

From: Kerry Scott [mailto:kerryfscott@gmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, December 10, 2015 12:28 PM
To: Paul Foley
Subject: Oak Bluffs North Bluff Sea Wall DRI #659

Dear Mr. Foley and Martha's Vineyard Commission:

The proposal to armor the North Bluff in steel bulkhead has not received the kind of public input and scrutiny that a project of this magnitude requires.

The ConCom proposal has the potential to completely eliminate the beach in front of the sea wall. It is an industrial looking solution for at least a portion of the North Bluff, which has already been over-urbanized.

It is supposed to solve at least one problem that doesn't even exist--that of creating a linkage between two boat lines which don't need to be linked--and it creates other problems by failing to address the entire sea wall.

It is astonishing to think that the public hearing is this evening, when the file is still incomplete, we have no idea how this will look from the water or the harbor or the boat wharf or even the bluff above, although both 'industrial' and 'urban' come to mind as descriptors.

It's really unclear why the appointed Conservation Commission is in charge of this project rather than the elected Planning Board or even the Board of Selectmen.

Assertions about public hearings are misleading and claims of public presentations are untrue.

We all hope the MVC will give this a fair hearing, rather than rubber stamping the application which was only submitted after the project had already been bid and awarded--twice. Thanks to the Oak Bluffs Planning Board for making the referral.

Now, the Selectmen and ConCom are putting huge pressure on the Commissioners to review this in one night and approve it the same night even though an incomplete application was filed with the Commission only two weeks ago--and even now it remains an incomplete submission. This is so unfair to the Commission, never mind the public.

The Oak Bluffs Town Administrator testified that there have been five public hearings, suggesting that somehow justifies the failure to refer it to the Commission. Here's the truth.

The ConCom did hold four of what they are calling "public hearings" as follows: on February 8, 2010 at noon, attended by no members of the public, May 25, 2010 (no time given), attended by no members of the public, June 3, 2014 at 4:00, attended by no members of the public, and June 16, 2015 at 4:00, attended by two members of the public.

The Selectmen 'hearing' was held June 30, 2015. It was by no measure a public hearing. The Chair of the ConCom introduced the engineer for a brief overview of the drastically altered project and then said design drawings and bid documents would be available the end of July. That's it. There was no follow-up meeting, no public review, no presentation of design drawings--not until tonight.

This is wrong on so many levels it begs the question of what else is wrong. We already know about the defective bid process, law suit from unsuccessful bidder due to those bid defects, failure to present the current proposal to the public, pressure from the Selectmen on the Planning Board not to refer it to the MVC, pressure on the Commission to rubber stamp it without a complete review, pressure on the Finance Committee to ignore it--one can't help but wonder what else the proponents hope doesn't get looked at.

The minutes for all five meetings are posted on the MVC website. Here's the link:
<http://www.mvcommission.org/dri/summary/659/51539>.

It is worth nothing that these minutes do not reflect public hearings, record public testimony, or refer to a full presentation of the current plan. The meetings do not appear to have been conducted as public hearings at all.

At this point, the most important thing is for the MVC to know that overseeing a thorough review is more important than preserving the funding. There will be another opportunity for funding, but there won't be another chance to get this right.

Just so everyone is aware of the possible consequences of this proposal, I am furnishing a link to an article about three miles of Jersey Shore beaches which have been closed following post-Hurricane Sandy use of this same method of armoring their coastline. http://www.nj.com/opinion/index.ssf/2015/10/jerseyfication_rocks.html

We are well aware the MVC Commissioners are being lobbied (bullied?!) into believing the loss of funding and failure to go forward with this project immediately would be catastrophic. I disagree.

Catastrophic is the loss of a beach, urbanization/industrialization of the waterfront, spending state grants unwisely and causing a reluctance among funding agencies to support future grant applications.

Catastrophic is saddling the town with a maintenance nightmare. Catastrophic is ignoring the public process. Catastrophic is altering the approach to the Oak Bluffs boat wharf and harbor beyond all recognition.

MVC Commissioners may be assured that the waterfront of Oak Bluffs is critical to us, that we are relying on you to shape this into a worthy project without time pressure and political pressure, and that a temporary loss of funding matters far less than doing the right project the right way, following a process that serves the public interest.

Furthermore, if the Town Administrator, Board of Selectmen, and the ConCom had handled this process correctly, if they hadn't been so entirely derelict in their responsibility to the public and then tried to deceive their way out of it, there would be no need for either time or political pressure. They are the ones who messed up.

Thanks for your consideration,

Kerry Scott