Court.

ABOUT THE ASSEMBLY OF DELEGATES

The Barnstable County Assembly of Delegates is the legislative branch of Cape Cod Regional Government. Fifteen Delegates, one elected by each town, enact ordinances and appropriate the County's annual operating and capital budgets.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Randi Potash, Speaker | randi.potash@capecod.gov | 774-212-7166

Dan Gessen, Deputy Speaker | daniel.gessen@capecod.gov | 508-208-1760

Owen Fletcher, Assembly Clerk | owen.fletcher@capecod.gov | 508-375-6761