

Wendy Weldon

Chilmark MA

508 364-3457

[wendyweldon@earthlink.net](mailto:wendyweldon@earthlink.net)

Leanne Cowley

Chilmark MA

339 225-0973

[galantecowley@comcast.net](mailto:galantecowley@comcast.net)

March 28 2016

To The Martha's Vineyard Commission,

After attending the hearing for the two Squibnocket projects we want to add some new concerns and re-emphasize some concerns that we mentioned in our first letter of March 15, which we wrote as co-chairs of the Squibnocket Pond District Advisory Committee, SPDAC. We are writing this letter as concerned Chilmark residents. Our concerns are not necessarily those of the SPDAC.

The hearing was excellent, very informative and helpful in understanding the complications of these two projects.

**First we are reminding the commission of the lack of flushing in the east end of the pond, something that was mentioned in our first letter.**

The east end of the pond is the area most impacted under current development and future build out scenarios. This part of the watershed is more densely developed, and the naturally eutrophic characteristic of the pond is most pronounced here because it's the most stagnant area, with possible nitrogen input from the homes close to the water. The pond is shallower here.

Squibnocket Pond has been determined by the MVC to be nitrogen-impacted (Gaines, Wilcox, and town reports), due in part to lack of flushing and in part from increasing inputs from development.. We urge the MVC to plan for more mitigation of impacts in the east end than current planning demonstrates. According to Article 12 of the Town By Laws, the DCPC overlay district was formed "in order to protect the waters, tributaries, groundwater and land abutting Squibnocket Pond. The District is created with special concern for preservation of the unspoiled nature of the Pond and adjacent coastal areas, and for the fragile ecology of the area..." Article 12 further specifies that when there is a conflict between regulations, "the more restrictive shall apply." We fear that these concepts have been lost in the process at times, while forging through the many considerations and complexities surrounding the beach renovation and Squibnocket Farms access.

**Second, We want to address the traffic on the causeway and how to possibly reduce both the vehicle and the pedestrian use of the causeway. Again this was mentioned in our first letter.**

We propose that the boat launch remains in the same location but with limited access. Kayakers and canoers are sufficiently served by the current walk-in near the current parking lot. Finding a new access just for these small paddling boats near the Vytlacil property may be a possibility. A boat launch for skiffs at the south end of the causeway would add to traffic congestion, pollution, and noise in the increasingly-congested east end..

What if the causeway had the Squibnocket Farms gate at the north end, thus restricting vehicle use on the causeway? This keeps the use of the causeway private as well as available for the shellfish constable and for any emergency traffic.

The shellfish constable would be permitted to use this proposed boat launch when needed to ensure that Squibnocket Pond stays open for shell fishing. The boat launch would also be available for use in an emergency situation. If in the future, the pond is used for shell fishing and commercial fishing, then the fishermen could also use the causeway and the boat launch. If this launch is open to the public for all boat launching, we have concerns that overuse could be environmentally damaging. General public use will increase traffic on the causeway and will add to the congestion at the south end of the causeway where cars and trucks will need to turn around after dropping off or picking up their boats.

*Zoning by law 12.4 A. Zone A, .1. the Board of Selectman may grant licenses for aquaculture and for commercial fishing and shell fishing, provided that no motor greater than 10 horsepower is used for propulsion. No recreational use of motors shall be permitted on the Pond.*

**Third, The visual impact of the raised roadway needs to be addressed. Again we wrote of this in our first letter.**

Not least of all the regional impact considerations are the visual impacts. The very fact of this structure reduces the natural and wild feel of this area of Squibnocket Pond. There are thousands of visitors to Squibnocket Beach yearly and we suggest that the presence of the causeway is going to negatively impact the human experience of the pond for all users. We urge The MVC to carefully consider whether the proposed 13 foot height is ultimately necessary. Would a 9 or 10-foot height equally achieve the goal of minimal disturbance from a wash over due to a storm impact? Would a lower height negatively affect the vulnerability and longevity of the causeway structure? The level of shading between 13 feet and 9-10 feet appears to be inconsequential.

Further, sight lines may present a safety issue. The height and bulk of a higher causeway does not allow a person approaching the single-lane structure to see if another car might be approaching from the other side. Obviously there are no turnouts on the bridge to accommodate two cars approaching at the same time at each end. And, finally, a structure of that height will increase the impact of headlights at night, shining far across the landscape and into people's homes, creating light pollution, which Chilmark seeks to minimize.

**Fourth: The Squibnocket overlay district has its own set of zoning by laws as you know. Perhaps this project does not need a special permit from the ZBA, but shouldn't this project be as unobtrusive as possible and fit into the natural landscape? A lower causeway with a less obtrusive railing system would certainly help to fit in with the intent of the bylaw.**

*12.6 A. The Site Review Committee shall review all applications for structures or for special permits within the District. The Committee shall be empowered to require that a Special Permit from the Board of Appeals be sought for any application, which, in the opinion of the Committee, is not consistent with the purposes and intent of this bylaw. Guidelines for consideration shall include but not be limited to:*

- 1. Development should be unobtrusive and subordinate to existing natural features and vegetation.*
- 2. New structures shall not be built on ridges or hilltops, and intrusion into the skyline as viewed from public places shall be minimized.*
- 3. Lawns and paved areas shall be kept to a minimum.*
- 4. Exterior lighting shall be shielded so as not to project beyond the lot lines.*
- 5. No new impervious surfaces allowed for driveways and parking areas except on slopes of 8% or more.*

Finally, thank you for your acknowledging our concerns. We appreciate your focus on the sensitivity and fragility of Squibnocket Pond, and it's watershed.

Wendy Weldon and Leanne Cowley

