

ROBERT HUGHES

Vincent House
Herring Creek Farm
Edgartown MA 02539

January 18, 2021

Commissioners
Martha's Vineyard Commission
The Stone Building
33 New York Avenue
Oak Bluffs, MA 02557

VIA EMAIL ONLY

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RE: Harbor View Hotel, Edgartown

Dear Commissioners,

The year 1950, saw the staggering amount of \$50,000 invested in the rehabilitation and renovation of the Harbor View Hotel. A dear friend of my grandfather's had organized the buying group. For my brother, cousins and me – I was born in 1950 – the Harbor View was a place for special occasions. These were grownup, necktie affairs. Our manners were watched and learned, sometimes with thoughtful, courteous help, from a waiter or waitress.

Today, our home is in Katama and our hometown is Edgartown.

Personal History and Perspective

At the end of WW II, my grandfather bought Great Plains Farm – today known as Herring Creek - from Ronald and Dorothy Wild. Their son, Michael, helped to form and, served as the first Executive Director of, The Martha's Vineyard Commission. In 1989, purchasing a 300-year-old house my grandfather had sold in 1959, my wife Susan, and I were able to return to the place I had loved as a child; and, with grandchildren there now – a fifth generation – “gratefulness” understates how thankful we are for the Island community and the MVC, in particular for the conservation initiatives we accomplished together at the Farm.

The Town of Edgartown has been well served by its leadership these recent decades as our Village continues to evolve. Partnering with private initiative, the MV Preservation Trust (today, known as Vineyard Trust) for example, has brought forward the concept that Edgartown itself, can be a *walking museum* – that is: thoughtful place-making enriches our community – that

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enrichment is “free” to all to enjoy. Bailey Norton, whose years of devotion and hard work to create today's experience of North Water Street, deserves honor. Notice the easy, natural views of our beautiful harbor. The quiet glow of gas lamps. This is rich whaling-period history, and it's ours. Peacefulness. Let's be careful not to spoil it. It is fragile. We could lose it.

The Hotel has Always Engaged the Community, First

At its founding in 1890, and well before construction began, the *owners asked the community* for choices of “suitable names”. Those mentioned most were published in the Gazette. During the ensuing several weeks, nearly 4,000 votes came in to the Gazette. About 150 favored Harbor View over Hotel Edgartown.

Today we have an opportunity to demonstrate the tradition of engagement. We can remind owners that we are all stakeholders. Their interests are our interests; and, the other way round. We are a town that keeps its word, we do square deals, we mean what we say. We can help owners see that financial success comes from leadership that understands the product it can offer. Imposing something – the latest bright shiny object – may displace the real value folk desire. Noise? Why? Jet skis on the harbor. Really? Bright outdoor lights? Try discovering the stars.

Islanders and long-time seasonal residents know how to partner. Economic success is what we wish for folk that invest in our Island. I say as if speaking directly to owners: ‘We won't get in your way. We'll help you. Let's make a deal together and keep it.’

Sincerely,



Robert Hughes