

June 10, 2020

ATTN: Martha's Vineyard Commission, Edgartown MA

RE: Meeting House Place – Support for the project from Michael Frick, 5 Hotchkiss Lane Resident

How about you all (MVC) put your heads together and come up with a plan that works for all?

Good evening MVC Board,

I would like to throw my full support behind the Meeting House Place project off of Meeting House Way. I understand there has been both support and opposition. However, being an abutter to the project and seeing how the plans have evolved over time, I feel strongly the project is well thought out and addresses many needs of the island and community.

Martha's Vineyard needs to encourage more houses to move off septic and expand the infrastructure for the central sewer system. This project brings sewer to the neighborhood, further reducing reliance on septic - a tremendous benefit for the neighborhood and Edgartown Great Pond.

I am dismayed at the ever changing goal posts and increasing demands on the project. Understand that I lived in a rural area of the NJ lake and stream region (Sussex County) that was 100% on well and septic. I come at this from experience watching what occurs when septic systems, even when updated to new standards, continue to affect waterways. This project removes several existing homes on Hotchkiss Lane (in the great edgartown pond watershed) from septic and onto sewer, and additionally provides capacity to allow for more homes to be removed from septic in the future. Once the sewer is installed on Hotchkiss Lane it will be hard to imagine my concerned neighbors not connecting knowing they would be further reducing the nitrogen levels without any cost to them.

A couple of points I want to make in support of the project:

1. The requirements the board has placed on this project, if applied to your current residences would most likely render your/our own homes unbuildable. Many of you have been on the board for many years. You must be reasonable in your approach and cannot try and throw everything & the kitchen sink in on this one project. The Meeting House Place project team have been extremely fair and balanced in their incorporation of feedback and additions/subtractions to the project. The board should provide for the same – a fair and balanced approach.
2. Putting more properties on sewer is only going to be better for the island. The island has 80%+ of homes on septic currently? What is wrong with placing new homes on sewer plus removing additional homes from septic that are not even part of this project? And the goal posts continue to change – one board member asked: “What do we need to do to get to ZERO% nitrogen – when you had previously asked for the project to get below a level of 100 - which the team subsequently produced. Now you want to get to ZERO, which, as a board member should know, is not reasonable or possible. The more homes on sewer, the better it is for the island overall. Let's be reasonable here. Stopping all development is not the solution. If sold as 5 lots with septic, which the land is currently approved for, the nitrogen will far exceed the significantly reduced levels that are provided for in this proposal.

3. The Affordable Housing units – again, you cannot correct all past mistakes and years of avoiding the problem on one project. Question: Was Affordable housing a requirement? NO! It was a cash payment or housing. This applicant has not only increased the cash payment beyond the requirement, but also added a huge bonus of 14 units of low cost housing for the working class. I am the father of a school teacher who would love to come up to MV and teach. Unfortunately, she cannot even afford a summer rental let alone a house on the island. This is a huge issue on the island and is exactly what the project team has gone above and beyond in addressing in their current offer. Can't the board work with the Meetinghouse Place team and come up with guidelines as to upkeep of the units, limits on appreciation per year, etc? It seems the board was asking Meeting House Way for all of the answers. **How about you all put your heads together and come up with a plan that works for all?**
4. The Island is financed essentially by under utilized seasonal only residents. Small businesses make or break their annual income on a 12 to 16 week period. Without additional tax revenue AND the start of some affordable housing, the problem of affordable housing and ever increasing housing costs will continue to compound. You cannot just continue to kick the can down the road for someone else/another board to deal with. How about you start to be a part of the SOLUTION to an ever growing problem. A great place and example to begin with is right here with this project.
5. 4,000 Square foot yards on the houses – this is NOTHING. And yet the Meeting House Way team is making this highly restrictive limitation work. As a sign of further lack of alignment and chaos, the solar component even had objections from board members – isn't solar a great solution? Can't you all get on the same page? The units shown in my opinion are a terrific idea and something the board should tout as a Green friendly solution and a huge win.
6. I understand the meetings are open to all but I am interested in the opposition of the gentleman from Duarte Circle, who does not even about this project and is vehemently opposed to it – why? If you look at imagery of his lot when he built his home, you will see a **complete clear cut** of his land, which seems to be at odds with his opposition to this project. (See attached pictures) This appears to be a classic case of "Do as I say, not as I do". The petitioner here has clearly shown their intent to protect the trees & land on the huge portion of the property that will not be built on - unlike the destruction that occurred on the Duarte Circle property. One needs to apply the same rules to others that one follows themselves – No ?
7. The gentleman from Duarte Circle stated that there is interest in this land from others. From the info I was able to find, the Land Bank twice turned down buying this property and no other buyers came forward. If, as the Duarte Circle gentleman stated emphatically, there is interest, maybe he can bring forward a buyer for fair market value? Will they then turn the land over to the land bank, or would they too want to build on the property? Are there other parties interested? Please let us know as you stated you know others are interested. The Meeting House Place folks I am sure would entertain fair offers, no?

To summarize, the Meeting House Place team has done an excellent job planning out a project with Green initiatives, as well as significant reductions to the required nitrogen levels - well below what they were asked to do. Additionally, they have introduced a major affordable housing opportunity for the town, tied in additional homes from septic to sewer, further lowering the nitrogen load, and should be viewed as an exemplary model and project going forward for others.

There are few pieces of land left on the island that are buildable like this one, and the board and residents of the island cannot cure all of the past ills made by previous boards on a single project.

We all want what is best for the island.

We have in front of us a well thought out project, which incorporates significant community and island benefits and wins. The team has been thoughtful and continued to work closely with the board and community to incorporate their feedback. There are many extras included in the proposal that go above and beyond. The project is currently approved as 5 homes - if you do not act now there will not be the same opportunity to influence the project in the future.

Include these significant wins & benefits now and **approve this project!**

Michael Frick



