

The town says his lighthouse is part of Hull, he says it isn't even in Mass.

There's a legal battle brewing over Graves Light, off the coast of Mass., after the owner of the lighthouse got a $3,000 property tax bill from the Town of Hull.



Is Graves Light part of Hull? Legal battle brews over property taxes for lighthouse off Mass. coast

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By: Kirsten Glavin, Boston 25 News
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HULL, Mass. — It's a mystery brewing at sea; who is overseeing a historic lighthouse sitting off the coast of Massachusetts?

Graves Light, sitting about nine miles off the coast of Boston, has been around since 1903. The town that it's part of, however, hasn't become an issue until recently.

Dave Waller bought the lighthouse in 2013 at auction and has been renovating it ever since. It wasn't until five years into the project, however, that he claims he was hit with a $3,000 property tax bill from the town of Hull.

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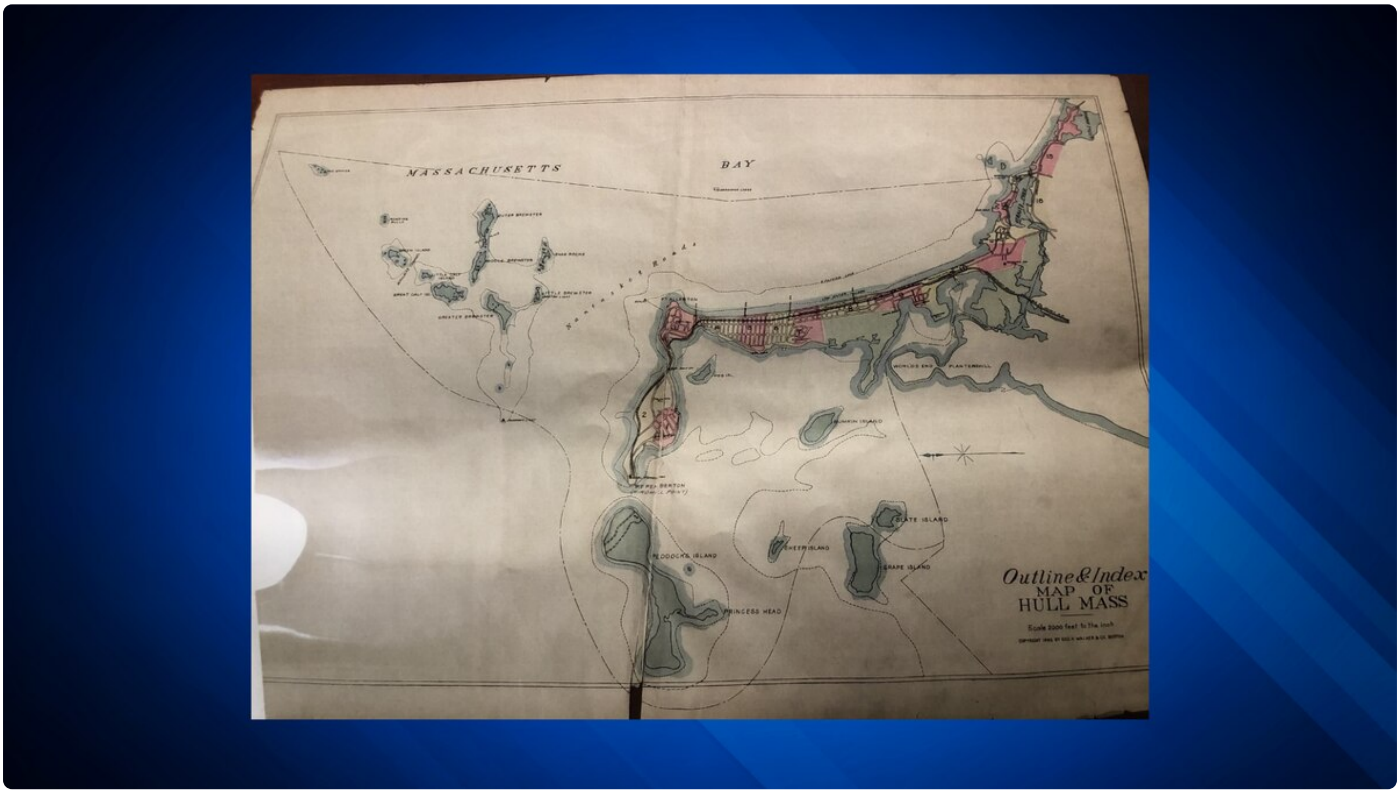
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"We got a little surprise in the mail from the town of Hull assessor's office, so we called them up and said hey, I don't think we're in the town of Hull," Waller told Boston 25 News on Tuesday.

Waller explained that his labor of love abruptly turned into a stormy legal battle. He claims that not only is Graves Light not in Hull, he says it isn't in any jurisdiction in Massachusetts.


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"When we bought the place we hired a land attorney to see what the jurisdictions were and check with all the towns, and he couldn't come up with anything about where we were," Waller said. "On the deed that we bought the place from the government, it said it was on unincorporated State waters, so we kind of took it at that."



Graves Light sits about nine miles off the coast of Boston. James Lampke, who represents the Town of Hull, said this map shows Graves Light within Hull's boundary, though it's unclear if this map is the most current one showing the official boundaries. (Boston 25)

Waller said he worked on the lighthouse for years without facing any issues: "We began our renovations getting permits from the MASS DEP, the Army Corps of Engineers, the Coast Guard and all the different organizations that were required for that kind of work."

When it comes to jurisdiction lines, the town of Hull has a different stance.

James Lampke, town counsel for Hull, explained that he's seen no evidence to suggest that Graves Light is not in Hull.

"They have not produced any sufficient documentation to satisfy us that it is in some other jurisdiction," he said.

Lampke met with Boston 25 News on Tuesday as well and provided several maps and documents that did state the lighthouse was within the jurisdiction of Hull.

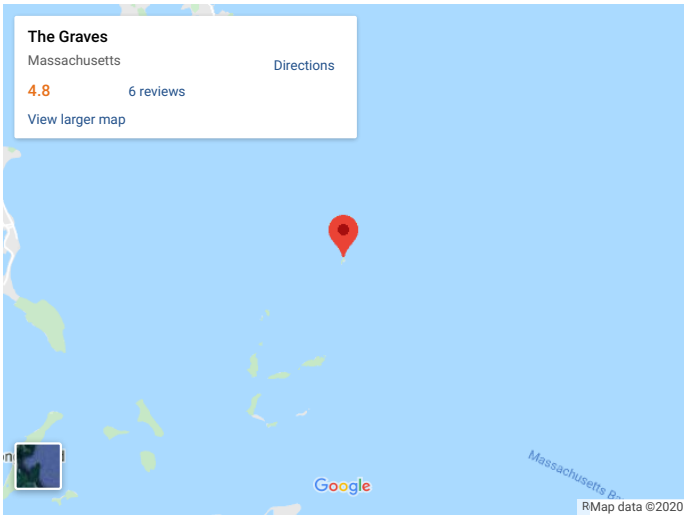
Whether the documents are the most updated and authorized versions, however, was unclear.

Lampke explained that the town also planned to enforce the need for building permits and inspections at Graves Light, stating safety concerns. He did however add that he believed the renovations were done by top-notch professionals, and applauded Waller for his work.

Waller said he is seeking a declaratory judgement to determine which jurisdiction Graves Lighthouse is in, if any.

Meanwhile Lampke stands firm that all land in Massachusetts must legally be part of a jurisdiction, posing the question: If Graves Lighthouse isn't a part of Hull, which jurisdiction in Massachusetts does it belong to?

"They claim it's not in Hull's jurisdiction. We say it is. Or if it's not in Hull's jurisdiction, which jurisdiction is it in?" he said.



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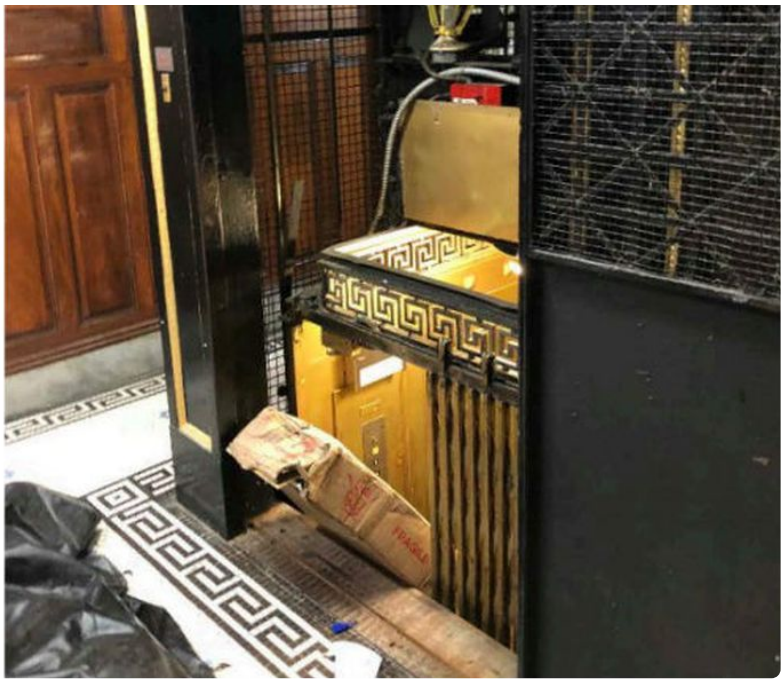
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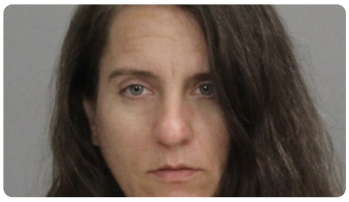


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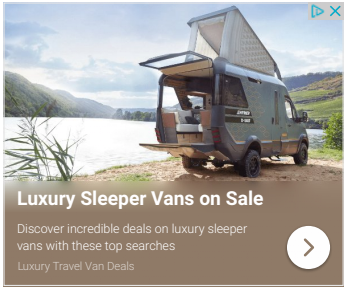
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