



Town of West Tisbury

PLANNING BOARD

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August 10, 2006

Linda Sibley, Chairman
Martha's Vineyard Commission
P. O. Box 1447
Oak Bluffs, MA 02557

Dear Ms. Sibley:

We write today to refer two building permit applications to the Martha's Vineyard Commission as Developments of Regional Impact (DRIs). Patricia M. White proposes to move her existing 3,300+ square foot house on the North Shore to an adjacent lot. She also proposes to build a 15,245 square foot house at the location of the existing house, visible from Vineyard Sound.

In addition to the properties' being subject to a previously approved DRI application, we firmly believe that this major undertaking merits DRI review by your Commission due to its myriad potential impacts to the fragile site and entire Island.

The existing house, and the proposed 15,000 square foot structure, are located within the Coastal District, a designated Area of Critical Planning Concern. Coastal District regulations set the height limit for the proposed structure at 24 feet. In West Tisbury, building height is defined as, *the vertical distance from mean natural grade at the corners of the building to the highest point of the roof...such measurement to be based on the elevation of the lot in its existing natural state prior to construction, grading, or filling.* In order to maximize the house's height, the applicant proposes to remove an existing knoll on the site, necessitating hundreds of truckloads of fill to be removed. It has been estimated that 3,500 cubic yards of earth will be trucked. We feel that the applicant is circumventing the intent of the height restriction by performing a major alteration to the site's natural topography.

The site is accessed via Obed Daggett Road, an extremely narrow ancient way. Several other single-family residences are accessed via this way, as well as Cedar Tree Neck, the nature preserve which is open to the public. Hundreds of truckloads of excavated material will travel over this private road which crosses a wetland area. Neighbors and Cedar Tree Neck visitors alike will be impacted by the truckloads of mined material stripped from the site, as well as the years of construction on a project of this scale.

Further, the proposed project will have an impact on the regional roads system. Indian Hill Road, a designated Major Road within the Roads District (a DCPC) and also a Scenic Road, is not adequate to handle a project of this size. As the applicant has not provided information as to where the mined material will be taken, we cannot list the other roads in the region that will be impacted.

We have a delicate source of electricity composed of a handful of cables running from the Cape to the Island upon the ocean floor. We continue to be concerned that the latest trend for oversized trophy houses such as this proposal will lead to even more regional brown-outs.

Attachment A to your Administrative Checklist for Developments of Regional Impact lists questions which may be used both by local boards in determining whether development proposals might warrant discretionary referral. We feel that the project proposed by Ms. White affirmatively answers several of these questions. Question c) asks whether the project will interfere with any existing public access to the shoreline. As Obed Daggett Road leads to Cedar Tree Neck, which contains a beautiful beach, the years-worth of construction traffic will interfere with the public's access. Question f) asks whether the project will create any disturbance or alteration of a wetland or vernal pool or their buffer zones. Without a plan to review of how the existing house will be moved from its existing site to new location, it is impossible to determine the extent of any disturbance or alteration. Question l) asks whether the project will generate any more traffic than the previous use. Question j) asks whether the project will create any traffic safety problems. We believe that emergency vehicles trying to respond to residences on Obed Daggett Road or Cedar Tree Neck will be seriously impeded by the heavy machinery blocking the road. The sheer volume of truck traffic, especially during the excavation phase, will lessen the safety on the regional road system. Question m) asks whether the project will discharge noise. If constructed, neighbors of this project will endure construction noise for years. Question p) asks whether there are any other factors peculiar to this project that might have a regional impact. We believe a single-family residence of this size unnecessarily burdens our source of electricity. Also, the property contains a Native American burial ground.

As the proposed house is larger than 3,000 square feet, the zoning bylaw requires that it receive Site Plan Review from the Planning Board. Because single-family residences are protected by Massachusetts law, however, the Planning Board can only make suggestions when reviewing a large house, it cannot condition the site or ask for modifications. For this reason, we are requesting your assistance in reviewing this significant proposal, and providing a venue to air concerns, answer questions, and craft solutions.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,

Murray Frank

Murray Frank

Chairman