

Paul Foley  
DRI Coordinator  
Martha's Vineyard Commission  
P.O. Box 1447  
Oak Bluffs, MA 02557

RE: GOOD Co. Application to delete affordable housing requirement

Dear Mr. Foley,

Although the recent proposal by the GOOD Co. to eliminate the affordable housing requirement of previous Martha's Vineyard Commission (MVC) decisions seems to have the support of the Edgartown Affordable Housing Committee (Vineyard Gazette article), We recommend that the MVC stand firm on their previous decision and deny GOOD Company's request to eliminate the affordable housing condition for reasons outlined below. We are full time Edgartown residents living in the Katama area.

First, the credibility of MVC decision-making process may actually be at issue here. Applicants will expect that the normal course of business is to agree to anything in order to obtain a favorable decision from the Commission banking on the knowledge that they can in all likelihood go back to the MVC at a later date to request a modification of a difficult or distasteful condition and be fairly certain of approval. Revisiting decisions in a piecemeal manner is not only impractical and inefficient but also does great harm to the overall credibility of the decision making process. Approvals of changes to conditions previously imposed should be considered only when highly unusual extenuating circumstances exist. This situation meets no such standards. The original decision in particular imposes a requirement which addresses one of the islands most critical needs, affordable housing.

The applicant is responsible for a new business in town and although providing housing for some of those employees they are not providing long term permanent housing of the type that would promote family life and encourage permanent residency. The affordable housing currently required in the adjacent development would help meet those needs. Eliminating that requirement would further burden the affordable housing effort on the island.

Although it is probably viewed as a routine business decision, the practice of buying off those who would disagree with a project through donations or other forms of payment effectively silences those who might otherwise object, is an unhealthy situation and should not be a part of the decision making process. In this case, it is especially difficult if not impossible to compare the building of affordable housing units within the project site to their construction elsewhere on the island. Any attempt to place a proper monetary value on such a move is going to be a significant challenge and needs to take place in a much more informed manner. What will the value of the replacement housing be to the developer? Have the developers calculated the economic impact of the absence of affordable housing units on the sale of the other units in the

project? With high end building lots selling for one million dollars and up, and not even considering the size of the units that would occupy those lots, the proposed offer of \$1.8 million seems off by at least a factor of three.

Another issue is the impact of GOOD Company's proposal on the affordable housing effort on Martha's Vineyard. Such a substantial sum of money in the hands of our local affordable housing committee would no doubt be put to good use but the Commission needs to consider the bigger picture. Is it more valuable to the community to have affordable housing located alongside a high-end development? Why should affordable housing not be located in such an area? This site is located along bus routes, fairly close to downtown and shopping and otherwise seems to meet the criteria for an affordable housing site.

The housing development and the adjacent Field Club have already been decried as elitist and contributing to class division on Martha's Vineyard. The affordable housing component is all that marks this project as a normal part of island life. Removing this requirement from the Commission's previous decision would be a serious blow to efforts to diversify our neighborhoods. Please vote against this request to modify your previous decision.

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