

**Dianne Smith, RN**  
**7 Bumblebee Hill**  
**Chilmark, MA 02535**  
**(508) 645-9447**  
March 27, 2014

M V Commission Members  
PO Box 1447  
Oak Bluffs, MA 02557

RE: "Edgartown Lofts" Apartments/Condos -- DRI 170 M3

Dear Commissioners:

We need you. Every one of us loves the Vineyard or we wouldn't live here. But from the time I moved to the island, 43 years ago, I have been concerned about the self-serving decisions made by our respective town fathers and mothers that have forever changed the island community. It is unfortunate, but we clearly need the oversight of a group of more objective people (YOU) to help us make more appropriate decisions. Zoning is helpful, but individual power-brokers can still prevail in our respective towns.

I was dismayed by the unmitigated gall expressed in the letter from the Edgartown Planning Board which accompanied the application of the Edgartown Lofts Apartments/Condos. It seemed both smug and high-handed for that Board to ask the MVC to rubber-stamp the application and send it back to the very Planning Board which had endorsed it, as is. This is the same Planning Board, you may recall, which in its wisdom in 2001 declined to close off the Mariner's Way access to the Four Flags parking lot, as originally recommended by the MV Commission.

Years ago, when I served on one of our town boards, I watched in disbelief while decision after decision was made with little regard to the town's own regulations -- regulations that I had conscientiously, but apparently foolishly, studied in preparation for service on that board. Invariably and understandably in a small town, most applicants had some sort of relationship with one or more members of the board. As a result, however, permits were issued which had absolutely no legal validity but which were *fait accomplis* simply because of who-knew-whom. No one recused him/herself for even obvious "conflicts of interest" in those days. And no one challenged the decisions because, of course, "we all have to live here."

Not much has changed in the past 40-plus years except that the cost of living and the cost of real estate have increased exponentially. That means the stakes are even higher, and that there is more than ever for the Vineyard itself to lose. Once in a while now, because a few regulations have begun to be enforced by the Commonwealth, someone will refrain from voting on a clearly compromising matter. But countless decisions in our island towns still get made (or not), based upon less-than-transparent political and/or familial relationships.

I no longer live in Edgartown, but I still care about it and about our business and residential neighbors there. I also care about the economy and future of the island as a whole. The "quality of life" we love (and so readily promote) is already compromised by traffic congestion; we don't need to make it worse. The Four Flags area in Edgartown has just as much of a negative impact upon island residents and visitors as does the Five Corners area in Vineyard Haven. There are **ten (10) points of entry** onto the Edgartown-Vineyard Haven Road and the Beach Road before those two major cross-island roads merge into Upper Main Street at "The Triangle." It is confusing and potentially dangerous for everyone, most particularly for our children, our elderly and our visitors.

The Edgartown Lofts application indicates that its parking lot shall be reconfigured to add more parking spaces to the existing 71 parking spaces. Regardless of the number, there simply can't and won't be enough. Whether it's summertime vehicle/bike/pedestrian congestion or wintertime piles of plowed snow, that lot is already over-utilized and often dangerous. The traffic and parking problems have been further exacerbated at Four Flags by a relatively new business (not "just" a grocery or a fish store) with internet access that seats customers both inside and out (11 seats inside, 23 chairs stacked outside, at last count) for extended periods of time.

It would be a disservice to any potential tenants/owners of the Edgartown Loft Apartments/Condos to lead them to believe there would be adequate parking for them. And it would be a disservice to the businesses already there, as well as to the public, to take away any parking spaces by crowding in even more vehicles that could be parked all day if people *did* (as proposed by the applicant) take public transportation to work. Twenty bedrooms equals potentially 40 adults, and connecting to the Town's sewer line could bring that number closer to 80 adults, since each bedroom could accommodate two bunk beds. Like it or not, each of those 80 people *could* have a vehicle.

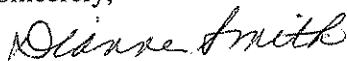
**"Edgartown Lofts" is NOT a proposal for affordable housing. It is a proposal for one man to make money.** We could neither limit nor enforce his projected accommodations for "working people," nor for his conversion of apartments to condos, nor for his tenants'/owners' vehicle ownership and requisite parking. We are *all* "working people" here, unless we're retirees (who probably wouldn't be interested in a walkup apartment), or vacationers, or children too young to drive -- but who do ride bicycles, God help them. And working people deserve better than a poorly planned housing complex that will negatively impact everyone but one person -- whose oft-touted "business is development." Not affordable housing. Not community building. Development.

Edgartown Lofts is considered a "DRI," a district of regional impact, for a reason; otherwise, it would not now be in the hands of the MVC. Development is appropriate in a low-impact location. Four Flags is hardly that. It is already highly congested, with both residential and commercial neighbors and visitors suffering half-hour backups into town, even during our "shoulder" seasons. The mission of the MVC is to study and protect the Vineyard from such proposed projects, as described in its enabling legislation forty years ago, and as Chairman Fred Hancock recently reminded us in his Op-Ed piece (*MV Times* 3/16/14): "...by protecting these values from development and uses which would impair them, and by promoting the enhancement of sound local economies."

As a former EMT and concerned island citizen, for the safety of everyone involved, I would urge you to deny this application and to require that the Four Flags parking lot egress onto Mariner's Way be closed, as was originally planned. The lot is being used as a speedy cut-through all year-round, not just in the summer time. No one polices the lot because no one can. It is private property, just as Mariner's Way and Dark Woods Road are private. There may have "only" been two *reported* accidents in the Four Flags parking lot thus far, but what about the entire Triangle area? I *know* there have been accidents on the immediately adjacent bike path! Do we need to invite more -- of any kind?

Thank you all for your ongoing efforts and service to the entire Vineyard community.

Sincerely,



Dianne Smith, RN  
Chilmark