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Gerard Hokanson
President

Mr. Ewell Hopkins, Chairperson
Oak Bluffs Planning Board
56 School Street
Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts 02557

January 29, 2018

Re: Lagoon Ridge Development

Dear Mr. Hopkins and Planning Board Members:

I am writing to you as the president of Tisbury Waterways, Inc. (TWI), a citizens' non-profit organization whose mission is to provide a community presence in matters involving the quality and improvement of waterways in and around the Town of Tisbury. TWI advocates for no-new-net-nitrogen policies to prevent further impairment of local waterways, including Lagoon Pond. Accordingly, we join with the Lagoon Pond Association (LPA) in strongly opposing the issuance of a Special Permit for the development of over 32 acres at the site of the Lagoon Ridge Development. As LPA has stated in their letter to the Board, "The development is in the watershed of the Lagoon Pond and its groundwater recharge area on forested land. The project is being developed in a manner that will produce large amounts of nitrogen from septic and run-off sources that will flow directly into the waters of the Lagoon."

Scientific studies have deemed Lagoon Pond to be severely impaired due to the nitrogen loading that already exists. The South (Upper) Basin section of the pond is poorly flushed and hence is already greatly diminished, and this zone directly abuts the area where the new nitrogen from the proposed Lagoon Ridge Development will flow. The 2015 Massachusetts Estuary Project (MEP) states that nitrogen loadings in the pond should be reduced by a total of 35% in order to achieve the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL). To reach this goal it is necessary to reduce present septic system loads by 50% and remove 100% of any new nitrogen introduced to the watershed. Obviously, the addition of any new nitrogen can only be more detrimental to the pond's environment and increase the expense of reaching the TMDL for both the Towns of Oak Bluffs and Tisbury. Any new nitrogen, such as the large increase from the Lagoon Ridge development, will necessitate that the reduction burden be mitigated elsewhere in the Lagoon Watershed and will surely come with associated costs and the possible intervention by the Massachusetts DEP if the Towns are not properly addressing the TMDL.

Since the Lagoon Ridge development was last considered, the towns of Tisbury and Oak Bluffs have been in discussions relating to the control of existing nitrogen loads in Lagoon Pond and the Martha's Vineyard Commission has initiated revamping its nitrogen loading standards. As The Lagoon Pond Association has noted, "These efforts should not be undermined by the addition of a project that will clear acres of land, build three new roads and uses a septic system that dumps nitrogen into the fragile Lagoon." While we understand that an innovative/alternative system is planned for the Lagoon Ridge development, experience elsewhere shows that these systems fail to significantly and reliably reduce nitrogen effluent. Technologies are currently being developed that will consistently reduce nitrogen levels to less than 5 mg/L – far better than the 19 mg/L proposed for Lagoon Ridge. TWI recommends that the Planning Board postpone development of Lagoon Ridge for at least 2 years to allow further development of new treatment systems. The addition of any new nitrogen to the Lagoon must not be permitted.

In the event that the applicant produces a plan that has a zero net balance of nitrogen for the development acreage, we at TWI will join the Lagoon Pond Association in reviewing our position on this proposal. However, at present the Planning Board must marry planning for growth with the preservation of the Town's physical resources. Echoing LPA's sentiment, by denying the Special Permit for this project, you will have taken the opportunity to protect the pond and the wellbeing of the residents.

Thank you for time and thoughtful consideration.



Gerard C. Hokanson
President, TWI

cc: Doug Reece, Lagoon Pond Association