

July 22, 2022

Mr. Alex Elvin
Martha's Vineyard Commission

RE: Bristol Application for Soundside

To the Commission:

I have known the Bristols for more than forty years. One of the main reasons my husband Paul and I chose to move here to this island was their presence and their example of extraordinary stewardship of everything that is precious about Martha's Vineyard. Six generations of Susannah's family as resided in Soundside for more than 110 years. I know from long discussions with them that their children and grandchildren want to remain there for that long or longer. Brian and Susannah have now moved here full time. But the house simply doesn't support year-round living.

Brian and Susannah love Soundside. Well over a year ago they embarked on a plan to restore the house only to find out that it was simply not financially or practically feasible. They have agonized over what to do. They turned to an architect that has restored multiple properties in West Chop and is deeply sensitive to what it means to live there. What they have created together is as close to Soundside as possible, while decreasing the footprint and abiding by current setback restrictions. Most importantly, by creating a new house they have found a way for their family to continue to enjoy their spot on the shore for generations to come.

I do not know of any family that cares more about Martha's Vineyard. I do not know many people who have given more of their time and energy to working to preserve the island that we all love, including importantly Susannah's work with Sheriff's Meadow. They and their family epitomize what the Vineyard is fast losing – people who are truly committed to this place.

I read with dismay the report of the hearing last night. Paul and I were unable to attend due to a terrible personal situation. We both fully support the request that the Bristol's have before you. We urge you to approve it.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Behnke". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

David Behnke
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