

# Harborview Hotel Spa

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To: Lucy Morrison <morrison@mvcommission.org>; Alex Elvin <elvin@mvcommission.org>;

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Martha's Vineyard Commission

Subject: Harbor View Hotel Spa

Dear Commissioners Morrison and Elvin,

I am a property owner at Kanomika Point in Edgartown. Along with my children and parents, we have enjoyed the quiet, beauty, history, and welcoming character of Edgartown for over 25 years, and our family is active in supporting organizations that help maintain a quality of life, which makes our Island such a special place.

I can think of no single area of Edgartown that better encapsulates the quiet, beauty, and history of Edgartown than the area surrounding the Harbor View Hotel. The immaculately maintained historic homes and beautiful gardens of the neighborhood and welcoming owners set the stage for arriving at a spectacular parcel of open, natural land with stunning views overlooking the pond, to the lighthouse, and beyond to the outer and inner harbors; an area open to all. On any given day there are children playing, people relaxing and reflecting while sitting on benches (including those with mobility challenges), strollers visiting the beaches, and artists with their easels and photographers with their cameras. A diversity of people sharing a common experience; there is no single feature which defines this special neighborhood and the overlook.

We are lucky today that neighbors and governmental agencies, who came before us, were wise stewards of this area. As you may remember, the open land referenced above was saved from development through the generous gift of a neighbor, who bought it from the developers then donated it to the Town Conservation Commission, to be held in trust for the enjoyment of the public.

While not as obvious as the major development of open land, of equal concern is what is taking place through discrete actions by the new ownership of the Harbor View Hotel. Through bits and pieces, the hotel is being transformed from a historic residential inn, suitable to its surroundings into a new commercial entertainment zone. The plan to tear down a captain's cottage

and replace it with a new stand-alone spa (3 times larger than what was in the original 2018 plan for a spa inside the main hotel building) is inappropriate in and of itself. When one steps back and views it in the context of the other changes over the past 18-24 months, it can be seen for what it is, a keystone to a new destination type resort for attracting special events, weddings, and commercial use by non-hotel guests.

A profound, irrevocable change will ensue, resulting in crowding, congestion, noise and light pollution, affecting the beauty and historic character of the area. Having lived in other parts of the country that are not as thoughtful in the stewardship of their surroundings as the town of Edgartown, I have seen first hand the degradation such actions can take on a neighborhood. Once leeway is given to this sort of commercial over-development, it emboldens others to push the boundaries. The long-term ramifications may affect not only the health of the environment and quality of life of its residents, but also this area's long-term economic outlook should it lose the delicate balance that makes it such a magical destination.

I respectfully urge the Martha's Vineyard Commission to act to protect the unique and fragile character of this area, which belongs to all residents and visitors.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully,

Holly Hawkes  
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