

September 21, 2022

Jennifer Rand, Town Manager
Town of West Tisbury

Dear Jennifer,

On behalf of the Island Housing Trust, I would like to again thank the Town of West Tisbury and the Select Board for its award of the 401 State Road project. IHT is thrilled to be continuing its partnership with the Town and building on the success of the year-round affordable rental neighborhoods at Scotts Grove and Old Court House Road.

IHT will however need to request that the planning and design process for the 401 State Road project be temporarily put on hold until such time as we can engage a new architectural firm. South Mountain Company, who partnered with IHT on its project proposal submission, has decided to withdraw from the project for the reasons shared in the attached letter.

Please be assured that IHT remains committed to working with the Town to successfully realize the 401 State Road project.

Sincerely,



Philippe Jordi
Executive Director

Cc: Michael Colaneri West Tisbury Affordable Housing Committee
John Abrams, South Mountain Company

south mountain

COMPANY

September 21, 2022

Philippe Jordi
Executive Director
Island Housing Trust

Dear Philippe,

I am writing on behalf of the South Mountain Company (SMCo), our Leadership Team, and Matt Coffey, who has served as the project architect for the early stages of this project.

After careful consideration, and with tremendous regret, we are writing to formally withdraw from participation in the 401 State Road affordable housing project. The decision stems from our sense that current circumstances will not allow us to create a successful project for the town of West Tisbury.

Our long history developing year-round affordable housing with Island Housing Trust (IHT) has been effective and rewarding. This effort to develop a response to the 401 State Road Request for Proposal (RFP) was no exception. We have been honored to work with you and we appreciate the collaborative nature of the partnership. We are glad that together we crafted a conceptual proposal that we felt was the beginning of a promising design process.

Last year, at our annual town meeting, West Tisbury voters decided to use this property to contribute to the island's critical need for affordable housing. But a significant bloc of voters expressed the view that it was essential to protect this part of the roadside district at the junction of two major roads. Our response to the RFP was predicated on the attempt to satisfy these two competing interests.

Our response was only an initial conceptual idea. We made that clear. We studied the property in depth. We carefully considered and responded to all aspects of the RFP. Ultimately, we proposed tightly clustered multi-family housing as a balanced approach to land conservation and development. Judi Barrett of the Barrett Planning Group, acting as a consultant to the town of West Tisbury assessed the response and wrote to the West Tisbury Affordable Housing Committee (AHC): *"I would have to say that overall, IHT's proposal is one of the strongest I've seen in any community I've worked with. They know what they're doing, and they will give you a great project."*

The AHC voted to accept the proposal, but at the same time the majority of the committee expressed their disappointment vehemently and sometimes disrespectfully. More importantly, they were unwilling to engage with us in a civil and collaborative process that would successfully lead to a solution that served all interests. They never expressed directly to us,

with clarity, what they were after, but some of their statements made it clear to us that we are not on the same page. They said that open exposure to the roadside was acceptable and led us to believe that protection of the roadside and the privacy of the occupants were not priorities for them. Of utmost importance to us is the comfort of the residents who will be living at one of the busiest intersections in town on a site that is sandwiched by two major roads.

At the conclusion of the last AHC meeting on 9/13/22, the AHC voted to require that IHT and SMC Co bring an updated design in four weeks with no additional input from the committee or the RFP would be re-advertised. The motion wandered some so we're not certain that our interpretation is entirely accurate. Assuming it is, that's inconsistent with the schedule the AHC had accepted, which provided for the *beginning* of design to commence in October, and it differed from some members' suggestions that the AHC, IHT, and SMC Co should sit together with the site plans and discuss priorities. The committee rejected the provision of additional input to clearly define the design goals and establish a basis for re-design.

Over many decades we have learned that successful projects result from intense collaboration between professionals and clients who trust each other and are committed to honoring and incorporating diverse points of view. That relationship clearly does not currently exist with our client – the AHC - and we do not feel that it is fruitful to continue without those essential commitments.

Once again I want to express our admiration for IHT, our respect for the process our two organizations have engaged in, and our hope for future collaborations that will be as successful as past collaborations.

We hope our withdrawal and this letter will open the door to constructive re-assessment by the town so that IHT can assemble a new design team and produce a successful project, as we know you can if circumstances are right.

You are welcome to use any of the materials we have developed in any way you see fit. Although we have invested heavily in this project, we expect no payment. We hope that our contributions to date will be valuable.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Abrams', with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

John Abrams
South Mountain Company

Cc: Jennifer Rand, West Tisbury Town Manager
Michael Colaneri, West Tisbury Affordable Housing Committee