

Arnold M. Fischer, Jr.
200 Road to Great Neck
Flat Point Farm
West Tisbury, MA 02575

May 17, 2018

Martha's Vineyard Commission
P.O. Box 1447
Oak Bluffs, MA 02557

Re: Flat Point Farm, DRI 34-M3

Dear Commissioners,

Following up on your public hearing May 3rd, I would like to add some written dialogue before the careful and thoughtful deliberations of the Martha's Vineyard Commission on my family's "estate plan" subdivision for Flat Point Farm.

First of all, the Fischer family is very fortunate to have had the benefit this spectacular property all these years! I think I can speak for the family that we all truly appreciate what a special place we have had to grow up on, live on, visit and enjoy.

I feel very positive about our conservation plan. It is a huge responsibility for my two remaining sisters and I to decide how to proceed with the farm. This plan has taken many forms, discussions, and meetings to determine how the family best moves forward and this plan is the result of our mutual goals.

I want to emphasize the major component of farmland conservation. If this plan is approved and completed, I calculate 73.4 acres of conserved farmland, commencing with our 12.9 acre parcel you approved in 2007. That is over 60 per cent of the area of the original farm my father purchased in 1939, preserved in perpetuity. And there is public walking access managed by the Land Bank.

We have been open with our neighbors and have kept them informed of our plans. I met with the O'Sullivans and showed our plan on their dining room table. I was the family member chosen to meet with the Looks. I tried to get us all together, Christian Strom, Samantha Look and Carly Look. Samantha was the only one to come to the farm for an open discussion of our plan.

As to the O'Sullivan property, our road to the Oyster Shack is presently on the whole length of the back of their parcel. It was like this at the time their family acquired the property in the 1960s. The road is used by our family and others for access to the pond with our permission. We have had various discussions over the years with the O'Sullivans about how to resolve relocation of the road. We believe the present plan is the best planning solution and fairest way to do so.

We propose to mutually release our present rights in each other's properties and provide them with a new approved road with underground electric service at our expense. They will then be free to use their property as they see fit without encumbrance. I have worked for the O'Sullivan's as landscaper and caretaker for over 30 years. More than once, Susan O'Sullivan has brought up the idea of moving their driveway and having cars parked behind their garage.

In 2013, we were able to sell to the Land Bank the 12.9 acre parcel you approved in 2007, reducing construction by the pond and preserving additional acres of farmland with an agricultural restriction on the adjoining fields. After that, we started to think about a new plan for our property. And then my sister Mary passed away in 2015, which also changed things.

The impetus for this new preliminary plan is to get a place for my daughter Emily and my niece Sarah to build their own houses. Emily's husband, Doug Brush, is a full-time teacher at the Oak Bluffs School. Emily makes Flat Point Farm Goat's Milk Soap and other products. She and Doug help run the farm. Sarah's husband, Marques Rivers, is a dedicated West Tisbury fireman. Both families have two children.

For a variety of reasons, we felt it best to change the preliminary plan that you approved in 2009. We assumed at that time that the three "affordable" lots would go to family members. Nine years later, and after our sale to the Land Bank in 2013, we do not think those family members would qualify for "affordable" housing as it is presently administered. Our new plan allows us to provide affordable housing to our children by giving them property so that two young families can afford to continue to live here, raising their children on the farm, as our parents did with us, and as we have with our children. Our plan satisfies the West Tisbury affordable housing bylaws and we will continue to discuss with the Planning Board how to best address that need.

We hope that you can appreciate the thought and effort we have put into this plan. We might have submitted something less for the short-term, but it is our understanding that the Commission would prefer to see a plan for the whole farm. There will be significant public benefit by the sale to the Land Bank of 34.95 acres of our farm once our new plan is approved.

We hope that you will agree with us that there are many other benefits to our plan as well and that you will approve it so that we can return to the Planning Board and continue with this process.

Sincerely,

Arnold M. Fischer, Jr. ("Arnie")