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To: Members of the Martha's Vineyard Commission

We are writing to voice our objection to the proposed expansion of the spa at the Harbor View Hotel.

We and our children are the owners of North Water Street Properties, LLC, which owns 101 and 99 North Water Street. We have owned and enjoyed this location for 22 years, spending most of every summer there. Our children have had the privilege of growing up on a street where many of the neighbors know and recognize them and look out for them. We have developed deep personal and social ties with many of our neighbors, and consider Edgartown every bit as much our home as our official residence in Greenwich, CT. One day soon we intend to spend most of our time in this special town.

We believe in the town and the island and have given to support several of its causes; primarily these have been the Island Housing Trust and the Hospital. When Bailey Norton asked us to support the North Water Street beautification project, we wrote a check on the spot. When he asked again, we wrote another check. We are members of a special community in a special place, and believe that it is our responsibility to pitch in when the opportunity arises to keep it special.

North Water Street is one of the most beautiful attractions on the island. We are proud and privileged to live on a street that is a tourist attraction in and of itself, and have always enjoyed the fact that it is a pedestrian-first, cars-second kind of street. We love that people from all over the world can be seen strolling down the middle of the street on any given day, safely and comfortably. We are and always have been happy to share. We know of no other street in the country where this kind of harmony exists between pedestrians and motor traffic.

The proposed spa expansion is but one example of how the current owners of the Hotel have played fast and loose with their agreements with the Town and their neighbors. We understand and approve of the Harbor View's primary business mission: to make a profit as a hotel, and to sell incremental services to its guests. But the Harbor View clearly intends to significantly expand its business mission to servicing large-scale events and walk-in traffic. Other examples of this expansion are the outdoor bar and restaurant, and the use of the residential house and dock at 119 North Water Street as commercial adjuncts to the hotel.

These facilities and activities were never envisioned by the Hotel's original permitting, and would have been vigorously opposed by abutters and neighbors had they been. They are likely to make a significant impact on the neighborhood, bringing more car, bus and taxi traffic, putting pressure on an already strained parking situation, and introducing air, noise and light pollution. If the Hotel were on Main Street, that would be one thing; perhaps not optimal, but understandable. Adding these types of strains to the end of North Water Street is likely to effectively extend Main Street traffic to the entirety of North Water Street. Already, taxis speed down our street to get to the hotel, Harbor View golf carts and horse buggies add to motor traffic, and large tour buses operate, dangerously, flaunting the Town's regulations. If the Harbor View is allowed this expansion, we fear that the street visitors stroll in and our children grew up biking, walking and playing in will lose its special, safe and happily sleepy character and become a busy, dangerous town thoroughfare. Once this happens, there is no recapturing what once was. We believe this would be a tremendous, permanent, loss for us, our neighbors, and the Island's current and future generations.

Please vote No on this application.

Best,

Alysa and Paul Stafford