

I am a member of the Affordable Housing Committee. Although I have only lived in West Tisbury for twelve years and am among the more recent members of the AHC, I am very familiar with issues facing people needing assistance in finding housing. As a Chicago attorney, I represented residents of public housing, victims of fraudulent mortgage scams, and hundreds of low-income clients. Since moving to West Tisbury, I have been honored to serve on the Affordable Housing Committee, whose mission is to secure affordable housing for the residents of the Town.

As an attorney I am familiar with situations in which there is more than one perspective and how to negotiate through the differences. I know the difference between stating one's position and rudeness. As a member of the AHC, I have witnessed communities, neighbors and the town coming together to do what can be done to provide affordable housing. I recall the many discussions that preceded the Town's latest affordable housing project on Old Court House Road. Some of the conversations between abutters and neighbors were intense, but after months of discussion and planning everyone involved accepted the plan set forth by IHT and, only a short time ago, many of us attended the ribbon cutting for the two units.

As I mentioned, I have been honored to be on this committee. I have witnessed dreams come true, participated in resolutions of how to best address possible violations of State and local regulations, and how to integrate affordability into an established neighborhood. I can honestly say that I have never witnessed discourtesy or rudeness, between committee members or those attending a meeting. No one on the committee has a personal agenda and all adhere to the mission the Town set forth for this committee. It is the responsibility of this committee to put forth housing that is not only affordable, but reflects the "feel" of West Tisbury and is acceptable to abutters and neighbors. This is an onerous task, often taking time and patience to accomplish, but in the end it has worked well for West Tisbury.

I feel the Town historically has given the AHC the latitude to execute an RFP for a project, review the responses and work with the entities responding. Of course, there often is dialogue and revision to the original plan, but in the end the committee and project manager have reached accord. Not every project is right for every business. That is true for any construction project, but in every instance it has been possible to find partners who can do the job.

I feel it is incumbent on the Town to allow the committee to work through prospective participants. No one entity should drive the selections available. I am not certain why South Mountain feels so strongly about what has unfolded, but I do know that there are many options open to Island Housing Trust, and that the committee, and IHT ultimately will put forth an exemplary plan for this particular plot. I feel the Town and the committee should honor South Mountain's decision and move on.