

## Paul Foley

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**From:** Kathy Laskowski [kathy.laskowski@gmail.com]  
**Sent:** Thursday, December 17, 2015 3:24 PM  
**To:** Paul Foley  
**Subject:** North Bluff Sea Wall Project DRI #659

Dear Mr. Foley,

I was in attendance at the first public hearing for the North Bluff Sea Wall Project proposal, which was very informative. However, I will not be able to attend the second public hearing. Therefore I would like to submit some further thoughts and questions to the MV Commission regarding this project.

One of my concerns is that the town is planning a three part project:

1. replacing the crumbling concrete wall with a larger steel one rather than repairing the concrete wall or replacing it with a similar material;
2. building a new boardwalk on top of the steel wall to provide better (and ADA compliant) access between the harbor and the fishing pier. This access does not continue, however, between the fishing pier and the SSA dock;
3. replenishing the beach at North Bluff in order to retain a usable beach which will basically disappear because of the construction of the steel wall with the large stone revetment in front of the wall toward the water. However, I am not sure if these 3 parts of the plan are necessarily interrelated. Is it possible, for example, to work only on the seawall now and do the rest later? Has there been thought and discussion about splitting up the project, especially in regard to the boardwalk?

Another concern is whether the entire project is being driven by the availability of funds, particularly those related to the boardwalk. Have other alternatives for funding been considered? Is it possible that the deadlines can be extended to allow for further examination of possible solutions?

Obviously, a principle problem communicated by many of the public involves the aesthetics of this project. The "industrial" appearance of the wall as seen from the beach and from the water is not in keeping with the nature of our town. If one is only thinking about the appearance of North Bluff from the street, sidewalk or new boardwalk, the appearance is not a problem. But those of us who use and appreciate the wonderful resource of our beaches in Oak Bluffs will not be able to ignore the negative visual impact of the wall. In October of 2007 the Oak Bluffs Sea View Revitalization Concept Master Plan of the Oak Bluffs Boardwalk to Beach Task Force (referenced in the documents of the MV Commission on this review) stated that, "the year round and seasonal taxpayers of Oak Bluffs (OB) expressed their desire in a series of well-attended public meetings to restore beaches and the overall in-town waterfront to a more attractive, functional condition." I believe we are still expressing that desire and that the "common good" is served not only by looking at the safety of the sea wall structure, but also examining its impact on the appearance of the town, in particular in relation to the tourism industry which is so important to our town's well being. The 2007 Master Plan of the OB BBTf also stated, "One of the first visual introductions to Oak Bluffs is presented to ferry boat passengers at the Harbor and the Steamship Authority (SSA) Pier." and notes the importance of the appearance and functionality of this space. This is still an important issue.

I understand the problems of balancing costs with a feasible design that addresses both safety and aesthetics, but I urge you to be certain that the information being presented is complete and fully investigated. It does not serve us well to rush through the process and be left with an unsightly wall for the next 50 years when there might be a better alternative.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project, which is vital to the life of our town, and our island.

Sincerely,

Kathy Laskowski

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