

Dear MV Commission,

I hope this message finds you well. I am writing to express our sincere gratitude for considering the expansion project proposed by Vineyard Montessori School (VMS) and to provide further insight into who we are and the significance of this endeavor for the Island community.

Vineyard Montessori School has been an integral part of our community just shy of 50 years, serving as a beacon of education and personal development. Our commitment to Montessori philosophy, which emphasizes a child-centered approach to learning and fosters independence, creativity, and critical thinking, has made us a trusted institution among parents and educators alike.

The proposed expansion project is a natural progression for VMS, driven by the increasing demand for high-quality early education in our community. This expansion will not only allow us to serve additional children island-wide, but will also enable us to enhance our facilities, curriculum, and extracurricular offerings.

The campus development has undergone a meticulous and considerate planning process, taking into account the evolving needs of the school and striving to integrate seamlessly into the surrounding neighborhood. Before initiating the campus development, Vineyard Montessori intentionally and carefully devised our own traffic flow and implemented staggered drop-off times, with a strong focus on respecting the community.

Over the past 13 years, the school's commitment to maintaining a positive relationship with our neighbors has been evident. We have consistently responded promptly and taken action whenever a neighbor reached out to us. For example: when a neighbor notified us that our original dirt driveway was spilling into the road, we immediately rectified the situation by adding an apron to contain the driveway and changed the driveway product; when another neighbor asked us to work with them regarding the parking on Tashmoo Avenue, our immediate response was one of agreement and the school immediately called the Town of Tisbury to inquire about creating a no-parking street; when yet another neighbor contacted us about their desire to create a garden space on our property for aesthetic reasons, we collaborated on the project and reimbursed the neighbor for the materials to create the garden; when an abutter requested that we do not remove a specific tree from our property, we accommodated that request; and yet another time, we immediately turned a light off once we learned it had been left on overnight, as we had previously not been aware of that. Vineyard Montessori has always been committed to working with our neighbors — though we cannot always provide them with everything they ask, we have always listened and responded.

In a proactive effort, we transparently and accurately communicated our building vision and plans to our neighbors well in advance of making them public, hopeful to foster open and collaborative discussions. When I first read in the newspaper her concerns, I called Doreen

Kinsman to ask to be a part of the neighborhood plan to eliminate parking on Tashmoo, in hopes of working with the neighbors.

In response to encroachments on our property by adjacent property owners, we presented opportunities for an easement, aiming to provide them with additional space. This gesture was extended even though they had constructed their home and propane tanks within and on the school's property without prior consultation. Despite the lack of communication from their end before building, our intent was to approach the situation with fairness and reasonableness.

Our vision for this project is to take an active role in creating an Island where every child and family thrives within a robust, nurturing early childhood system fostering lifelong success and well being for all. The mission of this expansion is to create access to and promote equity in high-quality childcare for families living in all Island towns.

Here are some key points highlighting the importance of the expansion project for the community:

Increase toddler and preschool capacity Island-wide by 65%, with a cohesive, vibrant campus and healthy facilities

**Meeting Growing Demand:** The demand for early education and care has been steadily increasing, and the current facilities are no longer sufficient to meet the needs of our Island community. The expansion will enable us to accept more students, reducing waiting lists and ensuring that more local families can benefit from our unique educational approach.

**Workforce Development:** This expansion allows families to remain in or enter into the workforce while their child is in a safe and nurturing environment. This contributes to the economic growth of our community. The parents at VMS are composed of the island's workforce including, but not limited to nurses, police officers, fire fighters, teachers, farmers, doctors, painters, administrative support and business owners.

In addition, Vineyard Montessori School recognizes their own faculty and staff as essential personnel.

**Community Engagement:** VMS has a long-standing tradition of community involvement. The expansion project will further strengthen our ties with community partners.

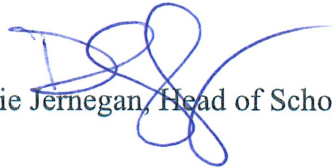
**Investment in the Future:** By expanding Vineyard Montessori School, we are making a strategic investment in the future of our island. Well-educated and empowered individuals contribute positively to society, and the expanded VMS will play a crucial role in shaping the future leaders, innovators, and responsible citizens of our community.

In conclusion, the Vineyard Montessori School expansion project is not just about increasing physical space but is a holistic investment in the well-being and prosperity of our entire Island community. We are confident that this endeavor will have a lasting positive impact on the lives of island children and their families **creating a brighter future for local families who are the fabric of this island's workforce.**

We also encourage you to review the state and federal support for initiatives like ours. At the end of this document, you will find recent quotes from Massachusetts officials and US Senators who understand the importance of access to early education and the difference it makes to local economies.

We appreciate your time and consideration. We invite the opportunity to delve into further discussions about this project, addressing any questions or concerns that the Martha's Vineyard Commission may have as they continue to evaluate and consider for approval this crucial undertaking.

Respectfully, Debbie Jernegan, Head of School



“Far too many parents are being held back from returning to the workforce because of the daunting cost of child care. [We must] help to relieve those pressures by expanding high-quality Pre-K access.” -Governor Maura Healey ([source](#))

“Early education is foundational to closing the opportunity gap in Massachusetts - bringing economic equity and mobility to families as well as educational opportunities to their children. Access to affordable child care is also an engine of the state's economy, enabling families of all income levels to participate in our workforce.” -MA State Early Education and Care Commissioner, Amy Kershaw ([source](#))

“Child care is the key to unlocking Massachusetts' economic potential. With a commitment to working families, we can expand access to care, cut costs for parents, and enable businesses to thrive.” -MA Whip, Katherine Clark ([source](#))

“Childcare issues are workforce issues. When people don't have access to affordable childcare, they can't go to work, and when they can't go to work, our local economies suffer. It's that simple - and that's why we need to make childcare accessible.” -US Senator, Amy Klobuchar

“Child care solutions are a critical enabler for economic growth in Massachusetts.” -MA State Secretary of Economic Development, Yvonne Hao ([source](#))

“Accessible, affordable, and quality child care is a critical infrastructure for Massachusetts workers and families.” -MA Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development, Lauren Jones ([source](#))