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Martha's Vineyard Commission

DRI # 659 North Bluff Sea Wall MVC Staff Report – 2015-12-10

1. DESCRIPTION

- 1.1 Applicant:** Bob Whritenour (Town Administrator); Carlos Pena (CLE Engineering)
- 1.2 Project Location:** Sea View Avenue Extension, Oak Bluffs, MA Map 9 Lot 58.
- 1.3 Proposal:** To replace an existing 720 foot long concrete sea wall on the North Bluff with a sheet metal pile driven seawall four (4') feet higher (built over the existing concrete wall) with a timber boardwalk on top and stone revetment and beach nourishment in front.
- 1.4 Zoning:** N/A
- 1.5 Local Permits:** Conservation Commission. The seawall is an already authorized structure so they are allowed to replace it. Applicant has consulted with the Army Corps of Engineers (A.C.E.) and The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) that no other permitting is required.
- 1.6 Surrounding Land Uses:** Residential; B-2 Commercial; SSA Pier and Terminal.
- 1.7 Project History:** The North Bluff Seawall project began in 2007. The intent was to perform repairs and improve access. The existing concrete seawall is 720 feet long from the ferry pier to the harbor bulkhead. It was originally licensed in the early 1940's by the Massachusetts DPW. The project footprint was established in 2009 and has evolved into its present design based on town objectives, funding mechanisms, environmental requirements and the integration of the seawall project into the framework of the OBPA Fishing Pier and the proposed O.B. Beach Nourishment II projects. The original plan was to replace the existing concrete seawall with a new concrete seawall 4 feet higher in the same place. The project had a budget of \$8,400,000. In 2014 FEMA withdrew their portion of the funding. The Applicant's then asked CLE what they could do with \$5,000,000. CLE proposed the alternative of keeping the existing wall in place and doing a sheet pile metal wall in front of it instead of concrete.
- 1.8 Project Summary:** The Proposal is to provide enhanced coastal storm protection against projected sea level rise by creating a sacrificial beach (15,000 CY), stone revetment (3-4 ton), raised seawall (4'), restored coastal bank and construct a timber boardwalk to provide a pedestrian link between the SSA Ferry Pier and O. B. Harbor.
- There are three funding sources: A \$2,000,000 Seaport Grant; A \$3,600,000 DCR Dam/Seawall Grant; and unspecified O.B. Community Preservation Act (CPA) Funding.
 - The Boardwalk would run from the fishing pier to the harbor parking lot. There would be an A.D.A. accessible ramp from the parking lot to the beach. At the other end there are stairs that go to the water at the SSA Pier. The funding does not allow the current proposal to incorporate the area between the OBPA Fishing Pier and the SSA Pier.
 - The sheeting would be a high nickel content steel with a dull buff gray enamel paint. The paint coating is guaranteed for 2 years and will have to be re-painted at some point, probably 10 years.

1. ADMINISTRATIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 DRI Referral:** The project was referred by the Oak Bluffs Planning Board on November 23, 2015.
- 1.2 DRI Trigger:** The project was referred as a Discretionary Referral (1.1). There were discussions as to whether the project triggered other items on the DRI Checklist. The Applicant chose to forego a Discretionary Review and go straight to DRI Review.
- 1.3 Pre-Application meeting with staff:** November 23, 2015.
- 1.4 LUPC:** November 23, 2015
- 1.5 Site visits:**
- 1.6 Public Hearing:** December 10, 2015

2. PLANNING CONCERNS

2.1 Some Key Issues

- Appearance: What will the sheet metal seawall look like? Is it appropriate for an Island gateway?
- Environmental: Is there any environmental issue with the ultimate corrosion of a metal seawall and/or the paint that needs to be periodically applied?
- Beach: If the beach nourishment is now part of the project, when will this be done?
- Access: The plans show a ramp from the parking lot to the beach supplanting an existing stair. Can additional accesses to the beach be added?
- Lighting: 5 Lampposts are indicated on the Boardwalk Plan.
- Maintenance: How will the metal sea wall be maintained? How much will it cost? Who will pay?
- Cost: Why was FEMA funding withdrawn?
- Construction: What is the construction schedule? Where will construction materials and equipment be stored during construction? How will noise, dust, and traffic be mitigated during the construction process?
- Process: Many correspondents expressed concerns with changes to the project and the process of public review.

2.2 Environment

- **Vegetation:** The existing bluff would be stabilized and replanted.
- **Habitat:** Not designated by NHESP as Habitat.
- **Landscaping:** The Landscape Plan (Page 18 of Construction Documents) says the coastal bank is to be replanted with *Ammophila Breviligulata* (American Beach Grass) at 12" staggered centers surrounded by a 6 foot wide border of *Rosa Rugosa*.
- **Open Space:**
- **Lighting:** Lighting shown on the Electrical Site Plan (Pages 15-17 of Construction Documents) indicate two (2) 20' tall lampposts and three (3) 16' tall lampposts on the Boardwalk and an undetermined number of flush mounted lights along the railing.
- **Noise:**
 - The boardwalk would presumably open at all times. Hours of operation have not been limited.
 - Construction Schedule: Time, staging, and limits on hours of construction have not been indicated.

- **Waste Management:** Locations for trash receptacles and recycling is not shown.
- **Wastewater / Stormwater:**
 - **Soils:** The site is located on the North Bluff in Oak Bluffs at elevations of 0' to 20' with East Chop loamy sand.

2.3 **Transportation**

- **Parking:**
 - The Site Plan shows 52 existing street parking spots along Sea View Avenue Extension along the length of the seawall.
- **Mass Transit, Bicycle and Pedestrian:**
 - The main Oak Bluffs Martha's Vineyard Transit Authority (VTA) bus hub is about one block away from the southerly end of the proposed seawall.
 - Though this is a fairly high volume pedestrian area there is only a sidewalk on one side of Sea View Avenue Extension which is a narrow sidewalk along the top of the bluff.

2.4 **Affordable Housing**

- The MVC has an unwritten policy not to apply its Affordable Housing Policy to religious or municipal institutions.

2.5 **Economic Impact**

- The proposal is part of the town's Capital Improvement Program.
- The Oak Bluffs' North Bluff is a gateway to the Town of Oak Bluffs and the Island of Martha's Vineyard. The North Bluff transportation gateway is a vital component to the town's seasonal and tourist base economy.
- The Boardwalk is proposed to serve as a link for pedestrians entering the town from the Steamship Authority, VTA Bus Stop, the Harbor Area and the downtown.
- It is not anticipated the proposed project will have an impact on municipal services.
- Create a small number of temporary jobs within construction/professional services.

2.6 **Scenic Values**

- **Streetscape:**
- **Architectural Detailing:**
- **A.D.A. Accessibility:** The Boardwalk and beach would be A.D.A. accessible.

2.7 **Local Impact/Abutters**

- Abutters have expressed concern with the loss of the beach, which until recently was not specifically part of the plan. They have also expressed concerns with the access to the beach, the look of the metal seawall, and the public process thus far.

3. **CORRESPONDENCE**

3.1 Town Officials: The **Planning Board** sent the project as a Discretionary Referral.

3.2 Island Organizations: Oak Bluffs Association: 2015-12-08 – Concerns for signage and drawing visitors away from downtown;

3.3 Public: Brian Packish: 2015-11-23 – Concerns with loss of valuable resources, aesthetics, public process; **Jason Lew:** 2015-11-23 – Concerns with loss of beach and access thereto, current maintenance, public transparency, data used; **Kerry Scott:** 2015-11-23 – Concerns with project and public process and that it should have been sent to the

MVC much earlier in the process; **Ewell Hopkins:** 2015-12-02 – Submitted an article and other information about seawalls; **Jason Lew:** 2015-12-05 – Post LUPC letter expressing concerns for the beach, design using metal, maintenance costs, environmental impacts, and the process; **Peter Crafts:** 2015-12-08 – Concerns with urban appearance of metal seawall; **Renee Nolan:** 2015-12-09 – Concern with Steel bulkhead design and elimination of beach; **Stanley Arend:** 2015-12-09 – Concerns with cost, appearance, and public process; **Heidi Signes:** 2015-12-09 – Concerns with urban appearance of a metal seawall; **Belleruth Naparstek:** 2015-12-10: Concerns with the choice of metal in the sea and maintenance costs, the urban look, and the public process and political pressure; **Ewell Hopkins:** 2015-12-10 – Concerns about the process and transparency, use of public funds, and many questions about the details of the proposal; **Kerry Scott:** 2015-12-10 – Major concerns with the public process, urban look of a metal seawall, Maintenance costs, future of the beach, and perceived political pressure; **Kathy Laskowski:** 2015-12-10 - Concerned with the look and feel of a steel bulkhead at a gateway, the public process, and urges MVC to look carefully at the proposal; **Jordan Wallace:** 2015-12-10 – Concerns with the look of a metal seawall at a gateway and the loss of the beach.