

Tisbury Historical Commission
William Street Historic District Commission
Tisbury Town Hall
Spring Street
Tisbury, Ma. 02568

Martha's Vineyard Commission
PO Box 1447
Oak Bluffs, MA. 02557

November 7, 2013

CRI # 89-M3 Stop & Shop Expansion

Dear Martha's Vineyard Commissioners,

As you know from my previous oral testimony the Tisbury Historic commission voted to inform the MVC and the Tisbury Board of Selectman of our objection to the proposed size and massing of the Stop & Shop proposal. During our monthly meeting of Wednesday November 6th, 2013 we reviewed the revised architectural drawings submitted by Stop and Shop in response to our request they consider a reduction in size of up to 35%. We applaud their efforts but find they fall far short of harmoniously designing a building that fits into the vernacular of our quaint and historic seaman's village.

Vineyard Haven shares and offers one of a just few active, functioning and historic seaports in all of America and maybe the entire world. If one takes a few minutes to look beyond the traffic, beyond the few instances of misguided and sometimes spontaneous development in response to a suddenly growing late twentieth century tourist economy, one will find a jewel in the crown. Our harbor is truly graced by the wooden sailing vessels Shenandoah, Alabama, Charlotte and the many hand-crafted works of Gannon and Benjamin and other independent shipwrights. The Douglas family has developed their waterfront with a reflection perpetuating our seafaring history. In 1972 the Town recognized the pressures of development and created the William Street Historic District. Further preserving our heritage and the artful creation of a by-gone era. The Town Hall and the West Chop Beach Club are landmarks listed on the National Historic Register. The Martha's Vineyard Museum has initiated a remarkable project to preserve and expand the Marine Hospital as its new home. The reclaimed vista and proud vintage building now welcomes guest to our harbor and us home after an arduous visit to the world of strip malls and big box stores.

I give you this history; I try to imbue upon you the beauty, the unique character, the historic significance of our island home. I ask you to reflect on this treasure, that you take responsibility to pressure yet enhance the heritage that we have been entrusted with. This responsibility belongs to all of us; whether native or wash-a-shore, year-round or summer resident, commissioner, selectman or citizen. Future generations will judge us by what we leave behind, lets us not import what most of us live here to avoid.

Simply stop this big-box approach to development and economic hostage taking.

We the Tisbury Historic Commission voted to convey and ask the following:

1. Does anyone believe the authors of today's zoning envisioned a single entity accumulating contiguous lots to enable a structure of this size?

The Tisbury Historical Commission emphatically doubts this.

We firmly believe had this been a probability appropriate safeguards would have been enacted.

2. The contiguous properties as they now exist consist of 42% open space. We acknowledge much of this is not visible to the public. However, we ask why should that empower Stop & Shop or any of us the authority or entitlement to obliterate this precious resource?

Reflecting back to the above zoning question we believe the answer is no.

We, as a society, cannot continue to accept nor justify development of this mindset.

We the THC request the MVC condition any decision on this application to protect at least 10,000 sq. ft. of green space which is approximately 34% of the overall area.

3. From a regulatory perspective we, you, are asked to evaluate the size, scale and mass of the application. Is it appropriate for the site? Is it harmonious with the surrounding neighborhood?

While we acknowledge the limitations imposed on any development of this site given the FEMA regulations and we acknowledge the need for a new store. We cannot accept any rationale supporting a structure of this size.

It dwarfs every building in town with the exception of the school. It is simply, clearly and unquestionably disproportionate to the site. For the past four months Stop and Shop has dominated the first 1 ½ to 2 hours of each public meeting repeating and embellishing perimeter issues and we believe grateful size has not fully been considered.

We reiterate our position – the proposed structure is too big for the site.

We recommend the following:

Continue down the path of creative architecture as recognized in the most recent revisions.

Set the building back from Water Street 35 feet. Thus preserving some of the 42% open space. This will allow a pedestrian and gathering location. It will soften the look of what is still going to have to be a tall and large structure. The perspective of a 35' tall building set back 35' is substantially more palatable than a set-back of 7, 10, or even 20'. A 35' set back will allow trees to reach full maturity to get beyond the developers token gesture, 'what do you want we planted trees'.

We recommend increasing the setback on Norton and Cromwell for all of the above reasons.

We recommend changing the entry façade from strip mall Americana to something more in keeping with our town.

To accomplish all of the above:

We ask the MVC to facilitate a workshop of stake holders including but not limited to:

the Stop & Shop design team, representation from Stop & Shop authorized to discuss and accept architectural changes as well as reduction in the size of the building, the Tisbury Board of Selectman,

Tisbury Historical Commission, Tisbury Planning Board and resident architects who may be interested in contributing to the formulation of an award winning design.

The Tisbury Historical Commission acknowledges something large will be built. We have not offered the above recommendation without differing opinions from within our own ranks. No one on the THC will endorse a building of the size proposed and some would like to stop it altogether. Like any effort of good governance we found common ground. We ask Stop & Shop to become partners in good governance. To help us find common ground. Let us not have this become a yes or no vote. Let us find a solution that serves the corporate need for the new store to be profitable while balancing the needs of the citizens of Martha's Vineyard and at the same time perpetuating and enhancing the unique character of the historical Town of Tisbury.

We ask each of you to consider this vision; you approach Vineyard Haven on the ferry. It has been a long day off island; you have struggled with Boston traffic. Daily traffic that is representative of our worst summer afternoon. You fought for parking at some big-box store. You negotiated the labyrinth of another. You struggled with construction on the Bourne Bridge. But now your home, the ferry glides into the slip, the gate opens, you're at ease. Again, your home. How do you want to be greeted? Do you want a replication of your day? Or do you want the satisfaction of knowing that the trees in front of you, the peaceful elderly person resting on the bench, the architectural splendor that is the new Stop & Shop exists because you as a member of the MVC took action, you enabled good design, you preserved open space, you facilitated the creation of a place reflective of our community in cooperation with healthy commerce. Remember the corporate board of Stop & Shop does not share this existence. We do not believe they truly value or understand the way of life we have all chosen. We ask them to reach out and learn to work with us to value what make the many sacrifices of living here year round so worth the effort . Then and only then they may come to understand our passion, our commitment and our determination.

But if they will not, shame on us if we allow them to dictate our future.

Respectfully,

Harold W. Chapdelaine, chairman

Cc Tisbury Board of Selectmen