

November 13, 2020
MV Commissioners
P.O. 1447
Oak Bluffs, MA 02557
Via email: elvin@mvcommission.org

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Re: "Destination Weddings"/Hob Knob DRI

Dear Commissioners:

I was hired in 1980 as the founding executive director of the 'Vineyard Trust'. My first project, May 1980, was to assume ownership of what was then the Methodist Church, which was done during a formal and solemn deconsecration ceremony in which the church's keys were handed to me by the Methodist Bishop who presided over the small congregation (including Sara Piazza's mother) at this bitter-sweet historic moment. Immediately after receiving the keys, the building was formally named "The Old Whaling Church", and after a year's restoration, it was opened for public use. One of the first things I did to raise funds for its upkeep was to begin booking performing artists and weddings. In fact, even back then, forty years ago, the weddings became so popular that I became a Justice of the Peace and performed many marriages there, from all over the country and abroad, as did others, such as the late John Alley. When I fully realized the Vineyard was becoming a **"Destination Wedding"** location, we transformed the Dr Daniel Fisher House into a wedding (and private events) reception site so that both weddings and receptions could be held on the same property. This revenue greatly helped sustain the Vineyard Trust since then. It is important to note that the properties are located **less than 2 short blocks from Tilton Way/Hob Knob**.

Today, everyone knows that Edgartown - and especially these Preservation Trust properties - are "Destination Weddings" sites. In fact, **the MV Chamber of Commerce has a special web page devoted to "Destination Weddings":** <https://www.mvy.com/weddings.html>

Apart from me, if there is any one person today at the MVC DRI Hob Knob Expansion Hearings who *knows* that Edgartown is a "Destination Wedding" site, and specifically that The Old Whaling Church and Dr. Daniel Fisher House are the most sought-after spaces, it is **Patrick Ahern**. He is the **Chairman of the Vineyard Trust's Board of Trustees** and certainly knows exactly how much income is derived from these events, because he is the only person **who signs all 990s filed with the IRS**. Although all 990s are required by law to be filed yearly, it appears that the Trust is delinquent as the last Charity Navigator-published 990 was back in 2017. Nevertheless, that year, 2017, the net (not gross) income for events was >\$500,000. Much of that net revenue would come from the "Destination Wedding" crowd. Surely that's a **huge selling point to the California real estate investors' group (whoever they may be?), dba "VIC Partners", who owns the Hob Knob**.

This information is why makes it all the more *specious that Mr. Ahern now asserts that the Hob Knob would not be a likely candidate for wedding guests* - rather, he says, the guests would be

“individuals” “in their 60s”, would “bring a book to read by the pool” and not congregate *en masse*. This is a ridiculous statement from the one person of anyone at these DRI hearings who knows the exact revenue and frequency of the Trust’s “Destination Weddings”. The new Inn (some have coined it a motel because guests check in themselves, without an Innkeeper to greet them) would be the only place that **can accommodate up to 80 guests** within such a short walking distance to the Trust’s wedding venues...less than two short blocks away from the proposed Inn.

To further point out the fact that the Inn would become **the most popular place for wedding parties** to stay (all 80 of them), what better place than the Inn for the intimate **Groom’s Dinner** and the larger **Sunday Farewell Brunch** - the kitchen and two adjoining dining rooms at 128 Main and its covered porch are **ideal for caterers** serving the 80 guests.

Just think! **Wedding Central!** And, all within only 2 blocks of the Dr. Daniel Fisher House and the Old Whaling Church!

Sincerely

Jane Chittick

P.S. I have asked three times now and am still waiting to hear how many months the Inn would be open - is it the 6 months an employee told me recently? Also, I haven’t had an answer to what the supervision of the 7-8 resident employees will be doing the time when the Inn/motel is closed? I also want to make sure that the record shows the number of new guest rooms at 128 Main would be three (3), not two (2) – this has already been corrected twice before, yet again at the 11/12/20 hearing, it was said to be two (2). Thank you.

Please give confirmation that the ‘Inn’ would never be allowed to apply for 1) permission to accept Spa clients who are not registered there and 2) a restaurant and liquor license of any type both now and in the future, despite any changes in ownership. Also, 3) that the original ZBA stipulation to becoming an Inn is based on there being a “resident innkeeper” is reinstated. In other words, the above three (3) stipulations will run with the property (just as the (ignored) mandatory resident Innkeeper should have been).

Excerpts from the Preservation Trust website:

“The Old Whaling Church is the perfect location for so many things. The lovely interior is an elegant setting for a **wedding ceremony** ...The Old Whaling Church is **the most sought-after wedding ceremony venue on Martha’s Vineyard**. Its magnificent colonnaded entrance has a commanding presence on Main Street in Edgartown. Centrally located in this charming village, the Church is **within an easy stroll of in-town accommodations**. The breath-taking trompe l’oeil [sic – misspelled!] mural that graces all four walls of the main sanctuary is an architectural masterpiece. The massive windows that allow the space to be washed with natural light are **a photographer’s dream!** **You may choose your own officiant: minister, rabbi, justice of the peace, judge or town clerk.** We have suggestions on **our list of preferred vendors**, or your own officiant can be licensed for one day to perform the ceremony. From the processional down the wide-plank center aisle to the final group photo on the granite front steps, the Old Whaling Church will fulfill **the wedding day dreams of every princess bride!**

The Dr. Daniel Fisher House & Gardens is an elegant location for your special and offers a variety of function opportunities throughout the year. The interior of the building includes four **beautiful rooms that can be used for wedding receptions**, cocktail parties, buffet and plated dinners. The flagstone terrace and adjacent lawn can accommodate tents with seating for up to 125 guests. **The gardens are lovely locations for small wedding ceremonies and photographs.** The Dr. Daniel Fisher House **can accommodate any wedding related event.** It can even be reserved as an **elegant headquarters for the bride and her maids to get dressed and primp** prior to the ceremony. The exquisitely manicured gardens and grounds offer multiple options for **outdoor garden wedding ceremonies.** Whether you're planning a large event or an intimate gathering – **parties of all sizes** are a perfect fit at the Dr. Fisher House. We can accommodate ten to fifty guests inside this elegant mansion for dinner, dancing and socializing. With the installation of a tent on the adjacent bluestone Terrace or the expansive East Lawn area, the guest list can grow to 125 or 250 guests, respectively.”