

2014-03-19

To the MVC,

MVC chairman, Mr. Fred Hancock, wrote a letter about the “MV Commission Bashing” on March 5, 2014, MV Times (and, again, on March 6, 2014, Vineyard Gazette) as noted below.

(FH)

*“I would like to respond to a recent spate of **Martha’s Vineyard Commission (MVC) bashing**, particularly as it relates to the current review of some developments of regional impact...”*

*“...thanks to the commission’s DRI review, **by ensuring they don’t negatively impact the water quality of coastal ponds, traffic, parking, affordable housing, scenic values and many other concerns that are largely beyond the scope of individual towns to address...**”*

“Clearly, the Stop & Shop hearings have stretched out much longer than the MVC or Stop & Shop would like, due to the fact that it took Stop & Shop six weeks or more to go back to head office each time it revised its plans in response to community concerns, to the time it took for the traffic studies and peer reviews, and to the fact that the applicant asked for several delays waiting for the town of Tisbury’s resolution of the design of the town’s adjacent parking lot...”

(MV Times) <https://www.mvtimes.com/2014/03/05/mvc-chairman-says-islanders-are-bashing-the-commission-and-are-misinformed/>

(Vineyard Gazette)

<http://mvgazette.com/news/2014/03/06/protecting-island-big-picture-mission?k=vg52dfea79b3bfc>

The “bashing” described above is from the public believing the MVC is not being as responsible for the welfare of the public and the town of Tisbury as they should be. Here are excerpts from the **MVC Mission Statement**.

“We avoided inappropriate development typical of the mainland...”

“For the most part, the quality of the environment, the quality of life, the unique amenities and the Vineyard’s sense of place have been preserved, and are the foundation of our thriving visitor-based economy and our sound property values.”

<http://mvccommission.actwin.com/thecommission/index.html>

There are frustrations on the part of the public.

1. Frustration: Is MVC's mission Compromised?

I see that Mr. Hancock looks at the responsibilities that have been reminded and entrusted to the Commission recently. Yet, his response appears to be explanatory, but defensive. This is without seeing the intention of the public’s urgent demands, of the highlighted areas above, on the MVC Mission Statement. Accordingly, the public has become discouraged, frustrated and angry.

It has been public knowledge that the Stop & Shop had altered its approach to the MVC, by changing its application by separating the Public Parking Lot from their proposal building. But the public already noticed the intention of their drawings is a big-box store design typical in a suburban area (Inappropriate for the island). Also the public see the Stop & Shop intentions to

monopolize the public parking lot to remedy its shortage of parking spaces to run the big-box store.

If they didn't propose such a Hyper-Store, it would alleviate these new negative impacts, that will be imposed on to the town of Tisbury. **It is natural that a smaller scaled (village) store will have fewer impacts.**

When this is addressed, the MVC hasn't shown any expression of concern nor does it indicate any clear resolutions. Lately the MVC appears to only narrow its responsibility to handle Stop & Shop's offers. **(disengaging, inert)**

Let's be clear : Originally, the Stop & Shop had presented proposals as "A + B"

A = Proposed Big-box Store, with its openings all to the parking lot

B = its manipulative use of the public Parking lot.

(problem)

Instead of creating their own private access openings or access lanes within their property to the public roads (Water St), the Stop and Shop has consistently kept their access openings all to the parking lot property line.

After the harsh criticism by the public, Stop & Shop declared to separate their application to "A/ (B)"

A only, the Big-box store to be reviewed by the MVC.

(B) to be handled separately by Tisbury Town Selectmen

(problem)

While the current A's building proposal's direct negative impact to Tisbury is still eminent, MVC accepted A's application, separated from B.

Strangely, MVC has discouraged the public comments on the consequences, between A & B, because MVC believes B. the public parking lot is no longer part of their concern. BUT, in reality it is a crucial part to be noted as part of the over all negative impacts in town.

Here are the overall "inseparable" problems between A & B

- **Monopolizing the parking lot** (by locating the loading dock accessed deep inside the public parking lot → creating the tree islands to widen the parking aisle to re-enforce the Stop & Shop truck route on the public parking lot → Stop & Shop, privatizing the parking spaces)
- **Pedestrian Safety** in the current lot will be more challenging. With Stop & Shop's **4 building accesses** all on Norton Lane travel way (part of the public parking lot), the pedestrian safety upon leaving or approaching the A building will be even more compromised in B. the public parking lot.
- **More confusing car (over)flow in the area and beyond:** As Stop & Shop insists keeping their building garage and loading bay openings to B. the public parking lot, not to Water Street, those building accessing vehicles will "pass through" the public parking lot. This will interfere with the other drivers, which will cause further delay as a domino effect on Main St, Water street, by then, a failed 5-corners and further out.
- Consequently, the lack of an awareness of the UNRESOLVED TRESPASSING of Stop & Shop vehicles to and from the building openings on to the public parking lot : There has been no public voting on agreements with the public resident of Tisbury, but only "executive sessions" with BOS. And the public do not know what's been discussed or agreed to.

- The public (open) parking lot will be filled first instead of the S&S garage. Naturally the drivers will look at the first spotted "open space" to park their vehicles.
- Overcrowding the parking lot and downtown area and there is **NO SOLUTION** at all. This will result in **ABUSIVE USE**, rather than a controlled use. The MVC has no real resolution. → If this big-box store gets approved by the MVC, the public will be deprived of parking spaces. → There will be the overall worsened traffic congestion in the town which will be blamed directly on Tisbury. → This may further expedite the deterioration of the downtown and Tisbury business' altogether.

Again, read the MVC's **Mission Statement, with A & B in mind.**

“...thanks to the commission’s DRI review, by ensuring they don’t negatively impact the water quality of coastal ponds, traffic, parking, affordable housing, scenic values (comment : building design & operation particularly) and many other concerns that are largely beyond the scope of individual towns to address...”

It is time for the MVC to address A & B together, now, not later, while Stop & Shop's application is on the table! It is time to discuss the implications that the S&S will have on the public parking lot and its relation to Main St. and to Tisbury.

2. Frustration : Why Delay? Have A & B ever been separated by MVC for the past several months?

When Tisbury Selectmen formed the municipal parking lot design improvement committee, Stop & Shop asked MVC to postpone the already scheduled meetings in December, and again, Feb 27th, 2014 meeting for another month.

Let's examine the MVC's separation of A from B.

In Mr. Hancock's essay in the news papers, MVC claimed that MVC accepted such delay request from Stop & Shop, but, Stop & Shop's delay excuse was already a separated B, Public parking lot matter.

The MVC appears to keep B. The public parking lot, separated from A. The Stop & Shop building Proposal. Why are Stop & Shop or MVC relying on how to use the Tisbury municipal parking lot(B) to solve the MVC decision? Does the MVC recognize this?

How could the B. public parking lot design discussions influence MVC's postponing/delay of making the independent decision and voting of the A. Stop and Shops building proposal?

Or, does MVC admittedly recognize A and B have been together for your decision-making? Furthermore, why did the MVC separate B to impose all those negative impacts from A. Building Proposal as if these are forced to become the town's burdens OUTSIDE the MVC's preservation mission, since last November?

When the public read about these MVC meeting delays, the public could not rule out the possibility of MVC's favoritism for Stop & Shop, and the **total disregard for the town of Tisbury.**

This appears very contradictory to MVC's Role in the public eyes. This is why the public is frustrated.

There is also a concern that MVC intend to approve Stop & Shop's building proposal, and , to accommodate their delaying tactic, by postponing the MVC's own judiciary public meetings in this manner.

3. Frustration : over-authoritative participation outside MVC

MVC's executive director openly has tried to influence decisions at other board meetings such as the Tisbury Municipal Parking Lot Design Committee meetings, the Tisbury BOS and other Town public meetings.

This was by placing what appears to be his biased agenda, sometimes with incorrect or misleading information, **by imposing MVC's DRI open space, vegetation, accessibility to the building on B. Tisbury town property, maybe to resolve A. Stop & Shop's access issue on Norton Lane side.**

He had met with a few other design professionals and Stop & Shop's architect. After that, Stop & Shop produced the A. building design's alteration in renderings we see as updates.

At the Tisbury Parking Lot Design Committee meetings, he has repeatedly indicated the Stop & Shop's access of the Public Parking Lot (Norton Lane) as a given. He said Norton Lane (comment : part of the parking lot from Cromwell Lane to Water St) is used as a travel way THROUGH the public parking lot to Water Street, and that it might as well be treated as a public road. This was while the MVC was waiting for that area to be defined by the Tisbury parking lot design committee. The MVC executive director himself repeatedly appeared to interject his influence on those Tisbury town members.

Another example, in the public meetings, he also suggested, removal, resizing, or relocation of the existing public comfort station repeatedly before the public members understood the scopes and issues and even after the public body's consensus was reached to keep the existing public comfort station.

However, on March 11, 2014, Tisbury Parking Lot design committee had already reached the consensus to keep the Public Comfort Station where it is - this came with other town department of both the DPW and the Police department, which objected to relocate the Comfort station from its current location.

And, after the selectmen accepted their framework in that the same night, Mr. London told LUPC members that the parking lot design committee did not reach the consensus or it could be open for a further discussion at a later time. Based on his comment, the LUPC's further discussion went to work around that changeable scenario.

Since the MVC director spoke from what is considered a position of authority, “a layperson,” some appointed town design committee members and the audience who are unfamiliar with the entire scope of the issues, tend to receive what he said as truth.

His comments were often recorded as if his input was part of the meeting body's official consensus, or the public comments in other meetings.

He appears to be partial either to MVC's current accommodation of the Stop & Shop, or, directly to Stop & Shop, by getting involved and influencing the public meetings in Tisbury this way.

This has muddied the waters, is very confusing, hence frustrating.

4. Frustration : MVC, why blaming others first?

I want to turn my focus here to the Stop & Shop's proposal where the Commission does not appear to be taking a strong or clear stance.

In this long expanse of time before the March 20, 2014 tomorrow's meeting, The MVC and Stop & Shop have placed blame of the delay on other committees such as the Tisbury Parking Lot Design Committee and the Tisbury BOS, when, in reality, it is MVC that needs to have the finger pointed back at itself.

The MVC was given a set of plans almost a year ago.

Requested traffic studies, in November, 2013, that were delivered that indicated the complete failures to those studied areas.

There have been open meetings at the Senior Center to hear what the public had to say over 8 months.

There have been LUPC meetings with the information-gathering discussion among yourselves. MVC have received letters from the public, the Steam Ship Authority, VTA, Conservation groups and others.

In unison, and, repeatedly, many from the concerned public and many of MVC commissioners have stated that;

- Stop & Shop proposal building will be too big for the site.
- It will be the single big unprecedented volume, with the blockage of a 39-40ft tall by 250+ft long volume as the first perception of the town.
- The visual impact is too great, removing any little visual open spaces we currently have and removing mature vegetation on-site, leaving the area all stark and barren.
- There is no specific environmental or economical contribution, other than "oversized" convenience for the Summer shoppers. But, even they won't get to the location due to overcrowding and inaccessibility.
- It will contribute to fail the traffic flow at 5-Corners at any season. (Mr. Dan Greenbaum)
- The development site is in a major FEMA coastal flood zone. The 1st floor indoor space will be compromised. There will be the hygiene issue or food contamination issues especially during the flood and hurricane seasons.
- All 4 accesses to the building (Entrance from Water St, Entrance-Ramp on Norton lane, Garage entrance/exit, and Loading bay for delivery trucks) are proposed, facing the private property - The Municipal Parking Lot, without Town Voting!
- By not creating the access to the public road, they are sacrificing the public Safety, and impose the Liability of the such incident to the town.
- Construction will take up at least 1/3 of the public parking lot, and this also has to be voted on in the public meeting.

As I listed above, the building proposal add more problems than solutions. How does MVC see this proposal work now and in the future?

Please, read your own words in the mission again.

"We avoided inappropriate development typical of the mainland..."

"For the most part, the quality of the environment, the quality of life, the unique amenities and the Vineyard's sense of place have been preserved, and are the foundation of our thriving visitor-based economy and our sound property values.

And, explain to the public why MVC has not voted accordingly. The public input and the fight have been enough to clearly address the issues the building proposal imposes.

5. What is being asked is

The current Stop & Shop's building proposal [opens up lots of **uncertainties** that we, the town residents, or MVC cannot predict or handle if it is approved.](#)

Other than discussing equivalent monetary offer, MVC should recognize [the TRUTH that, in this big-box store proposal, there is no real sense of preservation of the old, the present, and the new, commissioned to MVC by the public.](#) This is why the public gets nervous and frustrated with MVC.

Assessing this big-box store proposal in this frustrating and compromised manners, without having to learn what to protect and what to give, MVC is being irresponsible and self-contradictory.

Instead of worrying about the public criticism, look at the negative impacts laid out before you over these past months unbiased.

I ask MVC to look clearly at this S&S proposal for the immediate and the future impacts, beyond a "new, cleaner" store. If you really think for the public and the future generations, the impact of this size store and in this area will be extremely detrimental to the small fragile town (village) like Tisbury. Tell them, "It won't work!"

Stop & Shop should come back with the precise solutions for each addressed concern. Or, Simply they should come back with the different design and scale that will incorporate all the issues in positive ways.

Thank you,

D Hodsdon