

A Wildly Successful Wild and Crazy Idea

NANTUCKET, MA, USA, May 15, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- From a “wild and crazy idea” to a wildly successful program, the [Nantucket Islands Land Bank](#) has played a vital role in preserving and maintaining our island’s pristine spaces.

“In my mind, the greatest future challenge facing Nantucket Island is coastal resiliency—Nantucket’s recently approved Coastal Resiliency Plan totals projects in the amount of \$900 million. As owner of a significant number of waterfront properties that are critical to the island’s economy, the Land Bank can help tremendously in this arena.

We have a number of projects currently in planning in the downtown that will help build resiliency as well as preserve and enhance public access to the harbor for decades to come,” stated Executive Director Jesse Bell. “We can be a strong partner and work in coordination with the Town on these planning efforts

“

And at that point we began to think about how we would ever get support from Nantucket people for such a wild and crazy idea...”

William Klein

and apply jointly for grant funding in areas like Washington Street and Easy Street, both critical transportation infrastructure routes that currently serve as lifelines for the island. The Land Bank has already gotten started, but the permitting road on these projects is long, and there are significant regulatory hurdles to overcome...”

Forty years ago, in April of 1983, island residents voted overwhelmingly (466 to 1) at Town Meeting to file an

innovative home-rule petition with the Massachusetts Legislature to establish a land bank for Nantucket.

The petition was adopted by the state that December and ratified by another definitive vote at a Special Town Meeting in January of 1984, where residents agreed that this program was “probably the last chance to preserve for public use and enjoyment some open spaces and



Nantucket Islands Land Bank was the first program of its kind in the nation.

beaches of the Nantucket Islands.” Just two weeks later, the Nantucket Islands Land Bank, the first program of its kind in the nation, was in operation.

This governmental program is designed to acquire, hold, and manage important open spaces and endangered landscapes, using revenue from a 2% fee on most real estate transactions on Nantucket. There is a first-time homebuyers exemption. William Klein, director of the Nantucket Planning and Economic Development Commission (NPEDC) from 1974 to 1991, came up with this bold idea that is now a model for communities across the country.



Nantucket Islands Land Bank preserves property for public enjoyment.

Klein first visited Nantucket in February of 1974: “I was blown away at how beautiful this place was...About 30 days later, I was living here...I was 27...” He’d been in his position at NPEDC for less than a decade when it became clear to him that “families who had been here for generations felt like they were losing the island: village-centered development was being compromised,” Klein stated in a 2015 interview with Allen Reinhard, “the regular working people of Nantucket were seeing the island disappear as they knew it...they saw the threat. “I said to myself: zoning alone isn’t going to work for Nantucket to keep a village-centered development pattern.”

Klein began to consider what it would take to keep development from happening in Nantucket’s highly valued habitat areas and shoreline.

After a “quick calculation” he realized they’d need about \$100 million dollars, Klein explained in the interview with Reinhard. “I wrote a concept paper for the Planning Commission, just throwing the idea out, and was pleasantly surprised that people said, ‘oh, that’s interesting’... really smart people who had a real love of the island going way, way, way back.

“And at that point we began to think about how we would ever get support from Nantucket people for such a wild and crazy idea...How could you ever successfully argue or convince [residents] this was for the long term benefit of everybody and that saving land would protect people’s investment in the land that would be developed?”

During the first two years, before it had its own staff, Klein’s office ran the Nantucket Islands Land Bank. “I negotiated about \$25 million worth of acquisitions those first two years...guided by a five-member Land Bank Commission.”

Nearly four decades later, the Nantucket Islands Land Bank Commissioners and Land Bank staff is still devoted to acquiring, holding, and managing important open spaces and endangered landscapes for public use and enjoyment. During 2022, transfer fee revenue came close to \$47 million. They acquired 21.19 acres of land, bringing the total acreage owned by the Land Bank to 3,408 acres with another 503.4 acres protected by conservation restrictions (some held in conjunction with the Nantucket Land Council). From its inception through 2022, the Nantucket Islands Land Bank has spent \$385,147,076 on land purchases.

The five elected members of the Nantucket Land Bank Commission plan how to best fulfill their mission consistent with its statutory charge, and they prioritize and decide which properties to acquire. Executive Director Jesse Bell then negotiates the purchase. "In some cases," Bell explained, "money is not the most important to the landowner...every situation is unique...and sometimes there are multiple donors for a single property." At times, where appropriate, property acquisitions have been negotiated with lease periods or life rights.

Executive Director Bell describes a current Land Bank focus as preserving public access to the water, "and we stay aware of accessibility..." Many recent acquisitions "were strategic water access parcels: to ponds, harbors, ocean." Now the Land Bank needs to "plan and prepare them for public use." This includes creating and maintaining parks, trails, mowing, parking areas, trash pickup, boardwalk and dock building and maintenance, fencing, trailheads, road maintenance, tree work and forest management, and other vegetative and ecological management. In addition to administrative staff, the Land Bank has a year-round field crew of five, with field assistants in-season. They have a Research Ecologist and a Field Ecology Coordinator on staff. Their environmental staffers work on encroachments, permitting, conservation restrictions, and management of invasives. "The program has been a great success," Bell commented, "our Land Bank staff is dedicated and believes in the mission...they love the work: it's very fulfilling."

Suzanne Daub

Insider's Guide to Nantucket

+1 508-228-9165

[email us here](#)

Visit us on social media:

[Facebook](#)

[Twitter](#)

[Instagram](#)

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/627198461>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

