Adam Turner  
Executive Director, MVC  
33 New York Ave.  
Oak Bluffs, MA 02557

Subject: DRI 695 Menotomy Building

Dear Mr. Turner,

There are some significant deficiencies in the proposed DRI 695 Menotomy Building located at 14 Kennebec Avenue, Oak Bluffs. The planned four one-bedroom market-rate apartments adversely affect the supply of much needed low- and moderate-income housing for residents.

The building proposal requests expansion of the two-story to a three-story building, expanding the size by 3,323 square feet requiring multiple waivers. The proposed structure enlarges the residential footprint from a single three-bedroom apartment to four one-bedroom apartments, all with private kitchens and bathrooms. The expressed intent is to sell/rent these units at market rate, adding more short-term summer units to the market, depriving affordable housing opportunities for year-round residents.

The shortage of year-round affordable housing is well documented by the island towns and Martha’s Vineyard Commission, and the proposed Menotomy development ignores the problem by offering all market-rate apartments. The estimated $183,000 monetary mitigation to offset the loss of affordable housing (MVC Staff Report, 2/3/2020) does very little to improve affordable housing in Oak Bluffs. The amount is not adequate to purchase property or even build a single affordable housing unit. The developer’s proposal permanently removes affordable housing opportunities in the limited Oak Bluffs Downtown District by only offering market-rate summer housing.

I highly encourage the MV Commission, as a condition of the DRI approval, if approved, require all apartment units designated as deed-restricted affordable housing for workforce and low- to moderate year-round residents.

The purpose of the Oak Bluffs “top of the shop” zoning by-laws are to “provide for a variety of housing needs, including reasonable, affordable accommodations for a fluctuating workforce and opportunities to create moderate-income and senior housing units, both of which would promote economic growth and stability in the existing B-1 district;” (OB Zoning By-Law...
7.2.1.1). The Menotomy project in its current version violates the purpose of the Oak Bluffs Zoning By-law by not supporting affordable housing as required.

The Menotomy Building also violates the purpose of the Oak Bluffs Flexible Development Zoning by-law by disregarding the stated purpose of the by-law “to promote the development of housing affordable to low, moderate and median income families, and; to promote the development of housing for persons over the age of fifty-five” (OB Zoning By-Law 7.3.1). The proposed Menotomy development attempts to side-step the purpose of the by-laws with a minimal monetary contribution to Affordable Housing and ignoring the Oak Bluffs Zoning By-law.

It is not unreasonable for the town of Oak Bluffs and the Martha’s Vineyard Commission to condition the expanded apartments as affordable to favorably impact the supply of much needed workforce and low- and moderate-income housing for island residents. The decision to require affordable residential housing supports the MVC charter to “promote the provision of fair, decent, safe, affordable year-round housing for rental or purchase that meets the housing needs across income sectors but especially those income thresholds with the greatest need (MVC Policy for DRI Review – Housing).

I respectively ask the Martha’s Vineyard Commission to protect the limited opportunities for Affordable Housing and vote to require the residential units in the Menotomy building to be permanently designated as affordable housing.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

K. Mark Leonard

CC: Oak Bluffs Planning Board
    Oak Bluffs Zoning Board of Appeals
    Oak Bluffs Affordable Housing Committee