Hi Jen,

I do not think I will be available to attend the Select Board meeting on December 13, but I understand there will be a discussion to debrief about the accessory apartment article that was voted down on Town Meeting floor last month. I wrote the following response to Amy after reading her comments/reaction to the MV times article on the subject. Perhaps the Select Board would be interested in my observations.

Bea.

**Amy Upton** [November 15, 2023 At 4:17 am](https://www.mvtimes.com/2023/11/14/west-tisbury-voters-reject-accessory-dwelling-pilot/#comment-88248)

This was a vote of no confidence by the rank and file who half heartedly pay lip service to finding solutions to the housing crisis from the comfort of their own couches. When presented with an opportunity to make a positive difference they shot holes in an idea they hadn’t even bothered to read through, and from the sounds of those who spoke against it, had made up their minds before they got there. Sadly disappointing, but not entirely surprising. West Tisbury needs to do more and better or these Town meetings will grow sparser and even less well attended. People can’t show up and vote if they have no place to live.

---------- Forwarded message ---------
From: **Beatrice Phear** <beaphear2@gmail.com>
Date: Thu, Nov 16, 2023 at 10:56 AM
Subject: Town Meeting Vote
To: Amy Upton <uptonamy@mac.com>

Hello Amy,

I read your comments to the MV times with great sadness. Our town has been very supportive of affordable housing throughout the years. We have voted to tax ourselves to support the Community Preservation Act, to tax ourselves to support the housing bank, to create a pioneering opportunity for accessory apartments that did not exist in other towns, and to create a zoning bylaw to incentivize affordable housing through multi-family density. I believe the vote Tuesday was not a rejection of affordable housing, nor a rejection of the concept of incentivizing accessory apartments.

I think you misunderstood what happened. It is my view that the town meeting took the correct vote. You say this was a vote of no confidence, and I agree with you, but it was no confidence in the ability of the committee to explain, oversee or administer this proposed article. Nobody challenged the concept. People were voting against a deeply flawed proposal in two major areas.

Process:

This was billed as a "pilot" project, yet it was for a quarter of $1 million in a very small town when a pilot project could have been for one or two units.

You complain that people had not bothered to read the proposal. I am one person who read the proposal very thoroughly in October, wrote the committee to ask about a public hearing so that I could ask my questions and express my concerns, and checked the town website daily, but the public hearing was never held. And then, poof, an entirely different document was handed to me on town meeting floor. I had no opportunity to read that thoroughly.

A program of this magnitude should not be brought up at a special town meeting with no public hearing and no advanced opportunity to read the plan. Your work on the big house by law should have taught you that lesson.

Content:

The suggestion that an RFP should be sent to have someone bid on the job of processing applications is bizarre and has never been done for a town employee before, to my knowledge. Why cannot the affordable housing administrator process these applications and give them to the committee for review and approval? When I ran housing rehab programs in Cambridge, I sometimes had two applications in one day. This proposal has at most one application per month and does not need a special individual to run it. If you believe that your administrator is not competent to do this relatively simple task, perhaps you need a new administrator.

There was no limitation proposed on eligibility for the borrower. I am sure many people thought our tax dollars should not go to an affluent borrow who does not need the money, but that there should be some kind of income ceiling placed on eligibility.

There was no discussion of performance standards and timing.

It was implied that this money would be given upfront, but I would suggest it might be better as a reimbursement in order to ensure that work was done.

There was no outline of what the actual deed restriction would restrict. (I, for one, am skeptical that anyone would put a permanent deed restriction on their property for $25,000.)

Jefrey put it correctly when he said "it's certainly true that all the details of the best way to run this program are not specified". That is why we voted against it.

I hope the committee will explore the tax incentive that was briefly mentioned at Town Meeting and which I did not know about. It might be a better way to incentivize accessory apartments.

Bea