

January 12, 2020

To: Martha Vineyard Commission

RE: Public Comment on 131 North Water Street / Harbor View Hotel, Development of Regional Impact

Dear Commissioners:

As direct abutters to 131 North Water Street, we would like to share our perspective on the proposed changes to the previously approved DRI for the Harbor View Hotel.

We are summer residents of Edgartown and our family has owned 122 North Water Street for 35 years. As you already know, this is truly a unique area of the island composed of a historic and quiet residential neighborhood dating back to the 1700's. The area connects visitors and residents to the island's whaling era while also providing beautiful vistas of the lighthouse and access to the famed harbor.

The owners of the Harbor View Hotel purchased the property for this unique environment and, more specifically, at the same time accepted the limitations of being located within this residential historic district. Instead, we have recently witnessed an aggressive push by the hotel to maximize the commercial operation without consideration of its impact on the neighborhood and this special environment. We have seen a sprawling commercial enterprise emerge with new offerings such as bikes, water sports, golf cart shuttles, horse carriage rides, and expanded outdoor service of food and drink. These changes have already brought negative change to the unique historic neighborhood with increased congestion, noise, litter, and parking problems all without meaningful public input or review of the totality of changes.

Consistent with this recent trend, the hotel's revised DRI proposal to triple the previously approved spa plan and move it to a new stand-alone building pursues an ambitious vision that is no longer a simple hotel amenity. Instead, it is a material change in use – an entirely new enterprise – poised to create a new hive of activity and generate additional traffic, noise, and waste burdens. The proposed facility outlines 9 treatment/relaxation rooms plus nail salon, additional steam rooms, reception with retail, and locker facilities. The scale of this proposed facility undoubtedly would create a steady stream of new visitors and employees coming to the neighborhood daily on top of the current intense use during peak season.

We encourage the Commission to exercise its authority to protect the character of this unique historic Martha's Vineyard neighborhood and move to not approve the new expanded spa proposal. We believe that this will ensure that any future smaller spa remains appropriate as a supporting amenity and does not become an entirely new destination.

Additionally, we encourage the Commission to continue to assert its ongoing role in protecting this special place on Martha Vineyard. Maintaining this environment remains fragile and irreversible harm from over-commercialization is a real threat. Thank you for taking this matter under consideration.

Sincerely,

Gene & Sara Barbato

122 North Water Street, Edgartown MA 02539