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Martha's Vineyard Commission Land Use Planning Committee

Notes of the Meeting of November 14, 2011

Held in the Stone Building, New York Avenue, Oak Bluffs. 5:30 p.m.

MVC Commissioners Present: Doug Sederholm (Chair); Chris Murphy; Fred Hancock; and Ned Orleans.
MVC Staff Present: Paul Foley

Documents referred to during the meeting

- LUPC Agenda of November 14, 2011
- DRI 550-M3 Mansion House Room Conversion Staff Report 2011-11-14
- DRI 550-M3 Mansion House Existing and Proposed Front and Side Elevations
- DRI 550-M3 Mansion House Existing and Proposed First Floor Plans

1. Mansion House Room Conversion (DRI 485-M7) Modification of Approved DRI

Applicant: Susan and Sherman Goldstein

Project Location: 9 Main Street, Tisbury, MA Map 7F Lot 17

Proposal: Conversion of retail, conference and office/gym space into 8 additional guest rooms.

Purpose: To review the project and decide whether or not to make a recommendation to the full Commission as to whether this is a significant change to the approved DRI requiring a public hearing review as a Development of Regional Impact.

Introduction:

Sherm Goldstein presented the project:

- This is a conversion of around 4,000 square feet on the ground floor to create 8 new guest rooms.
- Earlier they had considered moving the health club to the front of the building and putting rooms in back but they decided against it. The health club will stay where it is.
- In 2006 their retail units were full but now, with Plum TV disbanding, they are all empty. They want to replace those empty retail spaces and the conference space with guest rooms. They will retain a smaller meeting space in the library.
- They have been to the Sewer Advisory Board and were told that the guest room use actually requires less flow than the retail and conference.

Paul Foley gave the staff report:

- The proposed internal changes to the Mansion House include converting approximately 3,660 sf of retail, 1,740 sf of Meeting/Conference space; and 1500 of Office/Gym room into 8 additional guest rooms. The hotel has cited the economy and decline of retail and office tenants as catalyst for this change. The 8 new guest rooms would have 2 double beds each (not currently offered at the hotel). The Mansion House is open year-round with 40 bedrooms as well as the Health Club & Spa and Zephyrus restaurant. The summer occupancy rate of the hotel is often 100%.
- There are 15 -20 year-round employees including part time and full time workers while the total number of employees increases to 30 – 35 workers during the peak season.

Discussion:

- Doug Sederholm asked if there would be any disturbance to the street. Sherm replied that all of the work will be on the interior with the exception of the two Juliet balconies and removal of stair case.
- **Ned Orleans made a Motion to recommend to the full Commission that this is an insignificant change to the approved DRI and does not require a public hearing review as a Development of Regional Impact and that we should approve the modification. The Motion was duly seconded by Fred Hancock.**
- Chris Murphy noted that there have been a number of modifications over the years that have been sent back to the Town without a public hearing. He said he thinks that at some point the best way to ensure due diligence when dealing with these incremental modifications is to hold a public hearing. He will urge the full Commission that letting the public speak at a public hearing makes for a better process.
- Susan Goldstein said that transparency is a wonderful piece of life on Martha's Vineyard. She said with the decrease in health club receipts and the decline of retail they are holding on by the skin of their teeth. They expected a 30% decline with the YMCA but it turned out to be a 60% decline. They stay open year-round as does the health club and the restaurant. They do not want to create a perception on the street that they are closing down. She also noted that a public hearing could take some time given that the holiday season is upon us. It could create a domino effect.
- Sherm Goldstein added that they were able to get a commitment from the Martha's Vineyard Savings Bank but part of that agreement requires these units to be up and running by next June. They can do that. They think it will be a four to five month project but any delays could jeopardize that.
- Doug Sederholm said that he understands Chris Murphy's concern with incremental growth but that he doesn't agree that in this case it is a problem. The changes are almost all internal.
- Staff was asked to check to make sure that the hotel is in full compliance with the 2002 DRI 550 Decision.
- Chris Murphy said he feels like we should probably have an automatic public hearing when a project is coming back for a second or third time without a public hearing. He said he doesn't see the proposal as bad he just thinks that there ought to be an opportunity for the public to weigh in.
- Ned Orleans said he hears Chris on the issue of incremental change but we do not have an automatic mechanism. Based on what the applicants have presented he holds to his opinion that this is a minor modification that does not require a public hearing. He also said that the public hearing process could take time due to the season and that could slow the project down.
- It was noted that at the local level there will be a public hearing at the Zoning Board of Appeals for a change to the Special Permit.
- Doug Sederholm asked anyone if they could see what the regional impact would be.
- Susan Goldstein said they have 23 parking spots on site and two more that they lease nearby. The estimate that 35-40% of their guests bring cars. Also, all of their advertisements are explicit about the parking and traffic constraints recommending that the guests think about not bringing their cars.
- Fred Hancock said he agrees with Ned though he wants to hear from staff about compliance. He said he had heard through the grapevine that some of the conditions were not complied with.
- **Doug Sederholm said that they should vote but note that the vote was taken before they had a compliance report. The LUPC voted in favor of the Motion to send the project back to the town by 3-0 with one abstention.**

Adjourned 6:35 p.m.