



May 6, 2019

To the members of the Pensacola City Council:

At the May 16 Council meeting there will be a recommendation from the City Planning Board to approve a land use change for a second-story addition to the carriage house at 110 W. Strong Street. This addition is to allow Martha's Vineyard – a 501(c)(3) organization that has operated in Pensacola for the past 10 years – to provide housing and meals for out-of-town families who have loved ones in area hospitals.

This letter is to support the recommendations of the Planning Board that the conditional use change be approved and that the project move forward.

A little history – Martha's Vineyard provides an important service to out-of-town families of patients in our community hospitals. Many times a tourist will fall seriously ill or be injured and family members will have to come to Pensacola from hundreds and thousands of miles away to be with their loved ones for extended periods of time. We also help the families of many military members from area bases who become ill or be injured. We have been providing these family members a place to sleep, nourishing meals and a comforting shoulder for 10 years at our present location on Euclid Street, with never one complaint from any neighbors. We help prevent out of town visitors to our city from sleeping in cars and in waiting rooms and eating out of vending machines. All our visitors are referred to us by hospital staff and undergo a background check. We accept no pay for any of our services.

We are purchasing the house at 110 Strong Street so we can move there and add two rooms above the carriage house. The house we are purchasing is presently a Bed and Breakfast which hosts approximately 1,000 guests per year. You should have received a letter from the present owner – Bob Robertson – supporting Martha's Vineyard on this same subject.

You also received a letter from Melanie Nichols with the North Hill Preservation Association expressing some concerns over parking and future possible uses of the property. For the record, we met with them prior to any city proceedings and they indicated to us they had no problem with the project and they applauded us for providing this vital service. And no one from the organization spoke at the Planning Board meeting.

Regardless - please allow me to address those concerns.

Parking – Currently there are approximately 1,000 guests who visit the B&B property per year. We anticipate fewer than 200 per year. AND sixty percent of our visitors do not have cars – they fly in and we drive them or help them with Uber or taxis. So we are reducing the traffic at the house from potentially 1,000 cars a year to potentially 80 cars per year. Our guests are not at the house in



the daytime. They are at the hospital. They come back in the evening for a good meal, some quiet time and a good night's sleep. Even though parking on the street is not prohibited (many neighbors do so now) we will add parking spaces on the property – not visible from the street – so that we will have seven parking spaces to match our seven guest rooms. Parking concerns should be lessened, not increased.

Use of the Property – Ms. Nichols is concerned about future uses of the property – beyond what we are proposing. Any future changes in the use of the property would require all the proper approvals from the Architectural Review Board and the Planning Board. It would not be fair to consider our request based on what may or may not ever happen in the future, especially because the city would review and have to approve any use changes or variances.

I would also note that Ms. Nichols compares our two-room carriage house expansion to the 26-room, 25,000 square foot Ronald McDonald House facility on Bayou Boulevard – which is also not a fair or reasonable comparison. Our proposed use is comparable to historic uses in the area and will actually produce less traffic than the present use of the house.

We have been very diligent to follow the proper channels to seek input and approval for this project. We have been good neighbors in our present location for the past 10 years, and we pledge to continue to be good neighbors in this new location.

Please join the Planning Board in approving this project.

Sincerely,

*John L. Hutchinson*

John L. Hutchinson  
Martha's Vineyard Board of Directors  
[johnlucashutchinson@gmail.com](mailto:johnlucashutchinson@gmail.com)  
850-324-0099