

FROM: Virginia C. Jones

TO: Doug Sederholm, Chairman

Martha's Vineyard Commission

12 August, 2020

Re: DRI Checklist Revision #14

On Monday, the 10th I was given a copy of the OB and Edg. Planning Board MEMO re: the DRI Checklist #14. Our Planning Board in West Tisbury was given a copy of the proposed Checklist update many months ago and we did discuss it at that time, drafted, approved and submitted a letter of comment. Virtually all of our suggestions pertained to affordable housing policies. The recent letter from Edgartown and Oak Bluffs is a much more general memo and most of the comments are about process rather than the content of the checklist – or at least that is how I view it. In fact, I am submitting this memo of concern and comment on my own behalf. We have not met or discussed the Checklist further and will have no opportunity to do so as a board before the due date.

The Memo focuses almost entirely on the content of the Checklist and how it can be used by a Planning Board. Over my 30 plus years as a PB member I have in fact, marveled how, under Massachusetts General Laws, Planning Boards have very limited powers – mainly centered around safe access to a property (frontage and the like), the size of a lot, the percentage of dry (buildable) land and whether services have been provided for the divisions and sub divisions. We also have some ancillary and rather minimalist powers such as the regulations about scenic stone walls and shade trees. That is pretty much it.

Then, back in the 70's and because of the fragile nature of islands in general and the Vineyard in particular, the MVC was established to govern development and other activities; and with that, it became a "super power." Because the MVC was invested with some extraordinary "powers" based in the provision of clean water, septic capacity, and the like, local Planning Boards also acquired certain "powers." Further we got a tremendous boost in working collaboratively island wide. We also get to work around the waters of the island and the shallow coast line. There is nothing like this elsewhere which lends quite the same protection to our fragile edges. **Fin fact, from the MVC we get to apply some teeth to projects which very much need to be regulated so that they conform to the island rather than manipulating land forms to make the island conform to a developer's dream.** During this process, everyone gets to participate – as long as they show up! In addition many projects and proposals are reviewed on a case by case basis – **as they should be** – since not every case responds to a similar policy or needs the same solution.

We appreciate that there are concerns about the amount of time and money required to process applications. However, as climate change, sea rise, and the loss of land diminish the amount of land for development (and the result in profound rises in value), if anything not only should the

requirements and criteria been sharpened up, I feel that projects need to receive more, rather than less review and professional attention. With all the stakeholders at the table, the process should move along. Yes, it may be expensive and time consuming but we need development to be by permit and not by right. Many projects actually may require more time and energy which will produce more anguished howls but we are observing land altering development which is beyond threatening – it is destroying our island. If you disbelieve me I would be glad to take you a little ride on a field trip of discovery to see what I mean!

I hope that this will help to elucidate why I think that the DRI check list should be strengthened rather than made more flexible or “light weight.” We have a lot at stake and little time to deal with the ever growing changes and threats!

Respectfully submitted

Virginia C. Jones

West Tisbury Planning Board