



Received by the Town Clerk:

Date:

Application complete \_\_\_\_\_

Application incomplete \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPLICATION COVER PAGE**

Date: July 14, 2022

Date Received by ZBA: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Applicant and Mailing Address: Stillpoint Martha's Vineyard Inc.  
PO Box 142  
Chilmark, MA 02535

thomasbena@gmail.com  
Email Address: phraluang@yahoo.com Telephone Number: 508.246.0021, 508.560.1332

Name of Owner and Mailing Address (If not Applicant): Stillpoint Martha's Vineyard Inc.  
PO Box 142  
Chilmark, MA 02535

Map and Lot #: Assr Parcel 22-4-9, 22-4-10, 22-4-11, 22-4-13

Street Address of Subject Property: 20 Stillpoint Meadows Rd

Applicant is: Stillpoint Martha's Vineyard Inc. (Thomas Bena)  
(Owner, Tenant, Purchaser, Other)

Nature of Application (Special Permit, Appeal, Variance): Special Permit

Applicable Section of Zoning Bylaw: 11.1-3(A) 3.1.1 use table, ~~3.1.1~~, ~~3.1.2~~, ~~3.1.3~~, 8.5.2, 8.5.3, T.J.B.

Date of Denial by Building Inspector, Zoning Inspector, or Planning Board (If Applicable): June 2, 2022 Building Inspector

Plot Plan: Must provide a plan by a registered surveyor showing the total property with the existing buildings, including the proposed project, all setback distances to be provided.

Plans: 2 sets of scaled drawings of floor plans that show total sq. ft. per floor (measured from exterior of wall), at least 2 elevations with one showing proposed height to ridge. If the project is an addition to existing structure please clearly identify proposed work.

Description of proposed project: Please attach a detailed narrative.

I have read the overview of the ZBA process attached to this application and completed all sections of the application cover page and therefore request a hearing before the West Tisbury Zoning Board of Appeals with reference to the above noted application.

Signed: [Signature]

Title(s): project manager

Application fee of \$200.00 is required. Date Paid: 7/15/22 CK# 119

# Narrative

Stillpoint Martha's Vineyard, Inc., a tax-exempt educational organization, is partnering with the Martha's Vineyard Land Bank to acquire a 40-acre parcel of land in West Tisbury, with the intention of opening it to the Vineyard community. The parcel, which includes a barn, abuts the Polly Hill Arboretum, the Francis Newhall Woods Nature Preserve, Seven Gates Farm, and Crocker Pond.

"This important tract of land sits in the Mill Brook watershed. Conserving large parts of it protects drinking water, habitat, and the Tisbury Great Pond," says James Lengyel, land bank executive director.

The land bank, in collaboration with the Land Protection Fund, a new initiative to increase collaborative land protection, will preserve the hiking trails and vistas along Crocker Pond and near Priester's Pond, conserving 26 of the 40 acres.

"This project epitomizes what is needed to ensure the Vineyard's future in the face of climate change and relentless development—collaboration among landowners with great foresight, public agencies, nonprofits, and engaged private supporters to keep the Island's land and waters intact for the benefit of nature and the entire community," says David Foster, author of *A Meeting of Land and Sea: Nature and the Future of Martha's Vineyard*.

Ben Robinson, who has been an essential part of the team planning Stillpoint, believes, "These days, when considering any sort of development, there needs to be a responsibility to do as little as possible—in terms of energy, material, and land use. Not only are both organizations buying land with development restrictions, together they are preserving 40 acres of land for public use—in perpetuity! And importantly, an existing, privately owned, solar-powered, state-of-the-art barn is being repurposed for community use."

Stillpoint Martha's Vineyard, Inc., founded by Thomas Bena, will repurpose the barn to create a gathering place for educational offerings including but not limited to classes, discussions, meditation, and the arts. Mr. Bena is the former founder and creative director of the Martha's Vineyard Film Festival (MVFF).

In 2019, Jake Davis, a key advisor for Stillpoint, offered to collaborate with Mr. Bena (then at the MVFF) on a discussion series that would use quiet, rather than film, as a tool to bring conversations deeper. The idea for the series, named *Inwards*, drew in part on Mr. Davis's background in Buddhist meditation and philosophy.

"Working with Thomas and our group of collaborators on *Inwards*, I was so inspired by how fewer words, and more moments of silence, helped create conversations that connected people across divides. Seeing the kind of learning that is possible in that space of stillness was part of what moved Thomas to embark on the Stillpoint project, and also what brought me to collaborate with him on this," says Mr. Davis.

The property, which had been approved as a 13-lot subdivision, was purchased in 2008 by Claudia Miller and also includes two privately owned, historic homes (one built in 1714) and ten acres of undeveloped private land.

For almost two decades, Ms. Miller supported Mr. Bena's efforts to bring the Island community together for important cultural, political, and environmental conversations inspired or provoked by film. Now, with this new vision for the barn, the community can continue to gather, in a preserved natural setting. "I'm thrilled that the land bank will protect more than half of the land and grateful that Thomas will put the barn to good use," said Ms. Miller.

"Without Claudia, none of this would be possible. She had the original vision to transform a 13-lot subdivision into a magical place to walk, be quiet, and enjoy nature. With the help of the land bank and the Land Protection Fund, we are simply ensuring her vision, and making it available for future generations," says Bena.