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Martha's Vineyard Commission
Land Use Planning Committee

To the Members of the Land Use Planning Committee:

August 4, 2013

I understand from a member of the MVC that requests for new ideas regarding the Stop & Shop Supermarket plan can and should rightly come from citizens.

I am writing to you to suggest that there are better ways to plan for the use of the lots currently owned by Stop & Shop than the plan that S&S have put forward.

I believe the public interest would be served by seeing more options for the supermarket expansion. Like many other residents, I welcomed news of an upgraded and expanded S&S. However, also like many others, I was deeply concerned when I saw the actual plan that S&S unveiled:

- The building is way out of scale, for its site and its actual economic base.
- Its aspect is of a suburban shopping mall anchor store.
- The current plan is premised on disruption of existing traffic patterns.

S&S representatives claim to offer some solutions to a parking shortage, but the actual value of this contribution is not undisputed. I would like to see a plan that dispenses with the parking garage. This would seem to eliminate the need for a two-story building.

I would like to see a plan that confines the store's basic footprint to the current store plus the old Midnight Farm space. I feel that a competent and creative architect could find ways to tie the spaces together and create a pleasing façade (from the parking lot) that would not be monolithic; would not cast a huge shadow over the parking lot; would be compatible with the atmosphere and scale of Vineyard Haven; and also would actually be a visual asset.

I understand that corporations that own grocery chains have standard store layouts with standard (interior) traffic patterns. The design that I am asking for would of necessity be "custom" in the sense that it departs from the standard S&S repertoire for stores of different sizes. However, I feel that the site requires a custom design, for both the interior and the exterior. This is not a "tabula rasa" shopping mall situation. It is not at all uncommon for stores in irregular-shaped sites to have irregular-shaped selling floors that use the space available.

I would like to see a plan that causes the least disruption to current traffic patterns. I would like see a plan that is not dependent on closing Norton Lane---actually or in effect---and that maintains the current multiple vehicle access points to the town parking lot.

It has been suggested that it would make a lot of sense for S&S to “flip” their current concept and have their loading bay on the Water Street side of their property. Their architects could design a setback to make space for this and use their creativity to make this bay look acceptable.

I think it would also be very useful for commission members and the public to see actual computer simulations showing the specific truck maneuvers that the current plan requires and that, S&S representatives assure us, are easily executed. Our local experts disagree. I think we need to see just how S&S plans to back these enormous trailers into their proposed bays at the intersection of Norton and Cromwell Lanes.

I would also like to see cross-sections that show clearly the “flood plain” issues that keep coming up in meetings. No one can really visualize these issues, and S&S’s proposed solutions, without seeing clear cross-sections with all relevant limits and dimensions clearly indicated.

I feel that it is reasonable to expect S&S to show more than one design for their expansion. Any client of an architect or an advertising agency expects to see a number of options, not just one. I see no reason why S&S shouldn’t be requested to provide multiple options for the Commission members, Town officials, and the public to consider.

Yours truly,

Katherine Scott