



BOX 1447, OAK BLUFFS, MASSACHUSETTS, 02557, 508-693-3453,
FAX 508-693-7894 INFO@MVCOMMISSION.ORG WWW.MVCOMMISSION.ORG

October 22, 2005

Timothy Walsh
Chief Executive Officer
Martha's Vineyard Hospital
Oak Bluffs, MA

Dear Mr. Walsh,

As you requested, we have scheduled an item on the Martha's Vineyard Hospital for the Martha's Vineyard Commission meeting of November 17, 2005. In order to help you prepare for this meeting, I am outlining below my understanding of some of the general issues about the hospital project that seem to be of concern.

When you and Tim Sweet met the Martha's Vineyard Commission in October 2004, the Commissioners suggested that the next time the Martha's Vineyard Hospital met the MVC, it would be useful to have a more in-depth discussion of the decision to remain on the present site.

In August 2005, representatives of Thomas, Miller, Partners presented an update to the Commission regarding the proposed hospital renovation and expansion. As with your presentation last year, convincing arguments were put forward about why the hospital needs to be upgraded. However, the Commission as well as members of the public again expressed concerns regarding the decision to expand the hospital on the same site.

The Commission was told that the Hospital Board made the decision to remain on the current site at a single Board meeting based on an apparently relatively simple analysis of two options: keeping both the Hospital and Windemere on the same site, or moving both to a new location. Several Commissioners suggested that a more complete written analysis of the options was warranted for a decision of this magnitude, which will affect Vineyarders for generations to come.

There are clearly strong arguments in favor of remaining on the current site, including the possibility of avoiding replacement of certain facilities and the resulting cost savings. Also, as you pointed out last year, the community including the immediate neighborhood is already used to having the hospital there, whereas relocating might elicit opposition from future neighbors. However, there were other concerns that were raised and, in order to help you address them, I am including a brief summary of some of these issues. Also, I

am enclosing copies of the full minutes of both Commission meetings at which the Hospital was discussed.

- Flooding: There is concern about the impact of a major storm and especially a hurricane on the hospital and on access to it. This concern is exacerbated by the recent hurricanes on the Gulf Coast. It was noted that Beach Road near the Hospital is often underwater after a storm. Have you checked the projections for the extent of a possible storm surge in a category 3 or 4 hurricane and have you considered the effects of rising sea levels 50 years from now? Note that, at recent meeting with your architects, there was some confusion about the location of the 100-year flood plain. It was also noted that the current site is constrained by the presence of several wetlands. It would be useful to present information about how Hospital location is rated with respect to the risk of being affected by hurricanes, storms, flooding, etc. Have any discussions taken place with MEMA or Island emergency managers about this issue?
- Access: There was concern that access to Hospital in its present location could be compromised with increasing traffic congestion and in case of other types of disruption. It was noted that any closure of the Lagoon Pond Drawbridge – whether unscheduled or scheduled in relation to its reconstruction over the next decade – could become a major roadblock to access to the hospital, forcing ambulances from Tisbury to go through the “blinking light” intersection, which can get very congested, especially when there are problems at the bridge. It was also suggested that an alternative location could be more centrally located for all Islanders.
- Open Space and Parking: There was concern that the limited size of the present site would make it more difficult to deal with the space requirements of the building and parking, while maintaining an adequate amount of open space on the site. Since the Hospital is located on such an important waterfront road linking the three most densely populated and heavily visited towns of the Island, the Commission is very concerned about the visual impact of the project, and especially the proposal to create a large and highly visible parking area in front of the building. If, in order to maintain an adequate amount of open space and to protect the scenic values along Beach Road, it is determined that it is necessary to concentrate parking into a garage, this would lead to another expense on this site that might not be required in another location. There was also concern that preserving the wing of the existing building presently housing the Emergency Department, for which we understand that that the Hospital has no current need, would lead to housing other activities that would increase the traffic generation on the site; on the other hand, if this wing were to be demolished, additional parking in this area could reduce the need for parking in front of the building.
- Availability of an Alternative Site: When you met with the Commission last year, you suggested that there was no readily available alternative site. At the August 2005 meeting, there was some discussion to the effect that Oak Bluffs had offered land for a hospital facility. Since the August 25

meeting, several other alternative sites have been suggested to the MVC by various agents.

- Relation to Windemere: We understand that it is the position of the Hospital that Windemere must be a part of the hospital. The cost comparison that was prepared of the options of staying or moving was based on both facilities remaining together. Although there are clearly many arguments in favor of maintaining this relationship, several Commissioners wondered whether the option of splitting the facilities didn't merit further exploration. If only Windemere stayed on the site, would it not be possible to either sell the remaining part of the site, or to use that part for a complementary facility, such as a retirement home, which might benefit from the proximity of Windemere and offer some of the operational and economic advantages similar to those presently offered by the proximity of the Hospital.
- Cost: The Commissioners had many questions about the cost comparison of the two options. It would appear worthwhile exploring several options and updating the costs. The cost of moving will undoubtedly be greater than the cost of remaining in the current location, however the cost differential may not be as great as outlined in the initial comparison. The question is whether the advantages of an alternative location would warrant the additional expense.

Finally, wherever the hospital ends up, the Commission is anxious to ensure that the design fulfills your primary mission of delivering important health to Vineyard residents and visitors. The Commission also wants to make sure that the design responds to other planning concerns such as water management, traffic, energy efficiency, scenic values, and that it is a building that looks like it belongs on Martha's Vineyard. With respect to the last item, it was suggested that your consultants might want to invite a local architect who is very familiar with Martha's Vineyard design traditions to join the team.

We invite you to return to the Commission to discuss these issues – particularly the choice of site as well as the basic parameters of the building and site design - - as soon as possible, without waiting for a more complete proposal to be submitted for formal DRI review. The Commission, and I imagine the population at large, look forward to a more complete explanation, discussion and resolution of these and other issues, so the Hospital can move forward with strong community support.

Sincerely,

Mark London
Executive Director
Martha's Vineyard Commission