

# MARTHA'S VINEYARD BUILDERS ASSOCIATION



To: Martha's Vineyard Commission  
Re: Proposed Changes to DRI Checklist  
Date: November 18, 2019

Dear Commissioners:

On behalf of the one hundred-twenty member businesses in our organization and the many hundreds of islanders we employ and collaborate with, the MVBA would like to express our gratitude for the difficult and vital work that you all do for the island by serving on the MVC.

The MVBA is here to offer you our support in your efforts to ensure a healthy and stable future for the island. Collectively we have a considerable depth of expertise in the planning, development, design, finance, insurance, construction, caretaking and maintenance of thousands of homes on the Vineyard. Among our membership are experts in renewable energy and energy conservation technology, building science, natural resource conservation and impact mitigation, use of sustainable materials, youth workforce development and affordable housing. Please know that we are here, we are listening, and we would like to help.

However, we do have serious concerns about Article 4.2 on the proposed revision of the DRI Checklist. Our membership has a wide range of positions on the question of further regulating the design and construction of medium and large homes. In general, our position is summed up as follows:

- The towns are capable of handling this issue, each in their own way according to the needs and desires of their voters. They have the bylaws, boards, committees, hearings and town meetings to handle numerous applications without undue delay. Currently there are over 70 town, neighborhood and site-specific districts, zones, overlays and sets of rules that every project must comply with, not to mention private road and neighborhood covenants. There are setbacks, height restrictions, roof pitch and tree cutting regulations, and there are Stretch Energy Code and wastewater requirements. Chilmark even has its own large house by-law, and it is working well for them.
- The towns have the discretion to refer any project to the Commission if they feel they need the regulatory horsepower of the MVC. The MVBA feels that denying the individual towns the right to govern locally is overreach on the part of the Commission and may actually undermine the critical support that makes the MVC strong and vital. We need the MVC to grapple with regional issues and to support the towns with their local ones.
- The gross square footage of a proposed home is a blunt instrument to address what is a complex issue and which needs a more nuanced approach. The MVBA would be eager to address the component concerns, such as nitrogen loading, energy use or visual impact with site-specific, educated problem-solving.
- The MVBA cannot support Article 4.2 until a substantive underlying policy is published and publicly debated before the trigger is implemented. The towns and their voters are being asked to support a regulatory trigger while the underlying policy has not even been discussed. If the voters of the island determine that medium and large homes are a regional issue, then it is critical that a specific set of objectives is laid out so that owners, planners, designers and builders can tailor their applications to ensure a reasonable expectation of success when reviewed by the MVC.
- The MVC does not have the bandwidth to handle the huge increase in mandatory reviews entailed by Article 4.2 and does not appear to be concerned about the impact this will have on our industry through the inevitable delays in permitting. The Planning Board in Edgartown has suggested that upwards of 45 permits in their town alone would have been referred in the past year under Article 4.2.

Once again, the MVBA salutes your service to the Vineyard. We are workers, employers, parents and islanders, and we too care deeply about our island.

Board of Directors  
Martha's Vineyard Builders Association

Cc: Tisbury Selectmen, Tisbury Planning Board, Oak Bluffs Selectmen, Oak Bluffs Planning Board, Edgartown Selectmen, Edgartown Planning Board, West Tisbury Selectmen, West Tisbury Planning Board, Chilmark Selectmen, Chilmark Planning Board, MV Times, Vineyard Gazette.

