- via email from Bill Doherty 10/30/13
- emailed to CRC Members 10/31/13

Statement to the Barnstable County Commissioners
October 30. 2013

Developing a five-year strategic plan to guide County leadership is a worthwhile undertaking and I want to commend the Commissioners for undertaking this important challenge in an open and thoughtful way.

In 2011 you appointed a Special Commission on County Governance to review the County's functions and governance and provide you with recommendations. The Commission was made up of 26 citizens from government, business and other organizations across the Cape, each with considerable experience with Barnstable County. I was fortunate to serve as co-chair of this talented and dedicated group of citizens. We provided you with a set of recommendations spanning the County's functions and governance structure that are worthy of your careful consideration. It is my understanding that many of the Special Commission's functional recommendations are incorporated into the strategic plan before you.

Our recommendation on county governance called for the merger of the Board of Commissioners and Assembly of Delegates into a seven member legislative body, and the appointment of a new County Executive. Based on my previous experience as a County Commissioner and State Senator, I continue to believe that the merger of existing bodies is essential to ensuring a unified and effective county government. The current two-body system results in a divided government with a tendency to focus inward on discussions about process and prerogatives. This inherent tendency detracts from our ability to act effectively as a unified County government. It is unfortunate that the public discussion about merging the two bodies has focused on unfounded concerns about representation and checks and balances. What the County needs going forward is a unified, efficient government able to direct its full attention and resources toward meeting the needs of the towns, protecting our natural resources and fostering a vibrant economy. I urge the Commissioners to embrace the Special Commission's recommendations on governance, incorporate them into the Strategic Plan and work toward their implementation.

Robert O'Leary
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