

Memo to Town Administrator, Town of Chilmark
Subject: Chilmark Town Affairs Council, Martha's Vineyard Book Festival 2021 Summer Series
April 15, 2021

As you will recall, the Martha's Vineyard Book Festival is part of the summer programming of the Chilmark Town Affairs Council (CTAC) and is held every other summer. In 2021, according to our usual schedule, the festival would be held on Saturday and Sunday, August 7 – 8, 2021. In 2019, after receiving approval from the Chilmark Selectmen, we very successfully held both days of the festival on the grounds of the Chilmark Community Center. But, of course, this is not a normal summer as the country and the island begin to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, we would like to submit to you our modest plans for the MV Book Festival's 2021 Summer Series.

Our objective for this summer is to thoughtfully organize a safe event that is fully compliant with Massachusetts Safety Standards for Outdoor Events. At the same time, we think it is important to begin to do something live, by August, albeit a smaller event than usual, and also to add a virtual component to it. To communicate to the island community that this event is different than our usual free and open festival, we have rebranded the event the **Martha's Vineyard Book Festival 2021 Summer Series**. We want the public to understand, and we will emphasize in all of our communication, that this is not an open festival with free admission. Instead, there is limited live attendance with pre-purchased tickets required. However, we will ensure that everyone can watch all of the Summer Series remotely for free.

The dates now planned for the Summer Series are August 6 - 10, 2021. Scaled smaller than the regular bi-annual festival, the 2021 Summer Series will be spread over more days, with two, three or four live events sequentially each day. Rather than the usual 30-35 authors, the event will include about 15 leading authors. We will require that all participating authors (and their partners, if they are joining the authors) be fully vaccinated.

Each live event will be ticketed in advance so that we have contact tracing information for all live attendees. We plan to use a large airy tent on the grounds of the Chilmark Community Center, the placement of which will be coordinated with the Center's summer program. Seating protocols will fully comply with Massachusetts requirements. Currently, Massachusetts limits outdoor gatherings in public spaces to 150 people although this may be further increased by August. The events on the same day will be at least one-half hour apart to allow time to empty the tent between speakers and clean surfaces. We will have porta potties for guests. We will use the inside of the Chilmark Community Center only for the green room and for authors to use the rest rooms. All staff for the event will be fully trained in COVID-19 health and safety protocols.

Books will be bundled with the purchase of the ticket. There will not be a book sales tent on the Center grounds but books will be handed out when an attendee checks in for the event. This will further avoid the potential for crowding on the site. Authors will pre-sign book plates and these will be inserted in books. There will be no author signing lines also to avoid crowding.

To expand access, each event will be live-streamed so that those who cannot get tickets or are uncomfortable attending in person can see the events. These live-streamed events will all be free and books will be available for purchase through the site. To provide a more intimate virtual experience for those who cannot attend in person, each author will also sit for a separate live-streamed interview that will be broadcast during the weekend. The Vineyard Gazette will be a sponsor of the MV Book Festival's 2021 Summer Series. Bunch of Grapes Bookstore will handle all of the book sales.

Parking: This more extended and low-density Summer Series should have a limited impact on congestion at Beetbung Corner during the summer and reduce parking issues. However, we will develop a comprehensive plan to limit the impact of the festival on the town, as follows:

- Hire a police detail outside of the CCC and at Beetbung Corner to facilitate traffic management during the Summer Series hours.

- Station guards at the library during their pick up hours to ensure that only their patrons park in their lot.
- Secure all available parking near the CCC including Chilmark Community Church, The Yard, Chilmark School, Beetlebung Farm, Martha's Vineyard Bank, Town Hall (after hours), and potentially a field on Menemsha Crossroad. Use volunteers/hire staff to manage these lots consistent with the requirements of the facility owners. Allow handicapped and elderly to park near or at the Chilmark Community Center.
- Provide clear instructions about parking options to ticketed guests.

As described, we do not expect this to be a full-blown festival but an expanded Summer Series with five days of programming and two, three or four events per day. While we understand that there is uncertainty now particularly with a spike in island infections, to allow this to happen in the safest way, we need to begin planning. We will implement a comprehensive plan to ensure that the Summer Series complies with all Massachusetts requirements while minimizing impact on other local businesses and activities. We believe the MV Book Festival, in all of its forms, is an asset to the Town of Chilmark and hope that this world-class programming can be accommodated here in our town as we continue to innovate during these challenging times.

Respectfully submitted by Suellen Lazarus, Executive Director, MV Book Festival, on behalf of CTAC