

ISLAND PLAN

CHARTING THE FUTURE OF THE VINEYARD

c/o MARTHA'S VINEYARD COMMISSION
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Natural Environment Work Group on Character Subtopic

Meeting Notes of March 5, 2007, 12 noon, MVC

Present – Work Group Members: Tom Wallace (Core) (lead on Character), Judy Crawford (Core), Ron Zentner, Marilyn Miller, Tad Crawford, Jim Newman, Carlos Montoya

Present – MVC Staff: Jo-Ann Taylor and Mark London

1. Introduction

Judy Crawford introduced the session. Tom Wallace gave a brief status report.

2. Comment On Draft OVERALL PURPOSE

draft OVERALL PURPOSE - what we hope to achieve for Character on the Vineyard

Vision - The character of the Vineyard's natural environment becomes an overwhelming element in the "Vineyard identity". Even the casual visitor is impressed by the authenticity of the Island's landscapes, both working and wild, and senses the residents' commitment to wise stewardship. She leaves inspired to return, in part, to make her own home a better place to live.

Comment - Built environments also are important to character of the Vineyard – we must note which is which and where they intersect. Stone walls, e.g. are part of both – history and diversity are important to both the natural and built environments.

3. Proposals for SHORT TERM STRATEGIES (with priorities identified)

- Roadside vegetation (and fences) **(priority)**
 - Convince owners to top trees to maintain overlooks like Tashmoo overlook, Chilmark Stonewall overlook, water side of Moshup Trail
 - Open views of fields from roads; recreate pasture and field patterns – as long as there is not development on the other side – more selective opening
 - More selective screening – no cut zone Island Road District, e.g.
 - Appeal to owners, develop standards (as short term)

- Prioritize roadside areas that we want to protect – identify them is a short-term strategy – use mapping to discover where the most development is possible in areas where we want to protect the roadside vistas.
- Land Bank should be involved – buy properties rather than screening them – minimal is screening – in between, make sure that the development is done so as to minimize the visual impact – possibly site plan review like aquinnah – also balance buying land and taking it off tax rolls with development.
- Farm vistas – now working landscapes subtopic – large expanses of rolling farmland visible (farm out of sight contributes to working landscapes, but keep them visually accessible)
- Light pollution **(priority)**
 - appeal to owners, give examples (OB school better than WT school, e.g.)
 - Develop good examples
 - Identify qualities as well as showing specific examples
 - Covenants can require review of exterior lighting, e.g.
 - Public buildings are some of the worst – if get public buildings to sign on, then there would be good outreach – start with getting them on board, then follow with the public
 - Try to get buy-in ahead of time, lay groundwork rather than set up adversarial relationship.
 - Show good examples publicly 20 best, then privately approach the 20 worst.
 - Need to engage in a discussion of what are the lighting needs and why? Safety and liability issues are important for public buildings, e.g.
- Study balance between privacy and public access. The Vineyard has some fabulous pockets that are unique and maybe more attractive because they are not visible from a public road, little jewels.
- Understanding of economics of preservation vs development (tax receipts, e.g.) **(priority)**
- Public building and utilities - If town fire stations, etc. are landscaped appropriately, that would be a good example – when bid it out, require design to be done locally – fix up and naturalize public properties **(priority)**
- Keep views and viability of fishing, etc. and all things maritime.
- Mvc LUPC could revise native plant list and get resource people in to help LUPC with review.

4. Proposals for BOLD INITIATIVES (with priorities identified)

- Buy development rights on large lots that already have a house.
- Or **undevelopment** - buy those properties that have been developed that are in key spots – Land Bank could buy the property with life rights or something like that – life estates, e.g. **(priority)**
- Island wide DCPC re setbacks and green space **(priority)**
- Return Edg-VH to rural road – stockade fences? green border? (this item may belong more properly in the built environment topic)
- Understanding of economics of preservation vs development
- Establish known tax benefits associated with giving public access. Cape, e.g. has specific rules about how much of a tax break is awarded for public access, assessment is reduced by 90%.
- South Shore DCPC – define setbacks from the ocean - housing is being built that impacts views – keep building and rebuilding from happening on beaches
- Require sharing driveways for large properties – tax driveways by the foot – manage curbcuts
- Cluster zoning as the rule rather than the exception
- Create little villages

5. PARKING LOT (items reserved for more in-depth discussion at another time)

- Who is covering the “built environment”?
- Manage uncontrolled roadside development that would mar particularly valuable vistas.

6. Next Meetings

- Core – Wednesday, March 7, 11:00 A.M., upstairs at MVC – review work group progress

Notes prepared by Jo-Ann Taylor