

December 3, 2018

Dear Friends,

As many of you know from both conversations around town and my remarks at our special town meeting, I am completely opposed to the construction of the proposed bus turnaround in Menemsha. I have written multiple letters to the Planning Board, attended meetings, and had conversations about the topic. Although the plan continues to move forward I cannot simply sit back and watch. Therefore, I have requested the topic be placed on the December 18, 2018 selectmen's agenda.

I'll be honest, when the Planning Board initiated its subcommittee to work on updating the Menemsha Master Plan, I was hesitant. Like many, I don't embrace change well. But, the plan started off feeling positive with numerous opportunities to share thoughts and concerns. Bill Brewster, of Brewster Architects, was brought on board and hired to consult and create recommendations. A number of topics were discussed including pedestrian safety and traffic flow.

I was pleasantly surprised but the sensible nature of a portion of the improvement packet submitted by Mr. Brewster. A simple reconfiguration of the parking lot layout referencing standardization of parking spaces (I don't know if you've noticed but they are all different sizes- both length and width!), add drop off zones in the corners of the lot, add bike racks, etc. On page 16-17 of the *Menemsha Concept-FINAL_2017-1026* scenario A letter b even mentions "turning radii should be designed to accommodate VTA bus."

As time went on, more meetings ensued and the vision for Menemsha became much more suburbanize and the open vistas and working waterfront felt as if they were being pushed to the wayside in exchange for buses and tour vans. This is where and when my overwhelming dismay began. The proposed bus turnaround, which is now staked out and flagged just to the north side of the restroom/comfort station, began to really take form. I spoke up in opposition to the idea yet felt as if my voice was not being heard. In this particular instance, I feel as if a "tunnel vision" approach was taken.

My most recent letter to the Planning Board, dated November 14, summarized a number of suggestions I have made over the past months. My letter began with the following paragraph, which still rings true today:

As I look out my window at work, my eye is constantly caught by the fluttering orange surveyors tape fastened to the tops of the stakes laid out marking the proposed bus turnaround. I continue to feel dismayed by the forward progression of this plan and have found myself with sleepless nights trying to figure out why the forward momentum of this concept is a good idea.

I have propose the following via writing to the selectmen:

Repaint the existing parking lot to maximize use of the current area provided. Continue to utilize the current bus stop location. This can easily be done without disruption of any of the open area vistas we currently enjoy and will eliminate the need to create the proposed bus turnaround. It is a far less costly alternative that does not have such a drastic visual impact and actually lends itself to remedying the issues of overall traffic flow.

My reasons are as follows:

1. The change in the aesthetical beauty of this open space covered in grasses and roses (and, yes, Poison Ivy!) this construction will create is phenomenal.
2. This proposal does not solve the congestion that will continue to occur in the main portion of the Menemsha parking lot. Folks “buzzing the bight,” delivery trucks (of which there are numerous large box-style trucks in the congested months), errand runners, beach goers, commuters, and so on will continue to be impacted by the “pinch” point where the “road” portion of the lot opens up into the main section of the parking area.
3. Having the bus continue on its regular pattern of pulling over at the comfort station then continuing around the parking lot is actually an asset to the traffic officers who utilize the presence of the bus to keep cars flowing.
4. One huge issue with this proposal is that the buses cross the beach-restroom walkway! If this is implemented, folks will now have to navigate through vehicular traffic on a walkway that was created in order to alleviate just this issue! We are putting our children back into harm’s way once again.

Additional suggestions are:

1. Request smaller buses. The VTA should meet OUR needs not vice versa. (*On a similar note, have you heard the VTA has requested that the town of Edgartown cut down the big beautiful trees on Church Street to accommodate the buses? Wow.)
2. If Option 1 is not feasible, then stop the #4 bus from coming down the hill into Menemsha. Have it connect with the #12 at both the LDO and the CCC.
3. If necessary, after reconfiguring the parking lot layout, designate certain spaces for use by compact cars only.

Additionally, although I did not think to address this in my recent letters to the Planning Board and selectmen, according to the application which went in front of the Conservation Commission on October 3, 2018, the proposed bus turn around will be constructed within a Bordering Vegetated Wetland (BVW) and approximately 6,800 square feet of Land Subject to Coastal Storm Flowage will be altered. In addition to being a major open vista it is land subject to protection. Why we would consider building in a protected BVW when there are reasonable, less impactful options is beyond me.

While in an attempt to compile my thoughts so I could reach out to all of you to share my thoughts and request your support I, not only submitted letters to the both the Selectmen and the Planning Board, but I took to the power of the internet for research, continued to have conversations with anyone who would listen and I submitted a letter to the editor at the MV Times.

While my fingers walked the internet I saved a few excerpts to share.

1. Historical Commission Minutes of 9/20/16 read:

Ms. Weidner explained the Planning Board is updating the Menemsha section of the Town's Master Plan and is meeting with all boards to seek input. The Commission reviewed the current Master Plan for Menemsha and thought that was on target and has helped keep Menemsha as an active fishing village. The Commission mentioned Menemsha has always been under the jurisdiction of the Park & Recreation Committee and Board of Selectmen and this system seems to work. The Commission added Menemsha is congested for only 8 weeks a year. They further thought small changes would be the best way to proceed such as more offsite parking and more stringent enforcement of the current parking regulations to help with the traffic congestion. The Planning Board members thanked the Commission for its input.

2. A lot of relevant information can be found in the Martha's Vineyard Commission's "Chilmark Community Development Plan" of 2004. Rather than quote it all, I will share the following:

The character of the Island is derived to a great extent by how it looks from public spaces, including major roads and the water. A preliminary identification of views from the main Island roads includes:

- wooded areas within 200' from roads as well as adjacent fields and ponds;
- larger vistas from public overlooks and particularly scenic roads and,
- the axis of view corridors at the ends of certain roads.

- A secondary buffer area, generally an additional 300' from roads, was also identified as was the coastal viewshed made up of land within 1000' from the coast and of other navigable waters. Also included are cultural landscapes that towns have previously designated as Special Places. This analysis in particular will likely be subject to future refinement by the towns and MVC.

3. On page 16 of the Chilmark Master Plan 2000 supplement, Menemsha has a page all to itself. Of particular interest, although I've included it all, is the simply summarized "Its rustic look, open spaces, fishing boats, beach, views, etc. all contribute to the uniqueness of the place."

In every Master Plan survey taken since 1979, voters and non-voting taxpayers have listed Menemsha as first among all places they consider of special importance to the community. Its rustic look, open spaces, fishing boats, beach,

views, etc. all contribute to the uniqueness of the place. But the character of the area is changing. The introduction of a winter water system has brought year-round residents. Houses are being enlarged and refined. Commercial activities are becoming more intrusive. Parking is becoming more congested. Open spaces are being taken up by new construction. The number of moorings off Menemsha beach is increasing. The beach is becoming increasingly crowded. Serious consideration should be given to investigating ways in which the unique quality of Menemsha can be protected without unreasonably restricting existing activities.

Goals:

1. To maintain the visual character of Menemsha as a small fishing village.

Objectives:

1. Assure priority of commercial fishing boats in Menemsha Harbor (over) pleasure craft; maintain presently designated dock areas for commercial fishing vessels; make no expansion of dock facilities for pleasure craft.
2. Keep all existing fishing shacks in Menemsha; require that before any shack on town property is removed the town be given the opportunity to purchase it with private or public funds to lease to fishermen.
3. Require any new building or alteration to building on town-leased land to be subject to design approval by the town for continuity of design and proportions of traditional fishing shacks.
4. Protect the amount of use and the quality of Menemsha Beach by providing no expansion of on site parking facilities.
5. Ban tour buses for the safety of pedestrians on North Road and Basin Road, and enforce the ban.
6. Minimize open air display of merchandise in Menemsha where safety of pedestrians is a factor.

4. Excerpts from the REGULATIONS: CHILMARK WETLANDS PROTECTION BYLAWS may be of interest as on the plan drawn by Vineyard Land Surveying portions of the proposed bus turn around and proposed plantings may be within 100' of the salt marsh. Unfortunately, the distance is not clearly spelled out.

2.06 Salt Marshes

Salt marshes are significant to protection of wildlife and wildlife habitat, marine fisheries, where there are shellfish to protection of land containing shellfish, recreation, historic and natural views and vistas, prevention of pollution, storm damage prevention, and ground water supply.

Land within 100 feet of a salt marsh is likely to be significant to the protection and maintenance of salt marshes, and therefore to the protection of the interests which these resource areas serve to protect.

(3) Prohibitions

No activity, which will result in the building within or upon, removing, filling, or altering of a salt marsh, or land within 100 feet of any salt marsh, shall be permitted by the Conservation Commission except for the maintenance of an already existing structure and activity which is allowed under a variance from these regulations granted pursuant to Section 5.01.

5. According to the www.mass.gov website, an advisory group is working on regulations for Land Subject to Coastal Storm Flowage. The following should be something that is taken into consideration:

The Wetlands and Waterways Program convened an Advisory Group which met in 2014 and 2015 to develop regulations for Land Subject to Coastal Storm Flowage (LSCSF). To date the Wetlands Protection Act regulations have lacked performance standards within this coastal resource area, leading to confusion about how to adequately protect these resources. Standards are needed to preserve the characteristics of the landforms of the floodplain (e.g. slope, vegetative cover, permeability etc.) to protect the interests of storm damage prevention and flood control. The current understanding of an increase in the rate of sea-level rise and the effects of climate change have expanded the need for the development and adoption of LSCSF standards.

MassDEP, Coastal Zone Management and the Department of Conservation and Recreation continued to work on related issues including the research and development of draft regulations, and the publication of updated FEMA maps.

Although the townspeople approved the expenditure of funds to create the proposed bus turnaround that DOES NOT mean it is a good idea or that we actually need to spend the money. I do commend the Planning Board on the time they have spent addressing issues regarding Menemsha, but simpler alternative options, which have been suggested over the past year or so, have not been thoroughly exhausted. I do not think we should continue on with this particular project before trying other less costly and less invasive ideas.

We need to speak out because we need to be good stewards to the lands in our town.

I am hopeful that some of you may read this letter (sorry it's was long) and

1. write to the planning board and selectmen and share your opposition to this plan
2. Join me at the December 18 selectmen's meeting (time pending)
3. write letters AND join me

Thank you for your consideration.

Gratefully,

Katie Carroll

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