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Martha's Vineyard Commission
April 1, 2024
Re: DRI 694, Caleb Prouty House Removal

Dear Commissioners,

It seems that the Stop & Shop company may once again be making plans for its store on Water Street in Vineyard Haven---or, at least, for its site. S&S is owned by the Ahold Delhaize Corporation, grown much larger since 2013.

The 2013 plan was a cookie-cutter supermarket with some inconsequential ornaments stuck on. It was wholly inappropriate in both style and size. Ahold-S&S still wants to get rid of the Caleb Prouty House next to its three retail premises--no doubt to make room for something just as inappropriate as their 2013 plan.

But no one seems to know what Ahold-S&S's plans for the site actually are.

They should not be allowed to move the historic Caleb Prouty House from its historical location until the town and the MVC see Ahold-S&S's plans for the site. And of course just seeing plans for the site would not lead to an automatic approval for moving the house. Why Ahold-S&S would even come before the MVC for this removal without revealing their long-term plans?

Possibly Ahold-S&S just basically wants to get the CP House out of their hair now to have free rein in the future. I can imagine the meeting where this tactic was decided: "Our corporate planners want us to just get the site cleared---we'll decide later what we want to do with it, and meanwhile we can park more cars there."
Just say no.

It is quite possible, if they are allowed to remove the building, that they will put down more hardtop for parking. This would be ugly, and increase even more the traffic stress on Cromwell Lane, an unimproved alleyway. Too many people are using that lane, including those accessing the new parking lot. As an abutter to this lane, I can no longer use it to get to Beach Road---the potholes are simply too deep. I have to drive through the town parking lot and Five Corners instead. The Town of Tisbury and the MVC should be discouraging increased use of this dirt lane via any potential expansion of the parking lot---which was, I understand, created illegally after the illegal teardown of the Golden Dragon. Furthermore, more hardtop would increase the flow and hence flooding on Water Street.

S&S-Ahold has never to my knowledge made any effort to tailor a renovated store to the character of this town and its waterfront nor to the limitations of the site and the characteristics of local use, including coming up with a way to integrate the Caleb Prouty House and keep it on its historic site. The house and the site go together to create historical value. The house and its picturesque tall brick chimneys should stay where they are.

The S&S supermarket and the S&S "Summer Store" together make up a large retail space---probably more than twice the size of the current store. An intelligent and sensitive architect could find a way to integrate the CP House into a new market complex---for instance, as a cafe, a specialty food area, or some other function. Ahold-S&S have never shown this town, its history, and the site at the gateway to the Vineyard the respect to hire an architect with enough imagination to design a market that would be a visual asset to the gateway location.

The Island already has a giant expanded S&S in Edgartown.

In Vineyard Haven, a considerably smaller, New England--style store is appropriate---the CP House could actually anchor such a redo of the S&S, or guide or even inspire design decisions.

Bottom line: Until Ahold-S&S brings actual plans for the site before commissioners, the Caleb Prouty House should stay put. Ahold should not be allowed to have it carted away to be used for an unspecified purpose. Show this house some respect.

Yours truly,
Katherine Scott
29 Main Street
Vineyard Haven

