

January 25, 2022

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

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter concerns an Application for a Special Permit by Robert Breth for storage of rental bicycles in a garage at 11 Oak Lane. I would like to request that the Zoning Board deny this permit. There are a number of existing activities at the Breth property that are inappropriate for a residential area, and that have already placed an undue burden on neighbors and abutters. The expansion of business use of this property will only increase noise, traffic and other detrimental effects on the neighborhood.

First, Mr. Breth has conducted business activities at his property for several years, without applying for or obtaining the proper permits, as far as I know. There have been several vehicles on the property associated with a touring and transportation business; delivery and storage of bicycles and other materials; and storage, sanding and painting of picnic tables for business use. These “under-the-radar” activities suggest that Mr. Breth will attempt to get away with what he can, making me skeptical that business activities will be limited to the purported bicycle storage.

Second, the level of landscaping on the Breth property is more appropriate to a commercial golf course than a residential neighborhood. It is typical to listen to an industrial, ride-on lawnmower for four hours every weekend from April to November, followed by several weeks of leaf-blowing. Imagine finishing a hard week of work and hoping to spend your weekend relaxing, sleeping in, or perhaps catching up on tasks that require quiet and concentration, only to have your day off ruined by the roar of a mower that sounds like a jet engine...and this happens every weekend for over half the year. In addition to the dust, fumes and air pollution caused by landscaping equipment, the fertilizer and pesticide inputs on this property are likely to have a detrimental impact on groundwater quality. Mr. Breth has also clearcut vegetation to the edges of his property, which has destroyed wildlife habitat, caused topsoil erosion, and left no buffer to shield abutters from noise and other disturbances. For years, we have also had to listen to noise, yelling and splashing associated with a swimming pool on the property that the Town permitted. Finally, Mr. Breth has instructed his landscapers to dispose of his yard waste on abutters’ property (there is a police report documenting this incident), another example of unneighborly activity.

The unauthorized business activities and maniacal landscaping at the Breth property have already caused too much noise pollution, traffic, and negative impacts on air quality, water quality and the island’s ecosystem. Any additional impacts from further business activities are unacceptable. In addition to denying Mr. Breth’s current permit application, the Zoning Board should require Mr. Breth to submit retroactive applications for any business activities currently or formerly occurring at the property. These applications should not be approved unless the following conditions are met:

- 1) Require Mr. Breth to work with an ecological consultant to restore native vegetation to the perimeter of his property, in order to shield abutting properties from noise and other impacts and reduce some of the ecological harm his destructive landscaping practices have caused.
- 2) Because business activities inevitably lead to an increase in traffic and noise in residential areas, Mr. Breth should develop a plan to reduce noise pollution from other activities occurring on the property. This could be accomplished by limiting mowing to once a month, replacing a portion of lawn with native landscaping that requires less maintenance, or converting to electric landscaping equipment.

Section 3.2-1 of the West Tisbury Zoning bylaws prohibits "...any use of any building, structure or premises which is injurious, obnoxious, offensive, dangerous or a nuisance to the community or to the neighborhood through noise vibration, fumes, odors, smoke, gases, dust, harmful fluids or substances...or other objectionable feature detrimental to the community or neighborhood health, safety, convenience, or welfare." The noise pollution and other disturbances at this property already constitute a nuisance and have negatively impacted our quality of life. I hope that the Zoning Board will make the right decision and protect citizens' rights to the quiet enjoyment of their property, rather than promote an individual's private profit at others' expense.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Sepanara
2 Oak Lane, West Tisbury, MA