

Martha's Vineyard Commission

P.O. Box 1449

Oak Bluffs, MA 02557

Dear Commission Members:

I have been a seasonal resident of Edgartown for over 40 years, first as a renter and then as a homeowner since 1984. My first two summers were spent in a rental on Ox Pond Meadow across Fuller Street from the Harbor View Hotel. I have fond memories of the Hotel at the end of the last century. These memories are at great odds with the current operations prevailing at this ever-expanding resort property.

Our home is at 23 Tuthill Lane on Eel Pond one half mile from the Hotel. We are frequent walkers and a favorite route is through SMF's Ox Pond Meadow to Gaines Way and on to Starbuck Neck. This part of the Historic District is one of the real jewels of Edgartown. That jewel is being tarnished and perhaps irreversibly harmed by the owner of the Harbor View Hotel.

One of the most obvious examples is the expansion (to 2600 sq ft) of a public restaurant and bar on the western side of the property. This open area operates until 1230am and produces a tremendous amount of noise in a part of town where sound easily travels. The other overuse/abuse of the neighborhood is the North Water Street side of the property. It is clear the Hotel considers the area from its front door to the conservation land across the Street to be a part of its footprint. Activities spill over from the porch to the lawn to the Street and to the land across the Street.

I have talked to many of the neighbors who directly abut the Hotel and have come to appreciate that while ownership changed three times between 1990 and 2018 in each case the relationship with the Hotel was more or less cordial and cooperative. That has changed over the past two years under the new owner. Neighborhood trust has been replaced by suspicion and distrust. I am not surprised.

To understand the current situation you need to understand the operating style of the owner. In my opinion its “push the edge of the envelope”, “change it and see if anyone notices”, “a couple of feet here a couple of yards there”, “no need to reapply, the rules are really just guidelines”, “if it becomes an issue blame the contractor” etc etc. In a phrase its “ask for forgiveness if caught but not for permission”.

Why is this my opinion? The Hotel owner was until very recently my neighbor on Eel Pond. My experience as an abutter as well as a Board member of the Island land trust that was also an abutter gave me a full appreciation. I would strongly encourage you to reach out to the Edgartown Conservation Commission to get a full understanding of the owner’s operating style and respect for and compliance with Town regulations.

To eliminate the creep and incrementalism that has and is occurring at the Harbor View there needs to be very specific rules and regulations with continuous monitoring and enforcement. A good place to start would be a vigorous understanding and enforcement of the 1990 and 1992 Special Permits.

I join with many others in asking that you reject the proposed Spa. I also ask that you acknowledge that the new outdoor bar and restaurant were not properly reviewed and approved. You are in a unique position to recognize the totality of the new owner’s acts and to conclude that there has been a gross misuse of the Special Permits.

Thank you for your consideration.

John Schaefer