

From: [Doug Ruskin](#)
To: [Skipper Manter \(skippermanter@yahoo.com\)](#); [jessmiller73@aol.com](#); [Cynthia Mitchell \(cmitchell@vineyard.net\)](#); [Town Admin](#)
Subject: MVC representation
Date: Wednesday, October 21, 2026 7:07:24 AM

Dear West Tisbury Selectboard:

Because I had great concern about the Katama Meadows project, I attended many of the recent Martha's Vineyard Commission meetings reviewing it. I was at the final meeting last week at which it was turned down. As reported in both papers, the final vote included the abstention of West Tisbury's appointed representative, Ernie Thomas. This was clearly reported in both papers:

"The final vote was 10 to 3 with one abstention from West Tisbury commissioner Ernie Thomas" (<https://url43.mailanyone.net/scanner?m=1xJUA9-00000007xo0-2vTR&d=4%7Cmail%2F90%2F1792580400%2F1xJUA9-00000007xo0-2vTR%7Cin43l%7C57e1b682%7C26142692%7C17116472%7C6AD89CE59F26AB532B659E539DC10479&o=%2Fphtw%3A%2Fwtsevw..imsmt6%2Fco102%2Fm2t50%2Fmkaa1%2Fwea--dosmalrovihemewnyngedeil-%2Fd&s=EQsvFkkTHbZ-Bhmmh5rqXxC-7Chk>

"After the motion to approve failed 10-4, Mr. Thomas abstained from the vote to deny Katama Meadows, with Mr. Sederholm, Mr. McGinn and Mr. Kim voting no." <https://url43.mailanyone.net/scanner?m=1xJUA9-00000007xo0-2vTR&d=4%7Cmail%2F90%2F1792580400%2F1xJUA9-00000007xo0-2vTR%7Cin43l%7C57e1b682%7C26142692%7C17116472%7C6AD89CE59F26AB532B659E539DC10479&o=%2Fphti%3A%2Fvtsaaneedgzyr%2F.tteomnec%2F2ws0261%2F0-%2F%2F1evcd5mtsnimkaae-wea-%2Fdosma&s=q6yeG5WfloHx4DfkTumds7odPKs>).

To my knowledge, an abstention is necessary in only 2 cases: lack of knowledge of the issue, as when absence from a meeting precludes voting on minutes and; conflict of interest. Mr. Thomas was at every meeting I attended; all of the criteria were available and are public record. If he had a conflict, he would not have been participating at all. I should also note that this was not Mr. Thomas' only abstention. I witnessed many others over the course of multiple meetings, which baffled me.

I was so surprised by that final vote, that I asked Mr. Thomas directly for his reasoning for abstaining from it. His initial reply was that the project needed to be approved to avoid a worse result coming from a future developer. When I pointed out that was an argument

for a “no” vote on the final motion to deny, he said “...I knew my vote wouldn’t matter.”

As a resident and taxpayer, I expect full participation of those representing me at every board and committee. And I expect principled voting – voting a position. That is the whole point of being there. For West Tisbury to abstain from a vote on such a critical and controversial project is simply wrong. (I am not in any way suggesting that Mr. Thomas’ vote should have been either a “yes” or a “no”).

I ask that the Selectboard carefully consider all of its appointments to ensure informed participation in the appointed roles, and in the case of the MVC, to seriously reconsider our current representation. To be crystal clear, I have no personal animus toward Mr. Thomas; I barely know him. This is coming purely from my observations and comparison to the active engagement of most of the other MVC Commissioners.

Thank you for your consideration,
Doug Ruskin