



Town of West Tisbury
Board of Selectmen
West Tisbury, MA 02575

To: Steve Bernier, Chair; Jeffrey Kusama-Hinte, Mitch Rubin, Anne Evasick, Thomas Bena, Joanna Cole, Dawn Porter, Henry Louis Gates

Dear members of the MV Film Festival Board,

We write in the spirit of communication and cooperation, and as one board to another.

The Film Festival, with your guidance, has over time, established itself as an important cultural component of the Island, for which you are no doubt justifiably proud. Plus your well-earned reputation is something you would wish to uphold. It is not our intention to detract from your accomplishments in any way, and we wish the festival a long and successful life.

Your wish, at long last, to establish a permanent home or a headquarters for the Festival is quite understandable. The popularity and the logistics involved with the large number of popular programs you sponsor requires a next step for your organization. It is also understandable that you have in mind to expand both the scope and number of your annual programs, and it is for those very reasons that we write, and are greatly concerned regarding your interest in the Walsh property on Old County Road.


As we understand the broad outlines of your relocation plans, as they have been revealed in the Planning Board minutes, the Island newspapers, and your website, they are of such a scale as to be beyond all reasonable limits and capacities that could co-exist in the long established, peaceable rural neighborhood that surrounds the Walsh parcels. It should be noted the area is largely a legal Historic District, and the heart of West Tisbury village.

As protectors of the Town of West Tisbury's trust, this board must call to your attention the unprecedented outcry regarding your intentions. We ask that you review, and take to heart, the over 200 comments that were posted on their respective websites following the publication of articles in both newspapers. In addition, social media have also weighed in, and virtually all of the reaction has been negative. People have had much to say on a range of topics, and so much of their spontaneous commentary argues compellingly for a different location.

As board members we all have responsibilities, individually and collectively, fiduciary and otherwise, to our supporters and the community at large. We ask only that your Board consider not only our concerns, but those expressed by the community, and assesses the impacts on the small rural setting, as well as the community trust that your Board and organization could easily and irretrievably lose. Of no lesser concern to your Board may be the distraction and diversion of resources to your organization that a lengthy regulatory process could produce. We believe all of this is avoidable.

We thank each of you for your attention, thoughtful review, and intelligent response.


Richard Knabel, Chair


J. Skipper Mahter


Cynthia E. Mitchell

cc: Alan Berliner, Arlene McGlade, Claudia Miller, Edward Miller, Catha Day-Carlson, Jan Kaplan, Jessica Roddy, Jill Iscol, Nancy Parrish, Natasha Ziff, Scott Frank, Tobias Vanderhoop, Laurie David, Lisa Berkower, Mahsa Noble, Marilyn Vukota, Mollie Doyle, Monina von Opel, Brian Ditchfield