

Len Morris
February 27, 2024

I am writing to urge the Commission to deny Stop and Shop's application to remove the historic Caleb Prouty House and place it in private hands, a clear violation of the protections provided to this building as a Nationally Registered Landmark building. Their application also ignores the fact that the building is the oldest in our downtown and as such deserves to remain in place. Moving the building and putting it in private hands makes a travesty of Stop and Shop's obligation to act as trustee of this historic landmark. Putting the building in private hands removes it, effectively from all public access. It removes a major asset from any inclusive effort to develop a visitor friendly entryway to the island's only year round port.

This building should instead be used as a Visitor Centre for families who currently have nowhere to go when they enter Vineyard Haven other than a wholly inadequate information booth and a single bench near the bus transit site.

Families have no shade, no place to sit, no place to gather information on what is happening in each Town island wide. Info kiosks inside the Prouty House could provide this information on a daily basis. Docents from the MVMuseum could lead tours around Vineyard Haven and the Harbour area from the site. Minimal staffing would be required. Upstairs could be an office for the staff or be used by the Town, it could make an ideal office for the Harbourmaster.

Downtown Vineyard Haven at 5 corners is unsafe currently for pedestrians. This is due to the fact that they have no clear place to settle and collect themselves along with information. Last year there were multiple accidents involving pedestrians including at least one that required medi-vacing the injured party to Mass General. It is a chaotic place without good signage and terrible sidewalks and right of way with some of the heaviest traffic on island. People drive into the lot and take the turn at a high rate of speed if they think they are missing their boat.

Stop and Shop wants to use this precious site for parking and to create more parking at the waterfront. This is a stupid idea. Parking at sea level will be susceptible to flooding and parking under their store with no sunlight will become a rat farm.

Stop and Shop already uses, without payment or agreement, municipal parking for two of their trucks, effectively illegally expanding their storage. This invasion of municipal parking should be restored to the Town.

I believe that Stop and Shop should have a store in town that is confined to its actual footprint. Parking expansion should be the current lot minus their trucks. People should be encouraged, through design modifications, to use bikes or walk to the store. The Prouty House should stay where it is and become what it is, an historic asset to our town.

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38 years as a year-round resident