



**TOWN OF OAK BLUFFS, MA
PLANNING BOARD**

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January 30, 2023

Joan Malkin, Chair
Martha's Vineyard Commission
P.O. Box 1447
Oak Bluffs, MA 02557

Dear Ms. Malkin,

It is important for the Martha's Vineyard Commission to understand the coordinated planning and outreach Oak Bluffs has conducted over the last four years. We have completed detailed due diligence planning for the Southern Tier Affordable Housing project on the 7.78 acres on Edgartown-Vineyard Haven Road and how to best incorporate the development into the Southern Woodlands Corridor. The planning efforts have included more than 17 public meetings with elected officials, appointed members, and the public throughout the process. The IHT/AI team has met or exceeded all town objectives and criteria in the Request for Proposal (RFP).

Oak Bluffs has envisioned affordable housing on the Southern Tier site since the Town approved the transfer of the property in 1997. The property is identified in the 2017 Housing Production Plan as a primary site for housing and reaffirmed in the 2019 Comprehensive Master Plan.

The detailed planning for the project started in 2018 with a grant from MassHousing to evaluate the property. The Feasibility Study, completed in March 2020, studied the potential and constraints of the property in consideration of town infrastructure. RKG Associates, the contractor responsible for the study, consulted with town officials, Martha's Vineyard Commission (MVC) staff, and state agencies, holding two public meetings to gather input from town officials and the public and present recommendations. The study resulted in the proposal of a two-phased, 60-unit project on the 7.78 acres and the need to maintain access to the property located directly behind the 7.78 acres.

The completion of the Feasibility Study prompted an additional grant from MassHousing to create the RFP for the property. J M Goldson assisted the town in writing the RFP, identifying requirements, evaluation criteria, and scoring weights. Ms. Goldson coordinated with the MVC staff and the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP) to understand legal and policy requirements. We held three public meetings, inviting the public and, specifically, the abutters to collect feedback and incorporate the feedback into the final RFP. Public input was instrumental in prioritizing the evaluation criteria, placing an emphasis on affordability, sustainment, and sensitivity to landscaping and design. At the 2021 Special Town Meeting, the Town overwhelmingly approved moving forward with the project and authorized entering a long-term lease with the selected developer.

The RFP closed for responses in October 2021, with two developers submitting proposals for evaluation. Oak Bluffs established a five-person evaluation team consisting of members from the Select Board, Planning Board, Finance Committee, Wastewater Commission, and the Affordable Housing Committee. The team used the criteria and weighted importance in the RFP to evaluate the proposals. The prospective developers had two opportunities to present their proposals to the Select Board, Evaluation Committee, and the public. Ultimately, the team of Island Housing Trust and Affirmative Investments (IHT/AI) was selected based on the evaluation criteria and weighting priorities in the RFP.

Since awarding the development to IHT/AI, Oak Bluffs Boards, Committees, and staff have been involved in the coordination and design of the development in numerous workgroup meetings and at least 12 public meetings, including one community meeting. The town endorsed the 40B application, receiving the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) Project Eligibility Letter in March 2022. We worked together to gain NHESP approval of the site plan, where NHESP restricted the disturbed area to less than five acres and required contiguous habitat to the adjacent back 24 acres.

To date, the town is providing the land through a 99-year lease, has invested \$450,000 in Community Preservation Act and Housing Trust funds, and has been awarded \$1,400,000 in state grants for the project.

We are excited and look forward to adding 60 units to our Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) and delivering safe, stable, affordable housing community for our residents.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Crossland, Vice Chair".

Mark Crossland, Vice Chair
Oak Bluffs Planning Board

Cc: Debra Potter, Town Administrator, Oak Bluffs
Adam Turner, Executive Director
Alex Elvin, DRI Coordinator
Rich Saltzberg, DRI Coordinator
Ryan Ruley, Chair, Oak Bluffs Select Board