BUILDING/STRUCTURE HEIGHT IN FLOOD HAZARD AREAS

ARTICLE ## To see if the Town will vote to amend the Code of the Town of Harwich, Chapter 325 Zoning by adding the bold and underlined language as set forth below and to act fully thereon. By request of the Building Commissioner and Planning Board.

Explanation: New FEMA flood maps were adopted in 2014 expanding boundaries of the flood hazard area and raising the base flood elevation for many properties. Homes may continue to exist in flood hazard areas, but renovations or reconstruction require flood proofing measures including raising the first floor above the base flood elevation. The proposed by-law amendment follows similar language in such coastal towns as Dennis, Sandwich and Scituate. Without the amendment, many homes in flood hazard areas would have to be reduced in height to meet base flood elevation requirements combined with the requirement to measure height from pre-existing grade. Approximately 1000 homes in the AE flood zone in Harwich are impacted by the building height requirement. Far fewer homes exist in AO and VE zones. The AO zone does not include measurements for base flood elevation. The VE or velocity zone has a much higher sensitivity to flooding, and new construction in that zone is not encouraged.

325-2 Word usage and definitions.

BUILDING/STRUCTURE HEIGHT - The height of a building or structure shall be calculated by averaging the distance between the lowest pre-existing grade point at the base of the building/structure and the top of said structure, and the distance between the highest pre-existing grade point at the base of the structure and the top of said structure. A structure shall include such elements as a rooftop deck, fence, railing, widow's walk, or other rooftop structure, parapet, or other attached structure. A cupola not larger than four (4) feet in width and chimneys shall be exempt from the above requirements if they do not extend more than four (4) feet in height above the roof. For developed lots, pre-existing grade shall be determined by calculating the average of existing high and low grade points at the base of the existing/original building or structure and top of said structure, where the highest point is at a minimum of eight (8) inches below the top of foundation.

[NEW] **For a building or structure located in the special flood hazard area, height shall be measured from the Base Flood Elevation in AE Zones rather than from pre-existing grade. In the AO or VE Zones, height shall be measured from the Base Flood Elevation in the closest AE Zone rather than from pre-existing grade.**