

VINEYARD



GAZETTE

Protect the Pond

Thursday, May 28, 2020 - 2:21pm

We are in uncertain times, with many aspects of daily life changing. In the midst of change, one thing that remains constant is the threat to our Island's environment, and our way of life. I am writing to share with Islanders the renewed effort by Utah developers to build a luxury housing development a short distance from the Edgartown Great Pond. The application for this proposed project, the Meetinghouse Way development, is once again before the Martha's Vineyard Commission. It will be the subject of a public hearing on June 4 in Oak Bluffs. This application presents a clear danger to a sustainable and recognizable Martha's Vineyard, and needs to be denied.

Last September, after lengthy public hearings and presentations by agents of the developers, the LUPC, a sub-group of the commission, recommended to deny the application by a 7-2 vote. The application was then to be voted on by the entire commission. This final vote has been delayed since early last fall. Meanwhile, the developers have come back with a minimally altered plan, one that still envisions building 27 luxury houses, of up to 4,200 square feet each. There are some trimmings, mostly in the form of 14 townhouses affordably priced, but these are crumbs off a table laden with profit for the developers.

The pandemic has served to clarify the terms essential and non-essential. Almost needless to say, the impact of building a huge number of luxury houses, with lawns and pools, in the Edgartown Great Pond watershed, can hardly be deemed essential. Essential is towns and nonprofits partnering to build affordable, ecologically sensitive housing in a post-pandemic island. We need to house our truly essential population, the year-round residents working our farms, stores, restaurants, in our schools and medical facilities, in our law enforcement agencies, and other first responders. This can be done, without depending on the "generosity" of developers who balance the small pay-out for mandated affordable costs against enormous profit, and make a simple business, hardly an altruistic, decision to include some affordable element.

Also essential is all of us working to protect our natural environment, while allowing for sensible and equitable housing. This 54-acre parcel of mature woodlands, contiguous with tracts of conserved land around the Great Pond, should become part

of what's preserved by our conservation organizations, to be shared now, and by future generations as an integral part of our natural world.

There are clear and well-reasoned arguments against the Meetinghouse Way application (titled DRI 682B on the MVC website) that can be viewed if you are interested. Traffic, nitrogen, water, destruction of habitat, increasing suburbanization and inequality, are all major and unanswered concerns. The MVC is charged with weighing potential detriments against benefits in determining the fate of proposals such as this one. In this case, there are no real benefits, and a long list of detriments. Please consider attending the public hearing in whatever form it will take. This is a turning point for the island. Let's head in the right direction, starting with denying this proposal once and for all.

Jeff Agnoli

Edgartown

YOU CAN HELP SUPPORT LOCAL NEWS

Subscribe (<http://vineyardgazettestore.com>) or become a Friend of the Vineyard Gazette (<https://www.vineyardgazettestore.com/product/6/view>) and receive our free newsletters and free and discounted tickets to Gazette events along with our award-winning news and photography.