

To: Tisbury and West Tisbury Planning Boards
c/o Amy Upton and Jane Rossi

From: Red Coat Hill and Shubael Weeks Path neighbors

Date: March 28, 2023

Re: Access to our homes and properties

As neighbors who live along Red Coat Hill Road and Shubael Weeks Path in Tisbury, we are writing to request your help. We were encouraged by the meeting held in November between the two boards, and in the interest expressed at that meeting in hearing from the local taxpayers.

All of the properties held by the undersigned originally enjoyed three access routes to our Tisbury properties—two through Tisbury and one through West Tisbury. But because Tisbury historically allowed landowners to install gates on shared roads while West Tisbury did not, a situation has arisen over time leaving a single option that sends us through West Tisbury as our only route to access our properties in Tisbury.

With each Town's planning siloed from the other's, the consequences have included:

- compromised safety on the roads, where encounters between pedestrians and vehicles have become more frequent and more fraught
- compromised safety for residents, as ambulances and fire engines must take circuitous routes to reach homes where shorter, straighter routes have been closed by private gates
- pinch points where the effects of an unfair burden of traffic have reduced quality of life and safety for people and pets (e.g., the corner of Ben Chase and Red Coat Hill in West Tisbury), as well as increasing damage to the road
- lengthy and costly legal proceedings wherein seeming resolutions have been stymied by individual landowners
- reduced value for our properties, as access has become complex and contested
- a “forgotten” neighborhood that does not receive services provided to other town residents, such as cable, trash pick-up, and unobstructed emergency services, despite paying full taxes.

We therefore request the following:

1. That Tisbury and West Tisbury harmonize their Special Ways bylaw, to reduce the instances where one town's legislation obliges its landowners to drive through the other to access their properties. Specifically, we ask that you strike any language grandfathering gates from the Tisbury Special Ways bylaw, and prohibit private closures of access routes that have been in use for hundreds of years.
2. That the two Planning Boards support the Red Coat Hill/Shubael Weeks Path neighbors by insisting that the Eugster/Cannon/Donnelly easement and cross-easements be recognized by the Martha's Vineyard Land Bank and Island Housing Trust, as per the Comprehensive Permit (a signed and stamped Bridge Housing town document that also names the Martha's Vineyard

Land Bank). This would reopen a second access route for at least four properties, thus easing the pressures on the only route currently available to them.

3. That the two boards support the Red Coat Hill/Shubael Weeks Path neighbors by working with Town Counsel to ensure that our neighborhood is included in the new Comcast contract so that our neighborhood will have the same access to online Island services and utilities that others enjoy. We also request that you work with Island Housing Trust to allow Comcast to hook up from their development to Red Coat Hill. (This can be accomplished along existing underground utility lines.)
4. That the boards take whatever planning steps will ensure that landowners in this area are not forgotten when it comes to emergency services, garbage pick-up, community cable access, and other such public services our taxes support.

Sincerely,

Red Coat Hill/Shubael Weeks Path landowners:

Rachel Eugster, for herself and her sisters Erica and Sandra Eugster
Michelle and Steve Kelly
Scotty, Terre, and Emma Young
Terry and Colleen Conroy
Greg and Cristina Martino

Joined by our West Tisbury neighbor:

Leslie Eaton