



# TOWN OF OAK BLUFFS

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## Board of Selectmen

Brian C. Packish, *Chairman*  
Jason Balboni  
Gail M. Barmakian  
Gregory A. Coogan  
Michael J. Santoro

September 3, 2019

Woods Hole, Martha's Vineyard and  
Nantucket Steamship Authority Board  
PO Box 284  
Woods Hole, MA 02543

Robert R. Jones, Chairman  
Marc N. Hanover, Vice Chairman  
Kathryn Wilson, Secretary  
Moirra E. Tierney  
Robert F. Ranney



Robert L. Whritenour, Jr.  
*Town Administrator*

## **RE: Potential Reduction in Ferry Service to the Island of Martha's Vineyard**

Honorable Members of the Board:

The Board of Selectmen of the Town of Oak Bluffs has been informed that the Steamship Authority Board may be entertaining a request to reduce service to the Island of Martha's Vineyard by eliminating the 5:30 A.M. ferry. At their regular meeting of August 27, 2019, the Board of Selectmen voted to oppose this measure in the strongest possible manner through a correspondence to your Board and urges you to reject this reduction in service.

The Board knows that you are well aware of the importance of the ferry service which provides a lifeline for our Island communities. Many others simply don't understand or appreciate the enormous negative impact that such a reduction in service would have on our local residents. First and foremost, we rely wholly on the Steamship ferry service to be able to access medical services and get to doctor's appointments. It is often an all-day affair to be able to get to a doctor's appointment, receive chemotherapy or any other deeply needed medical services. Often the 5:30 A.M. boat is the only means to get up to the city on time for appointments the same day. Can you imagine having to take two days and stay in an expensive hotel just to see your doctor or receive medical treatment? That is what such a change means for us.

Another critical issue deals with the delivery of food and other supplies which require the early boat to be able to unload critical supplies at various business locations in the Town at reasonable times in the morning to avoid complete gridlock on our local roads. Later boats mean later deliveries during times when our narrow roads are packed with traffic. The geometry simply does not exist to accommodate food deliveries, local traffic and visitor traffic at the same time. It creates complete chaos and shuts our business districts down. We rely on the 5:30 A.M. boat during the summer and shoulder seasons to accommodate the flow of goods and traffic that we need to service our local and visiting population.

Available space on the current ferry service schedule is already very limited during the busy summer months, and the 5:30 A.M. ferries currently offer an extremely limited number of trips. We hope to work with the Authority to increase our level of services as local residents needs often get lost in the summer trade. To eliminate the service would be an unthinkable detriment to our community, and a measure that we hope you will join us in opposing.

In closing I wish to thank the Steamship Authority for your efforts during the recent busy summer period to meet our critical needs. We hope that we may continue to work with you as strong advocates for our community members who rely entirely on the Steamship service to meet their daily critical needs and we look forward to your support for service improvements rather than a dismantling of these essential public services.

Sincerely,

For the Oak Bluffs Board of Selectmen,

  
Brian Packish, Chairman

cc: Board of Selectmen of the Town of Aquinnah  
Board of Selectmen of the Town of Chilmark  
Board of Selectmen of the Town of Edgartown  
Board of Selectmen of the Town of Tisbury  
Board of Selectmen of the Town of West Tisbury  
Dukes County Commissioners  
Board of Selectmen of the Town of Nantucket  
Senator Julian Cyr  
Representative Dylan Fernandes  
George J. Balco, Port Council Chairman  
Robert B. Davis, General Manager