

Hi, Brian and Kristina -

We hope this email finds you well. As per your request, below is a draft proposal for the MVRHS Class of 2020 graduation ceremony. We hope to hold the ceremony on the grounds of Agricultural Hall and are looking at June 28th or July 26th as possible dates. This proposal is contingent on Governor Baker's social distancing guidelines at the time of the ceremony.

- Graduation 2020 will be a drive-in style event where attendees would remain in their vehicles.
- Depending on the State's guideline for social gatherings, attendees would be limited to students, immediate family and MVRHS faculty.
- There are 161 students in the class. Graduates will be allowed to have 1 vehicle per family. There will be certain circumstances that will allow a graduate to have 2 vehicles.
- There will be approximately 60 faculty members attending each with one vehicle.
- Students giving speeches would do so on the stage with a wireless microphone.
- The stage will have a large LED screen to display the speakers and the individual students as they receive their diploma. (See photo of the proposed stage below.)
- 2-3 videographers will be on-site to film and live stream the event for family and friends who could not attend the event
- Students would exit their vehicles to receive their diploma on the stage.
- Masks will be worn by all who are on the stage or outside of their vehicle
- The layout of the cars and the stage will be determined by Ag Hall guidelines, but the idea would be to have rows of vehicles, in a semi-circle pattern, to allow for the viewing of the stage and LED screen.
- MVRHS will be responsible for a police detail
- MVRHS will be responsible for setup and breakdown of all equipment
- This is a sample stage that Charlie Esposito, Director of the MVRHS Performing Arts Center has been looking at:



## Senior Class Officers' Statements:

### Message to West Tis:

In a community as tight-knit as Martha's Vineyard, graduation is not merely just a special day for students; for not only do those graduating look forward to the celebration, but so do their teachers, families, and the donors which make graduation (and the associated festivities, such as class night) possible. Graduation symbolizes much more than the conclusion of the senior class' high school career. The ceremony itself serves as the manifestation of some dozen years of academic learning, social development, and care that the island and her people have poured into crafting and refining the next generation. Thus, to lose the graduation ceremony entirely would not merely deny the class of 2020 a fitting end, but also many parents, teachers, and other supporters of Martha's Vineyard's youth.

Although COVID-19 has temporarily made a traditional ceremony unsafe, the Class of 2020 student council has been diligently working with our advisors, the high school administration, and parents to formulate an alternate graduation event. We believe we have come up with a solution: a drive-in ceremony, which will both celebrate all those involved, and maintain the safety of all those in attendance. Believing this to be our best option, the officers of the senior student council are requesting the support of the town of West Tisbury in hosting this alternate ceremony on the Agricultural Hall's fields.

Thank you.

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Since freshman year, I have played trumpet in the MVRHS band. That meant every spring, I'd get to skip one day of school to rehearse and have to spend another reluctantly playing for the graduating seniors. Even as a junior, with only one year separating me from that fateful day, it felt insignificant. A year seemed like a long time. Ahead, I only saw endless nights filled with the challenge of applying to college and afternoons spent adventuring with friends. It still didn't seem like it ever could end.

I would watch the seniors glide in over the rim of my horn and only briefly catch the feeling that something truly special was going on. I would almost feel an odd embarrassment like I had stumbled upon something sacred that wasn't yet mine to appreciate. I could feel the magic in the air, but I knew it wasn't for me. As my graduation day, or at least the theoretical possibility of it, looms closer, I now begin to understand. Those many nights have passed, and I haven't seen my friends in weeks. The endless days have ended. I am no longer an observer but a participant, and now we have the difficult job of bringing that magical moment together when in reality we are more separated than ever.

In regards to Covid-19, the health of our community remains paramount, and we are willing to adapt in whatever ways it may be necessary to abide by our island's health guidelines. In these uncertain times, we simply want to rejoice in the certainty that our grade has provided us for the last four years. We ask that you support us in this endeavor and help us find a space that can accommodate each of our six-foot personalities.

Jack Holmes

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As an “Oak Bluffs kid,” I am very grateful to say that I have already been afforded the opportunity of a Tabernacle graduation. You could feel the magic of the place, as the building (and the Campgrounds) vibrantly personified the love of the Martha’s Vineyard community. My friend and I played a not-so-great rendition of the famous Pachelbel Canon on our squeaky violins and were met with thunderous applause. It was truly magical — a full circle moment, if you will.

An Ag Hall graduation, I am confident, will communicate the same magic. What makes this place so special is the same as that which makes the Tabernacle special — it is a community landmark, a constant in times of change. A place to which I have returned time and time again for 18 years, be it for the Ag Fair, MV Youth Hockey banquets, Barn Raisers Balls, et cetera.

These grounds hold a special place in the hearts of Class of 2020 graduates. The Ag Hall stands as an embodiment of MV pride, MV character, MV love. An Ag Hall graduation would provide a unique full-circle close (and beginning!) to a group that is nothing short of extraordinary.

Alex Rego

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Every high school student longs for the day in which they can cast down their ink-stained notebooks and step into the world as a graduate. Ever since my preschool graduation, the cap and gown have been figures of adulthood, representing an integration into the “real” world. Although our current state has robbed us of a traditional graduation, we have been diligently scrambling to find a suitable replacement. It may be impossible to capture the classic “graduation” feel of years past - graduates surrounded by friends and family under the hospitable June sun, all impatiently waiting for the end of the ceremony - but we are attempting to create a celebration as close as possible.

I am extremely proud of the graduating class of 2020 and I sincerely hope that my peers will not go unrecognized in their accomplishments thus far. Our senior year has been challenging; the tragic passing of Davin Tackabury in the fall and the current global pandemic were shocks and have had lasting effects on many members of our class. I hope that we can end the year, and our high school career, with a celebration of what we have been through together and of the amazing people that populate the class of 2020. Thank you for considering our proposal.

Jaiden Edelman

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Being homeschooled until the 9th grade, graduation was not part of my growing up. The first time I attended the high school ceremony was not until my freshmen year, when my sister, three years my elder, was preparing to complete her own high school journey.

Although graduation was not an integral part of my childhood, in only the few years I have attended, it has already become a treasured annual experience. In many ways it serves as the first event of summer, one which finally pulls islanders of all walks of life out of their homes, and back into communion with one another.

I believe anyone who has attended even a single graduation can attest that the atmosphere of the event is undoubtedly special: a unique blend of stoic tradition, but the fire and excitement of youth, as so many bright young minds prepare to enter the next phase of their lives.

To deny the class of 2020 this experience, as well as their parents, teachers, coaches, and other supporters, would be almost criminal. While COVID-19 has complicated the process, I hope and believe an alternate ceremony can capture at least some of the original magic we are unfortunately bound to lose this spring.

Vito Aiello

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The West Tisbury Agricultural Hall, similar to the Tabernacle holds a very special place in the hearts of island youth. From annual fall festivals and pumpkin carving, to artisan markets, to the historic fair that marked the highlight of any islander's summer, the Ag Hall has been a significant place and part of our upbringing on Martha's Vineyard. With the status of a

tabernacle graduation for the Class of 2020 uncertain, I see no better place to celebrate the hard work and accomplishments of the senior class than on the grounds of the Agricultural Society.

Our class is a unique one in that it is filled with so many wonderful, intelligent, and altruistic students who are committed to bettering the Martha's Vineyard community and beyond. If any class deserves a distinctive and memorable graduation ceremony, it's this one. This pandemic has already taken so much from us, it seems only fitting that we are commemorated for all that we have lived in the last 4 years and all that we have lost in recent months.

I sincerely hope that the town of West Tisbury thoughtfully considers our request to hold a non-traditional ceremony at the Ag Hall as a way to celebrate not only the Class of 2020, but our lovely community that has shaped each and every one of us seniors into the people we are today. Thank you.

Emily Gazzaniga

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The iconic image of caps being tossed into the air exemplifying the feelings of accomplishment, joy, and freedom felt by graduates, marks the end of our island education. This moment is one I have looked forward to having ever since attending an MVRHS graduation in 2013. While this tradition has always occurred in the Tabernacle, nothing is now what has always been. Our class is living history. We are adapting as best we can to the challenges presented. What is most important to the class of 2020 is being together for a graduation ceremony. Our class is an exceptional class full of amazing kids who are deserving of some kind of celebration to mark the milestone of high school graduation.

It would mean so much to our class if we could use the Ag Hall to perform our alternative graduation. The Ag Hall is a very special spot for all Islanders, just like the Tabernacle. We hope you will consider our request and host our ceremony. Thank you.

Katherine O'Brien