

south mountain

COMPANY

To: Oak Bluffs Planning Board
From: John Abrams and Ryan Bushey, South Mountain Company
Date: 6/27/19
Re: Martha's Vineyard Community Services Project Update

This memo is an update on our recent progress, including steps we've taken to address specific concerns expressed by the Planning Board.

The first five points are in direct response to the points listed in the 3/15/19 and 3/20/19 Planning Board letters to the MVC:

- 1) **OBPB concern:** Lack of easement for ECC curb cuts onto Village Road
Update: MVRHS Committee voted to extend the existing easement on 6/24/19

- 2) **OBPB concern:** OB Fire and Highway departments' concern about Village Road safety and a need to prove compliance with the Massachusetts Fire Code.
Update: The MVC's 4/25/19 written decision approved the project with twenty road safety-related conditions that were vetted by the MVC's in-house transportation experts. These conditions must be satisfied before work begins. The MVC also imposed a five-year monitoring plan to ensure safety goals are achieved.

Despite the MVC's opinion that a traffic study wasn't necessary, Island Elderly Housing, the abutter to the north, hired McMahon Transportation Engineers and Planners to complete the 5/3/19 study that was posted on the Planning Board website. Despite some inaccuracies, the study recommendations align with the MVC's conditions and our conclusions.

Because IEH was unwilling to share their study for reasons that still aren't clear, despite promising multiple times to do so, MVCS was forced to pay for yet another traffic study by Vanasse Associates. Their 6/26/19 report, attached, also reinforces the conditions outlined in the MVC decision will result in a safe roadway.

Vanasse Associates produced two plans, also attached:

Figure 1: A road design that satisfies the MVC conditions and delineates additional clearing necessary to maintain safe sight lines. (The McMahon report concludes site distances are adequate as-is; so our proposal suggests even greater safety measures than that study.)

Figures 2 and 3: Fire access plans that demonstrate the proposed design complies with Chapter 18 of the Massachusetts Fire Code, related to Fire Department Access. These figures include an analysis of the turning radius of the OBFD's ladder truck—their largest piece of equipment.

- 3) **OBPB request:** A detailed Mass Transit Plan including traffic patterns, drop-off and pick-up locations, and a description of infrastructure such as shelters and bike storage.
Update: See previously submitted 3/6/19 drawing titled "Landscape - Paving and Circulation".

- 4) **OBPB request:** A Low Impact Development (LID) plan
Update: An LID plan addresses stormwater, but that's just one of many site planning issues we considered to minimize environmental impact.

At the Planning Board's meeting last month with MVC Executive Director Adam Turner, Ewell asked why Mass Audubon's Green Infrastructure and LID requirements weren't explicit conditions, Adam replied, "Because the project design already includes them all." The project has five conditions on landscaping, three conditions on lighting, four conditions on wastewater, and two conditions on Energy/Sustainability including an offer by MVCS to attempt a net-zero campus—something no institution has attempted on Martha's Vineyard.

Despite this testimony, and the careful staff analysis that prompted it, the Planning Board required MVCS to pay for a third party environmental review by Horsley Witten. Their report states: "We agree with the MVC's assessment that the probable benefits outweigh the few issues discussed below and overall the proposed project offers a number of model practices that should be implemented for new and redevelopment projects in Oak Bluffs moving forward."

The six issues that Horsley Witten identified are addressed later in this memo.

- 5) OBPB request: For MVCS to present its offer of agreement for an updated road association outlining its position as it pertains to roles and responsibilities.
- Update: Three of the MVC's conditions require MVCS to establish a road association, report on status of collaborative efforts to improve Village Road, and plan for the long-term success and safety of the road in order to occupy the site. While a road association in the formal sense has been deemed impossible by legal counsel because the constituents aren't the road owners (the high school is), MVCS has shown they are fully willing to work with IEH and the Y as a de facto association to achieve these goals. Something that needs to be addressed outside of this forum is how to fairly apportion road-related costs among the organizations. This proposed project isn't the reason the road is unsafe now. The MVC was clear that all three organizations should be responsible for bringing the road into compliance.

The six aspects of the project Horsley-Witten's environmental report commented on:

1. The site layout results in alteration of much of the existing site and contributes to further habitat disconnection.
Response: The tenet of environmentally-sensitive site design that H/W describes has always been a central guiding principle of this project. Despite an extremely tight site and phasing requirements, structures (building and parking) were consolidated to reduce sprawl, maintain habitat, and minimize the automobile. We were able to preserve the forest in the southwest corner of the site as well as the existing southern buffer. We worked hard to minimize disturbance by siting parking and buildings in previously disturbed areas. MVCS is investing a significant amount into re-vegetating disturbed land with a native, fertilizer-free and irrigation-free landscape that does double duty for stormwater treatment.
2. Addressing parking deficiencies is a primary objective of the proposed site layout.
Response: We agree. Parking for the existing facility is woefully inadequate and is the primary driver for the illegal parking along Village Road. We had to create more. With that said, we agree parking is an eyesore so we invested in a very detailed, thoughtful parking analysis to identify the minimum number of spaces that makes sense for the project. We appreciated H/W's suggestion to consider permeable paving in the drive aisles, not just the parking areas and have already made that change.
3. The site offers ample opportunity to promote sustainability through enhanced pedestrian/bike paths and public transportation.
Response: Again we agree. As shown on the Paving and Circulation Plan and Vanasse's Figure 1, the design adds two crosswalks with accompanying signage to enhance connections to the Y, the high

school, the land bank trails, and the skate park while also make them safer. Bike racks are identified on the Paving and Circulation Plan.

Sidenote: H/W agrees with both traffic engineers in saying, “the fire department and abutters have suggested widening Village Road or straightening it...these techniques are widely acknowledged as design features that lead to increased vehicular speeds.”

4. Stormwater management relies on green infrastructure and functional landscaping.
Response: These green infrastructure elements were implemented at additional expense to MVCS to ensure minimizing impact of runoff on Lagoon Pond and an environmentally sensitive stormwater approach.
4a asks us to consider pretreatment/sediment forebays and alternates to central dry wells: **These ideas are being evaluated by the civil engineer and landscape architect.**
4b debates the benefits of rainwater harvesting: **We’ve studied and implemented it in numerous residential projects, unfortunately the additional cost and complexity in providing code-compliant system is too high in this application. It is far more important to protect our sole-source aquifer (as this project does) than to harvest rainwater that will eventually enter the sole source aquifer in any case.**
4c just states, “This project is a good example of integrating stormwater with landscaping”.
4d suggests modifications the raingarden at the SW edge of parking: **We think this is a good idea and will make that change.**
4e questions the formula used for nutrient calculations: **These figures will be double-checked by civil engineer and vetted with Sheri Caseau, the MVC’s Water Resources Planner.**

5. Wastewater management is achieved by relying on the existing municipal wastewater treatment plant and a new temporary on-site Title 5 system.
Projected flows are different in the 5/9/19 design plan and the 2/19/19 nitrogen analysis.
Response:
The flow numbers will be double-checked by civil engineer and vetted with Sheri Caseau, the MVC’s Water Resources Planner.
Consider “NitROE” system as lower energy use alternative to “BioBarrier” system that is currently proposed.
We are carefully following the NitROE pilot systems in Tisbury and will switch systems if it proves to be a better option.

6. The Net Zero design could be better defined.
Response:
As H/W assumes, the project goal is net zero operational energy, or site energy. While the efforts they describe to quantify and off-set off-site energy consumption or becoming a net energy producer would be ideal, we feel the existing goal is ambitious enough for this organization.
We’ve heard some questions about how to promise a net zero project. No design professional or engineer will sign a contract guaranteeing net zero performance because whether a project achieves net zero is up to the occupants and their choices.

Conclusion

Martha’s Vineyard Community Services is single-mindedly focused on providing the very best social services to as many Islanders as possible, and does. Despite the difficulty of providing these extraordinary services, the MVCS Board has decided, at this important moment in its history, to take the broad and long view, to think holistically about the future as we are all threatened by the climate crisis, and propose the most environmentally progressive projects the island has seen. MVCS hopes that the Oak Bluffs Planning Board and the MVC will use their position and their wisdom to celebrate this fact and to use this project as a model for future development. Many have aspired to this approach; this project actually makes a real and substantive commitment to achieving it.

We and a vast team of professionals have worked hard to address the Planning Board’s concerns and we all hope you feel confident in approving this site design.