



BOX 1447, OAK BLUFFS, MASSACHUSETTS, 02557, 508-693-3453,  
FAX 508-693-7894 INFO@MVCOMMISSION.ORG WWW.MVCOMMISSION.ORG

# Martha's Vineyard Commission

## CR 9-2021 165 Circuit Ave. Demolition

### MVC Staff Report – 2021-9-17

#### 1. DESCRIPTION

---

- 1.1 **Owner:** Veta Richardson
- 1.2 **Applicant:** Veta Richardson; Joan Hughes (agent)
- 1.3 **Project Location:** 165 Circuit Ave. (Map 11, Lot 201), Oak Bluffs
- 1.4 **Proposal:** Demolition of a house built around 1900.
- 1.5 **Zoning:** Residential 1 (R1)
- 1.6 **Local Permits:** Demolition permit, building permit, variance for lot size
- 1.7 **Surrounding Land Uses:** Other residential uses in the R1 district; Nashawena Park to the east.

**Project History:** The existing house was constructed around 1900 as a summer cottage for an African American housekeeper who worked for a family in Boston and had saved up enough money to build the cottage for her family. More recently, the house has fallen into severe disrepair. The Oak Bluffs Historical Commission (OBHC), which has some purview over buildings more than 100 years old, determined in June 2021 that the building is not historically significant due to its deterioration. The house is not listed in MACRIS.

**Project Summary:** The proposal is to demolish the existing 1,223 ft<sup>2</sup> house, build a new 1,452 ft<sup>2</sup> house in a similar style and with a slightly larger footprint, and restore a shed that was likely built in the 1930s or 1940s. The current property is listed as having four bedrooms, and the proposed house will have three bedrooms and a new septic system to replace an existing cesspool.

#### 2. ADMINISTRATIVE SUMMARY

---

- 2.1 **DRI Referral:** Building official
- 2.2 **DRI Trigger:** 8.1b (Demolition of a structure more than 100 years old); concurrence review
- 2.3 **LUPC:** September 20, 2021
- 2.4 **Public Hearing:** To be determined

#### 3. PLANNING CONCERNS

---

- 3.1 **Historic Significance:** The house was constructed around 1900 in the Campground style, and is in a highly visible location, fronting Circuit Ave. and across from Nashawena Park. The house is just outside the Cottage City Historic District and is not listed in MACRIS. The property was included in a 2008 MVC study of the defining characteristics of houses on Dukes County Ave, and the existing structure generally aligns with those characteristics, including height, mass and setback, roof shape, building materials, and windows and doors.

According to a structural analysis by Vineyard Land Surveying and Engineering, the house appears to have been built with limited means relative to its time and has fallen into severe disrepair,

including a deteriorating and unstable foundation, deflected and undersized support beams, and uneven walls and partitions. In addition, the report notes the absence of wall cavities for standard insulation, and that much of the original framing has been replaced or covered up with newer paneling. The report concludes:

*The existing house is in severe disrepair and exhibits significant structural stability problems. The structure needs significant structural upgrade in each of the load bearing components with any major renovation project. Most of the existing supports would be either removed or support members added with an upgrade, in which case most of the original balloon frame style will be lost within new wall and roof cavities.*

A separate asbestos survey by Airsafe Inc. identified asbestos-containing cement siding that would require safe removal prior to demolition. The report also cautioned that the demolition may reveal other asbestos-containing material, in which case further consultation would be needed.

The OBHC has determined that the building is not historically significant due to the degree of structural deterioration, and notes that the “farmhouse architectural features that fit in with the historic nature of the area abutting [the] Campground” will be incorporated in the new structure.

The applicant has stated that she intends to honor the original owner by researching and publishing her story (with the family’s consent) and offering the cottage free of charge for two weeks each summer to African American families in Boston who could otherwise not afford to rent on the Vineyard, with a focus on front-line workers and first responders.