

MV Shipyard

I am James Malkin, a Selectman in Chilmark and the Selectman's Liaison to the Harbor. In this role, I am responsible for the town's efforts and activities in Menemsha Harbor and Pond. I am writing to share some observations relevant to the MV Shipyard Proposal for the Lagoon.

Chilmark deals with commercial fishing, shell fishing in Menemsha Pond, kelp projects in the adjacent waters of the sound and recreational as well as commercial boating. We are concerned at the impact of rising sea levels on our existing infrastructure in Menemsha Harbor and Pond. We are dealing with an active shell fishing fishery as well as commercial and recreational boating. Keeping Menemsha a working commercial fishing village is mandated in our Master Plan and was voted in our Town Meeting.

Over the past years, we have spent much time and effort with our Harbor and Shellfish Departments to create and maintain a balanced and sustainable environment for shellfish farming, for recreational boating and for moorings as well as slips. With appropriate and consistent monitoring as well as cooperation between our Harbor and Shellfish staff, we have been able to improve the quality of our shellfish catch, keep marked areas for fishing, restrict types of watercraft and allow for seasonal recreational boating as well as year-round fishing.

The impact of rising sea levels is forcing us to look at our commercial docks, our gas station, our fishing village and our access roads; all of which are currently impacted by higher than usual storms and tides and will be increasingly threatened and potentially unusable. The Hurricane of '38 destroyed Menemsha; similar destruction may be shortly in our future from accelerated sea level rise and increasing number of storms.

It appears that the MV Shipyard proposal strikes a thoughtful balance between the realities of the impact of tides on Beach Road, the continued change in the use of the traditional waterfront in VH (the entrance to the Lagoon used to be near Tisbury Marketplace,) the need for sustainable development of shell fishing, and of recreational and of commercial boating. I believe that the proposal is a thoughtful managed retreat in the face of rising waters and will serve to maintain a working waterfront for Tisbury.

All sea facing communities are dealing with the issue of sustainable use and development of land and water, of commercial and recreational boating activities, of employment. In our island's seasonal economy, the character of our waters and the housing and employment of full-time workers adds to those issues. MV Shipyard is a year-round operation in an industry that is part of our historic and our current economy.

It is clearly Tisbury's decision to make and I offer my observations and experiences for the Town's consideration.