

To MVC Feb. 7, 2019

Good evening. My name is James Athearn, I am speaking tonight as a citizen of Edgartown, and of the whole island, not in my role as president of the Vineyard Conservation Society.

I am deeply disturbed by the prospect of this new development near the Great Pond, as I have also been by the hundreds of developments all over Edgartown, and the Vineyard, that have been built in the last few decades and which have fragmented our open spaces and strained our island infrastructure to a possible tipping point. This is one more project that will add cars and trucks to our roads, sewage into our treatment plant, longer lines at our supermarkets, and dogs in our dog parks. Every element of our daily lives is impacted by growth in population. When you attend a memorial service for an old friend, you should plan to get there early or you won't get into the church.

Every drop in the bucket adds up. We have been adding subdivisions and houses to the island for decades as if we were incapable of doing the math to see where this is heading.

About 10 years ago the MV Commission worked hard for two years to create the Island Plan. The dozens of meetings and surveys and forums made it clear that the Future that people want for the Vineyard is not the one we are going to get unless we limit growth and development. In surveys of 3,000 Vineyarders and visitors in 2003 and 2004, 95% said protecting the Vineyard's environment and character was a high priority; 7% said promoting development and growth was a high priority.

I was a member of the MVC for 9 years and in that time I feel that I failed to accomplish a change in direction of the Vineyard's development. I was on the steering committee for the Island Plan and was very excited by the talent represented on the committee and the optimism we all had that this was a document that would save what was left of Martha's Vineyard. We came up with a great Plan, but what we failed to do was to face, head on, the necessity to set a goal of 0 net growth for Martha's Vineyard. Such a goal would not stop building but rather introduce a consciousness of developing policies that favor a stable population. The MVC was under political pressure at that time and I believe commissioners were too timid to take a strong position on growth, despite the evidence we had clearly documented.

It is not necessary for me to continue to point out the negative consequences of growth, except to stress that every bit of growth leads to more growth. This proposed development will bring in more people to build the houses, more families to look for housing and schools, and more cars; they will need a mechanic, a dentist and doctor, and demand other services that require more people, who in turn create a demand for more people, houses, more space on the roads, trails and buildings, more ferries and airplanes, and so on. And all these new people will have children who may want to stay and create more demand.

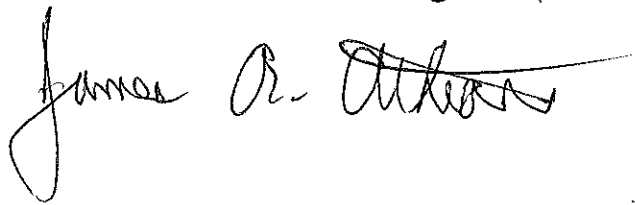
We have to stop growing sometime, the question is when? And will any of us or our children want to live on the overdeveloped island we have let happen?

This proposed subdivision gives the commission the opportunity to step up and use the extraordinary powers with which it was created to preserve and protect our land, water, and character for future

generations. By limiting development on Martha's Vineyard, you will be maintaining our local, sustainable economies, which depend on the beauty and character of an "unspoiled" island.

I am asking you to vote no on this application. Don't condition it. When you start to make conditions, a momentum develops where the project is expected to happen. Only a radical reduction in proposed houses could make the plan acceptable, and that could be a second proposal after this one is denied. The MVC has the power and the responsibility to stop this; do your job and make us proud of you.

James A. Atherton

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James A. Atherton". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the printed name.