

December 14, 2015

Martha's Vineyard Commission

Re: North Bluff Seawall Project

I am writing to comment on the above, which is currently before the commission. I am a member of the Oak Bluffs Conservation Commission, and attended the hearing last Thursday regarding this project.

My first comment is to stress the need to protect this coastal area of Oak Bluffs. The current seawall has been determined to have failed, thus endangering the bank behind it. Taken together with the impact climate change and rising sea levels will have in the future, action now to fortify our coastlines would appear to be the prudent course.

A question was raised at the hearing regarding the funding of this project, and the term 'free money' was used. We all know there is no such thing as 'free money'. The funds for the project are currently available through grants from state agencies. If we do not utilize these grants, those agencies will award the grants elsewhere. It would not save the taxpayers anything. When it becomes urgent to fix the problem, possibly dealing with additional damage or repairs, where will the town obtain the necessary funding? It will, no doubt, cost local taxpayers much more at that point.

There were concerns expressed about how the completed project will look. Does anyone think that it looks good at present with the damaged seawall? I understand that some people may like the new look and some may not. However, anything less than the proposed project would be a cosmetic solution to a failed system. It wouldn't provide the necessary protection.

My final comment is on beach renourishment. As stated at the hearing, all of the beaches in town will need to be renourished periodically. Permitting is required to accomplish this, and funding. Whether this critical north bluffs seawall project goes forward or not, those two things will be needed before any sand can be put on this, or any, beach. The town of Oak Bluffs is looking at a cycle of obtaining permits, obtaining funds, obtaining (dredging) sand, then renourishing beaches for the foreseeable future.

I understand and appreciate the concerns some residents may have, but in my opinion this project is necessary.

Thank you for your consideration

Ronald Zentner
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Oak Bluffs