

Letter to Martha's Vineyard Commission regarding Harbor View Hotel hearing

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Thu 12/31/2020 1:40 PM

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

Cc: Marla.L.Wolk@gmail.com <Marla.L.Wolk@gmail.com>;

Dear Martha's Vineyard Commission:

As neighboring property owners and longtime Edgartown part-time residents, we are writing to express our concerns about the rapid, out-of-scale expansion of commercial activities at the Harbor View Hotel (HVH). Our island home is at 62 North Water Street, which we use not only during the full summer season, but at various times throughout the year. (In fact, we are writing this from our Edgartown home now, in late December.)

We have been coming to Martha's Vineyard for more than 20 years, and have owned our current home for seven. We are not "anti-Harbor View" at all; in fact we have enjoyed staying at HVH many times, including while our current home was being renovated. We enjoy dining at HVH's restaurants with family and friends and believe – within appropriate guidelines – that HVH has been and can be a real benefit to the town.

Instead, we are writing out of alarm at HVH's recent and planned commercial expansion. We bought our home, as did many of our neighbors, with the understanding that HVH's prior Special Permits and Master Plan would govern any further development. Instead, the current HVH owners appear to be set on a course of dramatic, out-of-character expansion of HVH.

Our concerns are as follows:

- The historic residential neighborhood within which HVH operates is a unique asset on Martha's Vineyard. The quiet, pedestrian- and bike-friendly streets; the many restored Captain's homes; the unobstructed views of the Harbor; the family vibe of the lighthouse and the surrounding beach and park area are all integral to the longstanding "feel" of the North Water Street area and Edgartown Village more broadly. HVH historically has lived within and contributed to this feel.
- However, the stealth expansion of noisy commercial activities by HVH squarely degrades from this. Adding (without permitting or public input) an effective hotel annex at 119 North Water Street, building a large/noisy outdoor bar, and creating loud party venues on the front porch and lawn risk permanent erosion of the character of the neighborhood.
- The proposed, enormous commercial spa at HVH is yet another attempt to commercialize this residential neighborhood in a manner inconsistent with the prior Master Plan and prior permits. There is no reason the hotel's spa space needs should have expanded 5x from the prior approved plans. This spa would be completely out of character with HVH's neighborhood.

We urge the Commission to reject HVH's spa application and to take any further steps it can to keep HVH's activities in check (and in line with its historic character). We appreciate the work of the Commission in protecting the unique nature of Martha's Vineyard and believe this situation calls strongly for its intervention.

Sincerely,

Marla and Jeffrey Wolk
62 North Water Street