

**Re: DRI 695 – Menotomy Building, Oak Bluffs**

**February 25, 2020**

Dear Members of the Martha's Vineyard Commission,

I am writing in full support of the proposal by Brian Packish and Gary Jones as it pertains to the redevelopment of 14 Kennebec Avenue, and the preservation of the Red Cat Kitchen.

This plan includes measures to demolish the existing structure at 14 Kennebec Avenue and reconstruct a new, accessible building, create more rental options with the inclusion of additional apartment units, and preserve and upgrade the Red Cat Kitchen in order to service the community more effectively. Having been born and raised on Martha's Vineyard, I have seen many changes. Some good and some not so good, which is why I have carefully reviewed the designs and thoughtful proposal submitted, and I believe this plan provides a much-needed improvement to the downtown Oak Bluffs community.

Brian and Gary are both incredibly dedicated to the long-term viability of the downtown area as a functioning hub of island life, and through their proposed plan, they have found a way to not only preserve the island's character, but also establish a profitable and much needed job resource for year-round residents. Their mindful and strategic approach to the new structure merges a consideration of size and historical significance with an economically savvy inclusion of "market rate" apartment units, which would help in maintaining the cost of rent for the Red Cat while also enticing renters looking for housing in the area. I have known Gary Jones both personally and professionally for over 20 years and I remember the first time he visited the island. He was completely taken with the place – every aspect of it – the land, the sea, the people. I am not at all surprised he's chosen to spend a significant part of the year there and put down more roots by investing in a local business. I have also known Brian Packish and Ben DeForest since we were all kids and while their records speak for themselves, I'd be remiss by not saying I think what they have done for the town of Oak Bluffs is beyond admirable. It's people like this that can really make a difference in a community.

The current condition of the Red Cat Kitchen is in complete disarray and warrants demolition, which means that not only would the island be losing a landmark establishment, but those local farmers and fisherman that the restaurant has partnered with would also be negatively affected. Red Cat employees would also be without employment. As a friend and supporter of many small businesses and their owners on the island, it would be a travesty to see the Red Cat close its doors over a failed permit. Through this new plan, the building will be brought up to code and made accessible to a greater portion of the population. As a result, the new building would allow the Red Cat to operate to a fuller capacity during shoulder seasons and potentially in the winter months, meaning longer employment for the year-round resident staff and increased revenue for the business itself.

I respectfully request that the Commission members approve this project as designed to allow for construction to start during the proposed timeline, in the hopes of reopening the Red Cat Kitchen for the summer 2021 season.

Thank you,

Holly Jenkinson Bario