



Town of West Tisbury
PLANNING BOARD
P. O. Box 278
West Tisbury, MA 02575-0278
508-696-0149
planningboard@westtisbury-ma.gov

June 6, 2023

West Tisbury Zoning Board of Appeals
P.O. Box 278
West Tisbury, MA 02575

Dear Board Members:

The ZBA is now reviewing the radically revised Stillpoint plan as approved by the MVC. The Planning Board was disappointed and surprised by the MVC's decision to approve the current proposed Stillpoint project in West Tisbury. First presented to us about a year ago, the original plan was to be a non-profit entity providing space for low profile community activities encouraging effective communication through group discussions and conversations, and a place to enjoy a beautiful natural environment. That was the original concept that we reviewed and that many people supported.

Unfortunately, over time and as it passed through the MVC review process, the focus switched from non-profit to allowing substantial commercial use: large numbers of events such as weddings and other uses as a rental facility were added. Further and of great concern, the numbers of possible attendees grew exponentially. At the MVC weddings were disallowed as was live music outside. However, the possible numbers which could be participating is truly staggering. In addition, we know of several potential applicants who are watching carefully in the hopes that they can pursue similar projects. If allowed

as the applicant requests, rather than being at the heart of a quiet natural retreat and unspoiled area of great beauty, Stillpoint would be irrevocably changed and despoiled. All the work and energy as well as money that have gone into preserving that part of town would be for naught.

The Town does not allow commercial entities in the RU District except as home businesses. This is not a home business nor is it in the business district where this sort of facility might be allowed. (The barn was approved to be erected as a stand-alone structure for the storage of road maintenance equipment.) The Commonwealth does not allow "Spot Zoning" so a change in use as requested would have to be denied. The impacts of people, traffic, and light and sound pollution would mandate that decision because instead of being a place of peace and calm, the commercial activities and associated traffic would damage the neighborhood, the community and West Tisbury. Our/your neighbors have been very respectful and in return they deserve equal treatment.

It is our firm suggestion that the application be denied without prejudice so the applicants may return with an application that would be less disruptive and have less negative impact on the neighborhood, the roads and the Town.

We respectfully submit this letter to you for your consideration.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Leah Smith, Chairman
Virginia Jones, Co-Chair
Matthew Merry
Heikki Soikkeli
Amy Upton
John Rau, Associate Member

Zoning Board of Appeals

From: aearly@vineyard.net
Sent: Wednesday, June 7, 2023 11:09 AM
To: zba@westtisbury-ma.gov
Subject: Stillpoint
Attachments: image001.png

Dear ZBA members,

I write in support of the Stillpoint proposal you'll be considering tomorrow. Though I have lived in Chilmark since 1999, my family's roots are in West Tisbury (1924-2014) and I have been familiar with Claudia Miller's property and the surrounding area for some time. That swath of woodlands and ponds, including the Polly Hill Arboretum, is a place of great beauty that offers rare tranquility and natural healing to anyone entering it. I believe the Stillpoint project will only complement and enhance what is already there. Some may have concerns that Stillpoint will be another Film Festival, or that it might commercialize a part of the town. I believe there is a big difference between commercializing and access and that the alternative of having more high end private homes is more "commercial" and that it would take away from the commons in a way that Stillpoint will give back. Stillpoint will be joining a collection of West Tisbury properties from Polly Hill through the Ag Hall that provide careful stewardship as well as public access.

In all my years as a part time and now full time MV resident, I've never seen the fabric of our community so badly rent by economic, cultural, and political divisions or so many of the people I hold dear living on the edge. Throughout my business career, and now as a consultant and writer, it's been my observation that more solutions to thorny problems and emotionally-charged positions come from listening and reflecting what one hears than anything else we try. Nothing releases anxiety and defensiveness better than feeling truly heard. Eyes, ears, and hearts open. Often common ground can be found and creative solutions can bubble up, even from previously discounted sources.

Our island community is short of spaces where people can gather for any purpose, much less to experiment in building and rebuilding our sense of community and belonging through shared experiences and conversations. I believe the Stillpoint facility and the kind of activities it will foster (forums, conversations, dance, crafts, yoga, reading groups, films, and just plain fun) will provide shelter, structure, and encouragement for needed encounters that might spark understanding and change.

I believe this is an instance of "if you build it, they will come." Our fragmentation, aggravated by the fears and isolation of COVID and the influx of new residents, has made the yearning for connection and re-connection palpable. Stillpoint could be the locus for connections of all kinds.

I hope you will grant approval to the proposal. Thank you for the essential work you do for the community.

Alice Early

Alice C. Early

Award-winning Author, Career Transition Coach

P.O. Box 321, Chilmark, MA 02535

508 645 7886 phone; 508 645 2578 fax

617 306 0695 cell

She/her/hers

Visit me at www.aliceearly.com