

To: The Chilmark Board of Selectmen

December 13, 2018

From: Janet Weidner, Chair, Planning Board Subcommittee

This document summarizes the efforts of the Chilmark Planning Board Subcommittee with regard to planning in Menemsha. Members of the Subcommittee during this time consisted of Peter Cook, Joan Malkin and Janet Weidner.

In the spring of 2016, the Planning Board, at the request of the Chilmark Board of Selectmen, initiated a planning process for Menemsha. This was considered to be a first step in the development of a comprehensive Master Plan for the Town of Chilmark.

The Planning Board Subcommittee began our effort by conducting meetings with every stakeholder group which plays a part in Menemsha. We met with twenty three such entities including: town boards and committees (9); Menemsha residents; Menemsha business owners; the Vineyard Transit Authority (VTA); public safety entities including Chilmark police and fire departments and Tri-Town Ambulance; various Town departments including the Harbormaster, the shellfish warden, the maintenance department and the highway department; the Fishermen's Preservation Trust; the Coast Guard; the MV Commission; and attendees at that summer's Selectmen's Meeting for summer residents. These meetings were conducted over approximately a six month period from June 2016 to December 2016.

In general, the Planning Board Subcommittee held regular meetings on Mondays, prior to the regularly scheduled Planning Board meetings. One exception was when we met with town boards and committees. Rather than make a group of people come to us, we arranged to be on the agenda at one of their meetings. All of our meetings were publicly posted, and minutes for our meetings may be found on the Town website. In addition, we reported our progress and findings to the full Planning Board on a regular basis.

Throughout the course of these meetings, we gathered many ideas from the attendees on a range of topics. In order to organize all of the information that we gathered at these meetings, we categorized suggestions into several bins – public

safety, commercial, working waterfront, comfort station, vision. By far, the greatest number of suggestions and concerns we received were in the context of public safety, so we decided to focus on that area first. Ideas ranged from very specific suggestions to broader concepts to “do nothing – we just need to survive for the summer months”. While a “do nothing” approach could work for some aspects of Menemsha, we felt that that approach was unacceptable where public safety is concerned.

We met with the Board of Selectmen on November 15, 2016 and presented our initial findings with regard to traffic and pedestrian safety issues. We suggested that the Town pursue a number of public safety initiatives that we felt could be acted upon quickly and which could be undertaken without limiting the Town’s options for action on the overall issues in the future. The Selectmen agreed with our suggestions and placed two related articles on the meeting warrant for the Chilmark Special Town Meeting, held on November 27, 2017. The first of these articles asked the town to approve \$25,000 to make improvements to the Menemsha Shuttle lot, Menemsha signage, line painting of parking along North Road across from the Homeport, and screening vegetation in connection with a sidewalk easement (Article # 14). The second of these articles (Article # 15) asked the Town to spend \$15,000 to permit and construct an expanded parking area at the Menemsha Shuttle Lot atop the Tabor House capped landfill, among other things. Both of these articles passed at Town Meeting unanimously.

Our next step was to document the information and ideas that we had gleaned from our stakeholder meetings. We provided a report to the Selectmen, titled “Menemsha Master Plan – Parking & Traffic Summary”, dated March 27, 2017. The document provided background on how Menemsha “operates” while summarizing our findings to date in the area of public safety –pedestrian issues, parking and traffic flow. We also provided a copy of the report to Adam Turner of the MVC. After discussion regarding how the MVC could assist and contribute to our Town planning efforts, Adam Turner hired William Brewster of Brewster Architects, an architect with master planning expertise. Mr. Brewster was engaged to analyze traffic flow and parking issues in Menemsha.

After reviewing our “Parking & Traffic Summary”, Bill visited Menemsha in the spring of 2017 to familiarize himself with Menemsha and get a feel for the issues first hand. This was followed by a visit in the busy summer season and a final

walk-through in the fall. On each of these visits, he met with the Planning Board Subcommittee. On his third visit in the fall of 2017, the Board of Selectmen accompanied him on his walk around. At this point, Bill had prepared an initial draft set of recommendations. During the walk-around, he received feedback on his concepts from the Planning Board Subcommittee as well as the Selectmen and other townspeople who walked with us. We then re-convened back at Town Hall where Bill walked through a powerpoint presentation describing his initial set of ideas and accepted feedback and suggestions. Based on that, Bill finalized his analysis, and provided it to the Town of Chilmark in a package published on December 12, 2017.

The Planning Board hosted an open forum at the Chilmark Library on Friday, February 9, 2018 to allow Bill Brewster an opportunity to present his analysis and recommendations to the Town and to provide an opportunity for townspeople to provide their feedback. This event was announced in the Chilmark town columns of the MV Times and the Vineyard Gazette the week before. Over fifty people turned out for Bill's presentation. He presented a powerpoint briefing summarizing his analysis and suggestions. Lively discussion followed. In particular, the walkway that we were proposing be delineated between the Menemsha Deli/Beetlebung Cafe and the intersection of North Road and Basin Road came under heavy fire from some of the audience. Most of the other suggestions presented by Bill were well received, with some suggestions and input from the audience. It should be noted that there were no adverse comments made against the proposed Menemsha bus turnaround. In fact, it was applauded by many at the meeting as a safety measure that made sense (getting the buses out of the parking lot) as well as a potential improvement to the traffic congestion in Menemsha.

Following that meeting, at the request of the Selectmen, the Planning Board Subcommittee prepared a memo which provided a brief summary of the concepts presented by Bill Brewster and our assessment of priority. Based on the feedback we had received from the public, we divided the recommendations into two sets. The first set consisted of twelve proposed improvements for Menemsha which we recommended that the town pursue. These suggestions include the bus turnaround, the DiMaura walkway, the Greenebaum walkway, a redesign of the Menemsha parking lot, improved signage, a possible stop sign at the intersection of North Road and Basin Road and several other items. There were an additional

six proposed improvements from Bill Brewster's report which we recommended not be pursued without significant additional study. This list included the walkway that had been proposed between the Deli/Cafe and the intersection of North Road and Basin Road.

We provided this memo to the Selectmen on March 2, 2018 and followed up by attending the Selectmen's meeting on March 6, 2018. Based on discussion at that meeting, we agreed that, from a safety standpoint, the DiMaura walkway, the Greenebaum walkway and the bus turnaround should be pursued first. There was, and still is, every intent to pursue the other proposed improvements on that memo. For example, the Selectmen continue to make progress on approvals for the proposed Stop sign at the intersection of North Road and Basin Road.

In the months since March, the Town engaged Reid Silva to do engineering drawings of these three sites and proceed with the permitting process as required by State law. The Conservation Commission reviewed the bus turnaround project and approved it unanimously.

At the Special Town Meeting on November 19, 2018, the Town of Chilmark voted to approve the proposed Menemsha Bus Turnaround.