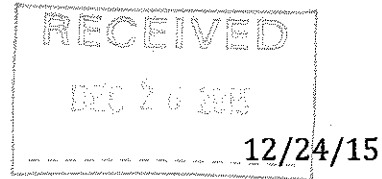


Att'n: Paul Foley
Martha's Vineyard Commission



Re: North Bluff Project

It was suggested that the Conservation Commission was not the appropriate body to assess and recommend what should be done to protect our eroding shoreline from the effects of climate change. If not the Conservation Commission, then who, the Highway Dep't., the Library?

The ConCom has been hard at work formulating solutions to this issue for years. When they create a plan it is then given to the Town Administrator and to the Selectmen for further review and recommendation. That seems appropriate to me. One might legitimately argue that there should have been more public review and deliberation of the revised plan, although it was first publicly announced a full year ago. Whether the responsibility lies with the ConCom/Selectmen/Town Administrator for not more broadly broadcasting the revisions, or with the Planning Board and others for not picking up on the matter, it is difficult to say. Should there have been an automatic DRI referral? That would have ensured greater scrutiny. But certainly, if aspects of the revised plan are so dreadful, they should have been critiqued well before this, because capturing the money to pay for the project is a real issue.

One may proclaim that other plans have been created before which would have fixed our eroding shoreline. But was there any money either in the town's coffers or readily available from other sources to pay for such fantasy fixes? There was not.

Another objection suggested that we seemingly aren't upset over potential threats to other parts of our shoreline. I would say that the threats to the entire shoreline are real and are recognized but that we can only address one portion at a time, as plans are created and permits are acquired and money becomes available.

I favor full transparency when it comes to deciding important town matters. Though this project didn't reach that degree of review until now, I think on balance, the objections fail to derail the most salient fact, that it will help Oak Bluffs begin to meet an uncertain environmental future.

While it might take some time for some folks to get accustomed to a seawall made of steel sheeting, I believe the ConCom and Carlos Pena did not arbitrarily devise this plan, but that it is the result of much research and consideration of alternatives. As with the much-maligned roundabout, in my opinion, the new seawall and boardwalk represent the town of Oak Bluffs being pro-active in meeting its needs for years to come.



Steve Auerbach