

Hearing Regarding Harbor View Hotel Changes to 2008 Master Plan

Peter Barris <pjbarris@gmail.com>

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To: Lucy Morrison <morrison@mvcommission.org>; Alex Elvin <elvin@mvcommission.org>;

Cc: Peter Barris <pjbarris@gmail.com>; Adrienne Barris <ariabar99@gmail.com>;

Dear Lucy & Alex -

Adrienne and I are writing to you in your roles on the Martha's Vineyard Commission. It has come to our attention that there will be a hearing this month to consider a revision to the 2008 Master Plan for the Harbor View Hotel (HVH) and we wanted the Commission to have the benefit of our viewpoint on the intended modifications to the HVH.

Adrienne and I and our family have been coming to the Vineyard for well over a decade. We currently own a home at 35 Dunham Road on Tower Hill in Edgartown. We purchased this property in 2012 and have significantly renovated it in the succeeding years. I mention the renovations because these renovations involved great care and expense on our part to insure that our home, which faces the harbor, preserved the architectural heritage of the island. We care deeply about the Vineyard and all that makes it special. We are committed to preserving these special qualities and philanthropically supporting the community which calls the Vineyard home.

The island generally, and Edgartown specifically, have a residential character blessed with an abundance of history and natural beauty. Edgartown is renown for its quiet ambience. It is this very character that attracts homeowners like ourselves as well as the majority of visitors. It is this quality that has been preserved for centuries and must be preserved going forward. Too many communities across our country are short-sighted in their planning and over time (often incrementally) lose what makes them special. As residents of the island we rely on the MV Commission to protect us from unbridled development that puts at risk the very things that brought us here in the first place. We are not opponents of any and all forms of development, just development that is not consistent with the long term interests of the broader community.

This brings us to the issue at hand - the peaceful, tranquil and family oriented neighborhood in the vicinity of the HVH appears to be under assault. HVH is incrementally and methodically transforming itself from an elegant historic hotel in a quiet residential neighborhood to a full-service commercial destination resort. This transformation, by necessity, is an assault on the very character of the neighborhood surrounding the hotel.

And frankly, it goes beyond the immediate surrounding area. Besides altering the character of the town generally it has a more direct impact than one might imagine on homes such as ours. Although our residence is a mile away by road it sits directly across the harbor. Sounds are very efficiently carried across the water, particularly when the winds are blowing out of the north. We are often surprised by the clarity of the sounds being generated from as far away as the HVH.

Our understanding is that the Harbor View Hotel operates with special permits issued in 1990 and 1992 which impose strict constraints on outdoor activities. It would seem that those constraints have not been observed or enforced. The full service outdoor restaurant and bar by the pool and the use of the front deck and front lawn areas for food and beverage appear to be a blatant disregard of those permits.

I cannot opine on the legality of transforming 119 North Water into an extension of the hotel nor the use of its dock for commercial services such as tour boats or ski jets. But these actions, along with the proposed expansion to the spa, point clearly to the transformation of HVH from a residential hotel/inn to a full-service destination resort with a wholly different character — a character not in keeping with the surrounding neighborhood nor the town at large.

Adrienne and I plead with the MV Commission to seriously consider the repercussions of the non-supported changes to date as well as those proposed in this modification to the 2008 Master Plan. We firmly believe they are counter to the original intentions of the Master Plan as agreed to by the neighboring community and are deleterious to the preservation of the character of the town and island at large.

Regards,

Peter & Adrienne Barris
35 Dunham Road
Edgartown, MA