

To: Martha's Vineyard Commission

From: Jeffrey Agnoli
Edgartown, MA

August 19, 2019

Re: DRI 682A

Dear Commissioners:

I am writing again the Commission on the matter of the proposed Meeting House Place Development (DRI 682.) I understand the original plan has been altered, and a new DRI of 682A has been issued. I understand that this change has rendered the voluminous critical letters and public comments toward the first DRI designation no longer applicable. If this is so, I find it unfair and disingenuous. Regardless, I write now to strongly oppose the new plan, since it repeats all the detriments of the first plan, and in some ways exceeds them. Simply put, this new DRI should be denied, since its detriments greatly outweigh its benefits.

The August 2, 2019 Vineyard Gazette contained two powerful articles that support denial of the plan. Both the articles "Spoiled or Saved, a Vineyard Tale" and "Summer Traffic Triggers Talk of Tipping Point Around the Island" accurately describe the crucial point the Island has reached. Yes, there has always been talk of over development and excessive traffic, but both are now to be seen not only as having increased still further, they are doing so in the face of what we now know are inevitable and unfortunate changes to our climate. DRI 682A is a clear representation of what needs NOT to happen if we are to respond intelligently and responsibly to what is upon us.

The project has little to recommend it, outside of the profit that will be reaped by the developers and their consultants. The environment and the larger community lose. There is no pressing need for these luxury homes, many of which will be second or third homes for their affluent owners. The new plan's inclusion of "affordable" townhouses is window dressing, and would itself only add to the traffic and environmental detriments to the sensitive area. In the face of ever increasing inequality, this project threatens the very nature of this island as a place for all types of people. A unique piece of woodland would be sacrificed to build enormous houses, with their permanent attendant drains on water and sewer systems. The negative impact of this project on a sensitive, irreplaceable ecosystem of watershed, woodlands, and the priceless Great Pond, is beyond calculation. Money and prestige are not the only measures of a community's health. We have current and future generations to answer to if we fail to act on what we know can only add to climate woes and subtract from our community's identity.

As stated in earlier comments, both written and oral, the Commission should be looking at the proposed Meetinghouse Way project as one component in a contiguous three-parcel project on both sides of Division Road, which eventually would total close to 50 lots. It is short-sighted not to see what will unfold in stages, but nevertheless will have an even greater detrimental effect on the area. If Edgartown is able to build its long planned Affordable Housing Project on the eastern side of DRI 682A, the cumulative effect of all these on the environment and traffic would be disastrous and would forever negatively alter the nature of an entire area of the Vineyard.

The recent event on Climate Change held at the West Tisbury School, which showcased the Vineyard's efforts, some led by our children, to respond with action to our environmental crisis, can be understood as expressing the views of the island community. The event was filled past capacity, and many Vineyarders of working age would have attended if the hour it started was later. The new Climate Change Task Force, with members from the MVC, is another example of what is being done to confront the crisis we face. Your denial of this plan, based on its clear detriments and paltry benefits, would have a momentous positive impact, and signal the strength of the island's willingness to forgo "business as usual" and move toward true sustainability and environmental integrity.

As I previously wrote, the Island community looks to you, the Commission, to see the big picture, to honor your inspiring charter and its mission, to think about future generations, to be brave in the face of financially advantaged forces, and to protect our community's values, which include fairness and reverence for our fragile natural and social environment. I urge you to deny this new application.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Agnoli