



Martha's Vineyard Camp Meeting Association

A Religious Community Since 1835

June 2, 2022

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

RE: Tabernacle Project

Dear Mr. Hopkins and fellow members of the Planning Board:

On behalf of the Martha's Vineyard Camp Meeting Association (MVCMA), I would like to express our appreciation for the thorough consideration that the Planning Board has given to our application for site plan review.

As the Planning Board continues its review of the project, please allow me to highlight several points that might aid in your decision-making process.

As you know, Phase V of the Tabernacle restoration entails replacement of the roof as well as construction of an accessory structure to the rear of the Tabernacle; however, we are not adding capacity to the Tabernacle or expanding the use of the Tabernacle, but rather enhancing its infrastructure to help ensure that it will continue to serve for many decades to come the purposes it has served so ably for the past 143 years.

One aspect of the plan that has received much attention is the addition of permanent restrooms to replace the port-a-potties that have been in place for more than twenty years. We believe that this will provide a significantly improved user experience especially for the larger island community and the summer visitors on which we all depend. The port-a-potties were never intended to be permanent, and we do not consider them to be suitable facilities for a structure of the nature of the Tabernacle.

We believe that this aspect of the project also comports with the Oak Bluffs Comprehensive Master Plan adopted in 2019, which on page 69 identifies bathrooms in the MVCMA as a measure that would enhance the experience of visitors to the island. The MVCMA is willing to build and maintain the restrooms at our expense.

We recognize that it appears unlikely that the restrooms could connect to the existing town wastewater capacity, and uncertain when they could be connected to the forthcoming expanded capacity. We are willing to proceed with the project notwithstanding that risk.

The project has broad support within the Campground as well as the larger island community, as evidenced by the generosity of the island towns in allocating CPA funds for the roof replacement in an aggregate amount of nearly one million dollars.

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The accessory structure will also serve our mission of providing a welcoming faith community in other important ways, not least in the provision of a lift for handicapped stage access, which we lack at present.

Several other points that might be relevant to your decision include:

- The outer edge of the building is more than 375 feet from the lot line in every direction. No changes in traffic or roadways are necessary to accommodate the addition.
- The MVCMA land was recorded as a single plot at the Registry of Deeds in 1972 and no changes are being made to the recorded plan.
- We have minimized the impact to the landscape, with only one tree needing to be removed, as approved by the Conservation Commission.
- The addition does not create pedestrian or vehicle safety issues.
- To minimize disruption of the view from within the Tabernacle, the entire addition fits behind the stage and does not extend past where there are currently porta-potties and tall bushes.
- There will not be other outside storage so visual intrusion is not applicable.
- The exterior lighting on the building is pointed downward to minimize lighting intrusion.
- The materials and scale of the structure are consistent with the prior historic building and the overall Tabernacle as confirmed by the appropriate federal, state and local boards.
- Wastewater disposal would go through the sewerage system when and if allowed and not affect groundwater. GZA GeoEnvironmental, Inc. is the asbestos monitor for the project and has prepared appropriate bid specifications to safely remove the existing cement asbestos roof materials.

In summary, we believe this plan is sensitive to the Site Plan Review Criteria Checklist of the Planning Board.

The MVCMA is and has been a religious community since 1835 and is also a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The proposed addition to the Tabernacle will help us fulfil our mission by making the property a more welcoming place for all, and especially for those with handicap accessibility requirements.

It is also in my view emblematic of our efforts in recent years to be a better neighbor to the town and the larger island community.

Thank you again for your consideration of our application.

Sincerely yours,



Andrew Patch
MVCMA President

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