

June 15, 2020

Martha's Vineyard Commission  
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RE: DRI 682, 682A & 682B Meeting House Way Subdivision

Dear Commissioners,

I am deeply concerned about the impact that this housing development will have on the health of the Edgartown Great Pond. Where and what is built along the pond can make a critical difference to pond health. Development will happen, but it can be done in a prudent and thoughtful manner.

How did a property zoned for 5 houses on 54 acres end up being a 36-home development with many large second homes? The developer bought the land knowing what zoning regulations allowed. This density of housing is over the capacity of this property and for the fragile Edgartown Great Pond watershed. Building affordable housing and encouraging solar power is positive, but these positives do not negate the negative impacts of the nitrogen and phosphorus discharge going into and damaging the pond health. Beyond that, I am also concerned that once the developer gets the subdivision approved, they will complain of "hardship" and not follow through on these commitments of solar and affordable housing.

Even if these proposed homes were hooked up to the wastewater treatment plant, there are many existing homes in the pond watershed that should be hooked up first to reduce the current nutrient load into the pond. Besides, the wastewater treatment plant does not remove any of the phosphorous and does not remove all of the nitrogen. The discharge could still greatly impact the pond health. These extravagant homes will also come with the runoff from the chemicals and fertilizers that would be put on their lawns. The Great Pond Foundation has shown that the nutrient levels on the pond are impacting the pond negatively. Regular openings of the barrier beach combined with dredging helps improve water quality, but the pond health is fragile; right on the edge of being clear and healthy and going downhill if nitrogen inputs are not reduced. The greatest discharge comes from the eastern edge of the pond, so these homes would add nitrogen where the ecosystem is least able to handle it.

An effective and reasonable solution would be to reduce the number and size of the homes. Yes, the developers have reduced the size and number of homes, but what they initially proposed was ludicrous, knowing that they would be asked to reduce the number and size. Maybe the thought behind the original zoning of 5 homes on this land should be more seriously considered. Please consider requiring that the lawns be minimally sized, organically maintained and use little or no fertilizer. In addition to a reduction in homes, perhaps half of the land between the pond and the homes could be put into open space as

a barrier to the pond. If affordable homes are not built as a part of this proposed development, perhaps a more sizable donation to affordable housing could be made.

Thank you for your consideration on this manner.

Anne S. Mazar  
Great Pond Foundation Board Member  
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Edgartown, MA