



c/o MARTHA'S VINEYARD COMMISSION
BOX 1447, OAK BLUFFS, MASSACHUSETTS, 02557
508-693-3453 FAX 508-693-7894
INFO@MVCOMMISSION.ORG WWW.MVCOMMISSION.ORG

8 **Housing Work Group – Seasonal Workforce Housing**
9 Meeting Notes of April 3, 2007, 4:30 pm, Martha’s Vineyard Commission

10
11 *Present - Members: Richard Toole (Chair), Harvey Beth, Christina Brown, Candy DaRosa, Barbara Day, Sean*
12 *Flynn, Nancy Gardella, Marc Hanover, Rob Kendall, Pat Manning, Sandy Ray, Jim Westervelt*
13 *Present – MVC Staff: Mark London, Christine Flynn*

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15 Meeting opened at 4:44 pm.

16
17 **1. Welcome and Introductions:**

18 Richard Toole welcomed the participants to the meeting. Mr. Toole introduced himself as a member of
19 the Steering Committee and the Housing Work Group’s Liaison to the Steering Committee. Members
20 then introduced themselves around the table.

21
22 Housing Work Group Core member Christina Brown gave some background information on the
23 Summer Housing Workforce Taskforce, which was a subcommittee of Edgartown’s Planning Board, was
24 formed in March 1999 to address summer housing for workers. The subcommittee was made up of
25 members from the business community in addition to staff from the Chamber of Commerce and the
26 MVC. It was mentioned that the group had worked for two years while having accomplished
27 fundraising efforts, selecting a potential dormitory development sight behind the Hot Tin Roof at the
28 Airport Business Park and creating architectural designs for the dormitories.

29
30 The Taskforce was given preliminary approval from the Airport Commissioners but when the Airport’s
31 Master Plan was completed the site was designated for the County’s House of Corrections. It was noted
32 that there is new interest to address the issue of seasonal workforce housing.

33
34 Participants then introduced themselves around the table.

35
36 **2. Presentation on the Vineyard’s Seasonal Economic and Demographic Profile:**

37 MVC’s Affordable Housing and Economic Development Planner Christine Flynn gave a presentation on
38 the island’s seasonal demographic and economic profile. The following are some highlights:

- 39 • In 2000, the year-round populations for the Cape and the islands were the fastest growing
40 communities in Massachusetts.
- 41 • Martha’s Vineyard’s year-round population growth within the last three decades has grown at
42 an average annual growth rate of 3%. Since 2000, it is estimated the island’s population
43 annual growth rate will be 1%.

- 1 • Seventy-five percent of the island's total year-round population is concentrated equally at 25% in
2 Edgartown, Oak Bluffs, and Tisbury. West Tisbury is closing in on its up-island counterparts at
3 19% of the island's year-round population.
- 4 • It is estimated that the on an average day in July and August the summer population swells to
5 75,000 which is five times greater than the year-round population.
- 6 • The Vineyard's Seasonal Housing Occupancy is second to Nantucket (60%) at 56% in the state.
7 Thus at merit to the statement that the Vineyard does lack housing but rather lacks available
8 stable, year-round housing for its residents.
- 9 • It is estimated that during the summer months there are 5,000 seasonal workers.
- 10 • The dominating year-round industry sectors for the island are retail, accommodation and food
11 services, construction, in addition to other service sector industries. It was noted that the
12 industries that experienced the highest fluctuation in employment figures during the summer were
13 retail, accommodation and food service, arts,entertainment,&recreation, and transportation and
14 warehousing.
- 15 • The makeup of the business community consist largely self-employed individuals in addition to
16 small businesses. Over 70% of all businesses on Martha's Vineyard employee between 1 – 4
17 workers. The US Census Economic Survey for Non-employer Statistics estimated that there are
18 3,300 self-employed workers in Dukes County.
- 19 • In 2003, the MVC in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce conducted a Business Survey.
20 The following are some highlights:
 - 21 ○ 20% of those surveyed provide some form of employee housing,
 - 22 ○ 50% of those surveyed indicated that their year-round employees have stable housing,
 - 23 ○ 63% of those surveyed indicated that they would not be interested in participating in
24 summer housing cooperative – It should be noted that 2/3 of those who responded were
25 in the retail and real estate industry sectors.

26 **3. Break-out Conversations:**

27 **A. Identify Needs for Seasonal Workforce Housing:**

28 In addressing the housing needs for the seasonal workforce, it was important to identify a few key
29 pieces of information. How has the high season for visitors changed? Second who is the seasonal
30 worker? And which industry sectors have the greatest need for seasonal workers?

31 It was pointed out that the length of the visitor season has changed. It used to be that the summer
32 season began on Memorial Day weekend and ended on Labor Day weekend. In the last five or ten
33 years the season has extended well into the fall and winter seasons. Stores that used to be opened
34 from May - September have slowly kept their doors open to Columbus Day in October. More recently
35 retail and restaurant businesses along Circuit Avenue, for example, are open through Thanksgiving and
36 even Christmas.

37 It was noted that the seasonal worker has also changed. Twenty years ago seasonal workers were
38 American college students. Over time there was a shift to Irish and English students or workers because
39 American colleges and universities changed the start of the school year to the second or third week of
40 August. Some businesses target foreign universities that provide credits to students who have worked in
41 tourism/hospitality related industry similar to a work-study exchange. It was also pointed out that there

1 are also those who are professional transient workers. Those individuals who are generally older -
2 twenties and thirties will work 6 months in Colorado and 6 months in the Vineyard. It was noted that
3 forcing living situations with individuals that work together could be very difficult.

4 It was suggested that retail and food and accommodations industry sectors had the greatest needs for
5 seasonal workers. It was pointed out that many of the restaurants and hotels offer some form of housing
6 to employees. It was agreed that a survey of the business community could help quantify the seasonal
7 workforce housing needs. It was suggested that the Chamber and MVC could collaborate on a follow
8 up Business Survey.

9
10 **B. Identify barriers to addressing the seasonal housing needs and how is the issue**
11 **currently being addressed? What are other solutions that could be implemented?**

12 Development barriers for year-round affordable housing such as land costs, availability of land, zoning,
13 permitting, funding, infrastructure water and wastewater, and NIMBY, are also applicable to
14 addressing seasonal workforce housing particularly for the development of dormitory housing.

- 15 • Just like year-round affordable housing there is inadequate supply of housing options for
16 seasonal workers. It was pointed out that seasonal workforce housing has a direct impact on
17 year-round residents who are forced to do the Island Shuffle.
- 18 • For those seasonal workers who do have some housing often times the houses are in violation of
19 health regulations for failed septic systems and overcrowding. It was asked how much slum
20 housing do we want to tolerate. If building inspectors and health agents shut down every
21 housing unit in violation of current codes that would displace both year-round and seasonal
22 workers.
- 23 • Businesses are struggling to find qualified and responsible workers even when businesses are
24 paying higher wages.
- 25 • Many businesses particularly in the restaurants and accommodation services provide some form
26 of housing for their workers - some employers either rent houses or have even purchased houses
27 to rent to their workers.
- 28 • It was noted that those employers are paying just under what a vacationer renting a home for a
29 month would pay. But to have the hire help during the summer is essential for the business to
30 survive. Some employers factor in housing costs for their worker as part of their business plan.
- 31 • It was pointed out that many employees in turn pay rent to their employers for the housing.
32 However it's still an added cost to the business owner.
- 33 • It was asked how employers avoid the tenant landlord relationship? It was suggested that
34 instead of a lease, the housing is included with the job. Therefore if an employee is out of line
35 that employee not only loses the job but also the housing.
- 36 • It was agreed that an education and outreach campaign similar to the Dukes County Regional
37 Housing Authority's Rental Conversion Program could be done in order to encourage private
38 residences to rent a spare bedroom. It was suggested that the Chamber or the Island Affordable
39 Housing Fund sponsor an out reach campaign but not get involved with matters of landlord and
40 tenant relations.

- 1 • It was suggested that older buildings such as a motel or municipal building be converted into
2 dormitory housing. Or model Japanese Hotels for space efficiency for seasonal workers. It was
3 noted that within the last five years the Vineyard has lost 100 rooms that were formerly B&B's,
4 Inns, or part of a hotel or motel.
- 5 • It was agreed that campgrounds and mobile homes in addition to boats could also be
6 affordable alternatives for seasonal workers. It was suggested that the Islander Ferry be
7 purchased and converted into dormitory housing.
- 8 • It was also suggested the business community could create a partnership whereby a dormitory
9 or condominium complex is developed. Businesses could then have the option to purchase a
10 unit for a seasonal worker. The condo's do not need to be limited to one size and could be
11 more appealing to transient workers.
- 12 • It was agreed that the Dukes County Community Development Corporation (CDC) be re-
13 activated.
- 14 • It was pointed out that Cape Cod has done serious outreach to its retirement community to get
15 retired individuals to return to the workforce. It was also suggested that year-round residents
16 who have employment but maybe looking for a second job and high school students should be
17 considered as segments of population to fill seasonal jobs in addition to work release programs
18 for convicted felons.

19 **C. What should be the roles and responsibilities of the private and public sectors to**
20 **address the seasonal workforce housing needs?**

- 21 • It was agreed that there ought to be an active partnership between the public and private
22 sectors to address the seasonal workforce housing needs. It was suggested that any partnership
23 be on an island-wide basis instead of town by town.
- 24 • The issue of how seasonal workforce housing should be subsidized was debated. It was
25 acknowledged that any governmental subsidy offers certain employers an unfair advantage. It
26 was suggested that if towns make zoning changes in order to make land available for
27 development that could be deemed as a subsidy.
- 28 • The Public And Private Partnership could advocate that dormitory housing is a community
29 benefit. In that this form of housing is vital to each town's economy. It was pointed out the
30 town's need seasonal workers for police, parks and recreation, in addition to other jobs.
- 31 • If land and infrastructure were made available with the support of towns then there could be
32 housing for seasonal workers in the private and public sectors. It was suggested that each town
33 could have two models to justify using town owned land for dormitory housing: one part of the
34 housing is for seasonal public workers and the second part is seasonal workers for the private
35 sector
- 36 • If land near the high school were used for seasonal workforce housing, the infrastructure for
37 water and wastewater would be possible to tie into these facilities. It was suggested that town
38 owned property should be inventoried and then prioritized for possible seasonal workforce
39 housing.
- 40 • It was suggested that seasonal workforce housing with the public and private split could be
41 described as "community housing" in order to utilize CPC funds.

1 Before the meeting broke it was agreed that the Housing Work Group would work on the following
2 items:

- 3 ○ Survey Business Community to quantify housing needs
- 4 ○ Consider retirees, high school students, and year-round residents (in need of a second
5 job) as alternatives to importing seasonal workers
- 6 ○ Conduct inventory of town owned property
- 7 ○ Consider forming Public and Private Partnerships
- 8 ○ Education and Outreach campaign to private residences

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10 Meeting adjourned at 6:06 pm.

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12 The next Housing Work Group on Elderly and Assisted Living Housing on Tuesday April 17, 2007 from
13 4:30 – 6:00 pm at the MVC.

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15 Notes prepared by Christine Flynn.

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