

June 16, 2021

Dear Members of the Oak Bluffs Historical Commission,

I am writing to introduce myself, share how much I value the history and inclusive culture that underlies Oak Bluffs, and offer my commitment to preserving that rich history and culture. Although I request your support of my Demolition Permit to replace the current building with a new structure in keeping with the historical architecture and neighborhood residences.

I grew up in Philadelphia and my late father, William Richardson, was a regular summer resident for many years before he married my mother. One of his best friends, Attorney Frank Morris of Boston (now deceased) kept up the summer tradition and as an Alpha Phi Alpha and Guardsman, "Uncle" Frank remained a part of the Vineyard's strong community of African American professionals. When I graduated from law school, Uncle Frank encouraged my father to treat me to a father-daughter trip to the Vineyard and we stayed at a cottage on Roberts Way in Oak Bluffs. That summer, Uncle Frank and my father introduced me to the richness of the African American history and community in Oak Bluffs and we visited the studio of an art hero of mine, Lois Mailou Jones. I would return again that summer and several summers thereafter, hosting countless friends and family members in summer rentals.

I was on the Vineyard in 2004 with my sister, when Mom called to tell us our father had passed away quietly in his sleep. And not long after that, Uncle Frank passed away too. Martha's Vineyard remains a special place filled with family memories. The history of African Americans, the culture we've brought, the diversity we offer has enhanced this community and I look forward to contributing to the continued atmosphere of friendship, respect and inclusion that makes Oak Bluffs so special.

So now to 165 Circuit Avenue and my proposed plans. This house is in a very visible location and it needs to reflect positively on the community and be maintained by an owner who cares deeply about honoring the past. I intend to be that owner. Having previously reached out to Ms. Pam Melrose with the Oak Bluffs Historical Commission in December 2020 prior to making an offer on the property, I started doing online research about the property, past owners, and the neighborhood. While there was not much information about 165 Circuit Avenue beyond unpaid tax records, I did see that at one time, former residents had been arrested for illegal possession and on-site use of crack cocaine posing potential health hazards beyond the home's current state of dilapidation and disrepair.

I am committed to rebuilding a home that respectfully preserves the Oak Bluffs aesthetic. I am working only with local resident experts – my realtor, septic engineer, general contractor/builder, architect, lawyer, appliance suppliers – will all help to guide my decisions understanding that in the end, I want my home to be erected with respect that honors all that Oak Bluffs represents.

As a result, I have told my builder that I would want him to look for opportunities to preserve touches from the property's +100 year history, whether that's an old door, a few fireplace bricks for a house number marker, or original doorknobs, we will be alert to ways to honor and share the history of past owners. Further, I can promise you that I will be a positive new neighbor and contributor to this very special community.

As we move through this process (and I have been forewarned this project will not be quick or easy), please do not hesitate to let me know if you have any questions or concerns about me, my plans, the construction, etc. I welcome your thoughtful consideration and the opportunity to one day take pride in being a neighbor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Veta T. Richardson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Veta T. Richardson