4/15/2022 -- *Draft for review -- joint reply from VCS and WT Conservation Commission to MVAS*

Dear Lauren, Rob, and MVAS trustees,

Firstly, thank you for taking the time to offer your review of the APR, and particularly to prepare a plan to mitigate site impacts from the Farmers Market use. That’s exactly the kind of plan we hoped for when VCS and Con Comm jointly expressed concern in the earlier communication. We too do not intend to reach the issue of zoning conformity here.

Secondly, we are in full agreement that short term rental for activities related to the historical activities of MVAS – which include Farmers Markets – is specifically provided for in the language of the APR. As you know from working cooperatively together these many years, our shared challenge has always been how to allow the full range of historically pursued (and zoning-permitted) activities while at the same time construing limits – in this case, the meaning of “limited” commercial activities relating directly to MVAS’s non-profit and educational functions.

Your plan to mitigate site intensity-of-use impacts seeks to do that, for which we are grateful. The challenge remains how to harmonize your right to conduct limited commercial activities with the increased frequency-of-use of the site that the Farmers Market brings. Using the metrics we’ve applied in the past, does adding the two Farmers Market events per week exceed the meaning of “limited commercial activities”? Should other events throughout the year be curtailed to reduce overall numbers? Can the net impact of those other events be reduced using some of the creative measures you propose here?

These are things your trustees may wish to weigh.

We understand that federal public health emergency declarations have been extended into the summer. It therefore makes sense to see how your plan unfolds for this season, provided the health and zoning authorities approve. We also ask that you urge your lessee to test the feasibility of the Grange venue for 2023, particularly the idea of deploying timed entry apps to calm traffic.

Thank you again for your proposal to relocate vendors, minimize field impacts, and provide off-site parking. Note, too, that unlike the 2016 circumstance (where there was a proposed conveyance to a new owner), the Farmers Market use is mission-consistent, so there is no urgency with the plan to create dedicated road access to your abutting unrestricted parcel.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Blum Whit Griswold

VCS Board President Conservation Commission Chair