



# HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING

2 Fairgrounds Road  
Nantucket, Massachusetts 02554  
[www.nantucket-ma.gov](http://www.nantucket-ma.gov)

**Commissioners:** Raymond Pohl (Chair), Diane Coombs (Vice-chair), John McLaughlin, Abigail Camp, Vallorie Oliver,  
**Associate Commissioners:** Stephen Welch, Terence Watterson, Jessie Dutra

~~ MINUTES ~~

Friday July 10, 2020

*This meeting was held via remote participation using ZOOM and YouTube,  
Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Regarding Open Meeting Law*

Called to order at 10:22 a.m. and announcements by Mr. Pohl

Staff in attendance: Cathy Flynn, Land Use Specialist; Holly Backus, Preservation Planner  
Attending Members: Pohl, Coombs, Camp, Oliver, Welch  
Absent Members: McLaughlin, Watterson, Dutra  
Late Arrivals: None  
Early Departures: None

Motion to Adopt the Agenda. (Coombs) Carried // Camp, Oliver, Welch, Coombs, and Pohl-aye

## I. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

## 11. 31 FAIRGROUNDS RD CONCEPTUAL DISCUSSION

	<u>Property owner name</u>	<u>Street Address</u>	<u>Scope of work</u>	<u>Map/Parcel</u>	<u>Agent</u>
1.	Coffin Farm 06-1119	31 Fairgrounds Road	Demo/move off MH	67-149	Brook Meerbergen
Voting	Pohl, Coombs, Camp, Oliver				
Alternates	None				
Recused	Welch				
Documentation	Architectural elevation plans, site plan, photos, and historical information.				
Representing	Brook Meerbergen				
Public	Jerome Vigil, 14 Waydale Road Stephen Welch, 13 Waydale Road				
Concerns (10:26)	<p><b>Meerbergen</b> – The proposal is to move this to 33 South Shore Road to a covenant lot; the move-off needs to be considered in the context it will become housing.</p> <p><b>Vigil</b> – Asked shouldn't the move off be discussed after the other applications.</p> <p><b>Welch</b> – To avoid the perception of any impropriety or conflict, identified himself as a property owner not listed as a direct abutter for HDC or other board correspondence but in the general area of the proposed work; clarified he would speak not as a Commissioner but representing his own interests as an individual. After hearing Commissioner concerns at the least hearing, he has given this property some thought Also considered HDC's recent discussions with Nantucket Historic Commission about Historic Surveys and what constitutes a contributing structure, and whether pre-1975 construction is legitimate sole-criteria; he doesn't believe structures built between 1940 and 1975 are automatically contributing. Research of national and state entity requirements is that the date of construction is listed in the National Historic Register as a consideration to be added to the register, but additional considerations are required: These include whether a building has cultural, historical, or local community significance; whether the building or buildings on a property contribute in such a way to convey or evoke the historical setting of a particular area or way of life; and, these are without regard to whether the buildings are well-kept or have a pleasing aesthetic.</p> <p>As he understands information about this particular property and its owner: structure is it was built in 1964 and is listed on the National Historic Landmark (NHL) database as contributing. The local community significance is it was built and lived in by native islander, Fred "Wiggles" Coffin, whose namesake dates to Nantucket's European settlement and whaling days. The Coffin family played various important roles in Nantucket's community development; cited Wiggles' multiple contributions, really snapshots of some of his total contributions, to the Island community, which represented an appreciation for open space, proponent of the fish and field-game as sustenance way of life, and the lifestyle of that era on Nantucket. With respect to the cultural significance, this was his family home and its simple nature and setting on the now oversized lot provide important historical context, being one of the last few that truly represent the historical, basically rural identity of Fairgrounds Road area, tied into the lifestyle of the era. These ranches are being swallowed up along with other virtues of the Island's past, yet they evoke an important nostalgia.</p>				

**Camp** – Reiterated what Mr. Welch said, that we haven’t taken culture and houses of that decade seriously. Thanked Mr. Welch for providing that history. Asked why it can’t remain as an example and scale of what could go there; it’s perfectly good and shows what could go there.

**Coombs** – What Mr. Welch has said is absolutely true; she has been trying to keep these smaller structures. Fairgrounds Road on the left has lost that small-house, rural feeling. It is important to keep this part of our history; it isn’t all historic houses. This is a street that belonged to the residents of the Island. There are other places to build what is being considered. We commissioners have to consider with this application through what we are charged.

**Oliver** – It is very typical of the area, but she’s wondering if in an attempt to make housing affordable, there is a disconnect. She thinks this is the perfect opportunity to create an affordable home while keeping this structure on the lot.

**Pohl** – The move on was approved but not the move off. These are all separate applications, and this is not germane to the discussion of the houses going on this property. We have to look at this as an isolated application. It would be nice for this to remain on the property as a sign heralding back to what Fairgrounds Road used to be. He would like to first get a full picture of the subdivision and how this structure could work into the fabric of what’s proposed.

**Motion to Hold for revisions. (Coombs)**

Motion  
Roll-call Vote

Carried 4-0//

Certificate #

Coffin Farm	31 Fairgrounds Road	Subdivision concept	67-149	Brook Meerbergen
Voting	Pohl, Coombs, Camp, Oliver			
Documentation	Concept site plan; aerial perspective rendering, correspondence, aerial photo of lot, HDC Enabling Act, initial 7-lot subdivision plot plan			
Representing	Brook Meerbergen Billy Cassidy			
Public	Piya Phatthananphuti, 16 Waydale Road. Jerome Vigil, 14 Waydale Road Stephen Welch, 13 Waydale Road			

Concerns (10:48)

**Oliver** – Her concern is the overall concept; asked for a presentation on that.  
**Meerbergen** – Provided an overview of the subdivision: The goal is to keep the big field open with buildings to the rear. There are five structures totaling 22 units. The structures are situated behind the location of Mr. Coffin’s house.

**Pohl** – Read into the record a letter of concerns from Jerome Vigil dated June 17, 2020.  
This process will not begin and end in this hearing; this is a conceptual design discussion. He can understand from the applicant’s point of view about getting preliminary feedback from the HDC before going to the Planning Board.

**Phatthananphuti** – He agrees with everything Mr. Vigil said in his letter.  
**Vigil** – This is historically a rural area and this development is too dense. The property was originally zoned for 7 lots. Enjoys the comments that Mr. Coffin’s house be kept there and incorporated into the project. From the aerial view, you can see the structures are crammed into the abutters property lines with no buffer.

**Welch** – Suggested the matter before the HDC was not a binary discussion, i.e. it’s not that your all for affordable housing – even though these apartments are not required to be affordable – or you’re not; you can support affordable housing while supporting thoughtful design that does not maximize development at the soul of the neighborhood or abutting neighborhood. Suggested what’s proposed is an over-densification. Looking at HDC area of review, in plan-view, presented annotated slide showing in red the proposed buildable area with exception of the pavilion. Clarified what is proposed as previously submitted to the Planning Board is 5 apartment buildings with 24 dwellings on less than 44,200SF. Contrasted the actual buildable area against the attractive perspective view showing the open space. Reviewed concept of flex development, supports concept subject to adequate setbacks observing norms of neighboring community and where there are mixed density uses such as this, with surrounding residences being primarily single-family dwellings some 20 to 50 feet of separation, that visual buffers be required. Presented annotated slide that shows where the proposed has many atypical setbacks. If approved as is, this could be considered a precedent noting there is nothing [with regard to HDC] that legitimately sets these lots and buildings apart from others—developer has complete control over whether and how to proceed with slightly fewer buildings of more typical density including to provide setbacks that allow typical screening between high-density out-of-norm uses and neighboring areas. Under Section 9(b) of the Act, referenced an included in slide annotation, each of these are matters under or of HDC purview. Clarified line around the perimeter depicts general location of many of the trunks of trees around the perimeter of the lot; those vegetative elements would have to be removed for excavation and other work. Presented a slide illustrating perspective cropped and redlined to show actual area and density of what is proposed and trees, many of which would potentially or certainly be eliminated. The matter of evoking nostalgia aside for the moment, this outlined buildable back area is what is under HDC review. There will be visibility from Trotters Lane and Waydale Road and this has a different, higher intensity use with higher density, typically circumstances the HDC requires vegetative and other screening to address. With respect to screening, the grade in the center of the buildable area of the lot is at elevation 36 feet above sea level; the front and rest is 34 feet above sea level; at Waydale Road, elevation at the road is 26 feet. Mentioned recent experience where differences in heights between adjoining properties created unintended negative consequences, in the instance a 24-foot building at the proposed location would appear 34 or more feet tall from the Waydale neighborhood. Read Section 9(b) of the Acts, for Commissioners to have an informed position in addition to typical review of exterior architectural elements other important matters under HDC oversight and control include: where proposed buildings are located in relation to one another and as compared to historical and existing counterparts and norms; and, where proposed buildings are located in relation to lot-lines, including

with regard to historical and existing counterparts and norms. Per the Act, a determination of appropriateness shall include a determination of whether or not the size, shape, and in relation the density, of what is proposed is compatible the surrounding land area and existing building and existing setbacks and norms. The foregoing, per the Act, supersedes any applicable law. Applicant's agent previously commented that what is proposed is no denser than the surrounding areas, but this is not the case as viewed from the internal road, it's a high-density conglomeration of buildings. Appropriateness of such density is a reasonable and legitimate question, and if density is deemed fully or somewhat appropriate, it's still reasonable and legitimate to determine to what extent the perception of such density can be mitigated to the benefit of neighboring historical and existing norms; legitimate mitigation may include increase in setbacks from less than typical depths, changes in ground cover and changes to size and shape of a building on a lot or lots; also, 1<sup>st</sup> story and taller screening, for example shrubs, fencing and trees, are regularly adopted and required by the HDC where new higher-density use is allowed where existing less dense use and taller structures are introduced as compared to surrounding areas. . Presented slide showing proof plan of the lot, being a more typical layout for a subdivision; noted that in his recent experience – Hawthorne Lane flex development, and many rear lot subdivisions – the Planning Board typically does not allow every lot of a new subdivision to have three dwellings, i.e. does not typically grant variance from single dwelling on a lot requirement of the Nantucket subdivision control law, which subdivisions control law is under zoning bylaw, still applicable to flex development despite it being a Special Permit process.

**Camp** – About Mr. Vigil's letter, it is helpful because it gives a good description of the neighborhood and where this is going so it helps her round out her feelings about the project and location.

**Pohl** – All presentations have expressed concerns about the setback and the buffer. Though he appreciates the greensward in front, it begs the question if it's a model for Fairgrounds Road.

**Flynn** – She forwarded to commissioners all emails she received on this project. Noted there are no further letters at this time.

**Cassidy** – Mr. Welch brought up some very good points. He believes the Sportsman's Club was assessed to the Angler's Club which in turn offered this property to the Land Bank. Feels with Mr. Welch's history, the Land Bank should be approached again about purchasing this property. He feels the iconic open space as it is now should be preserved. He is not a fan of the 7-lot subdivision mentioned by Mr. Welch. We will go back to the drawing board with the comments he's heard today; this is a "show-me" presentation in which he expects a response.

**Camp** – Several people have asked how to incorporate the Coffing house. Mr. Welch talked about keeping the existing vegetation at the end of property; that's important. This design should be inward rather than outward. Doesn't think the proposed density is a healthy community.

**Coombs** – They are taking a rural area and paving it; a group of houses similar to Mr. Coffin's would create a nice little community. With that many apartments, asked if the heating and air is centralized. Little houses with small driveways would fit the Fairgrounds area streetscape better and look like it belongs. The proposed doesn't look like Fairgrounds Road.

**Oliver** – A lot of what she was going to say has been addressed. Practical reasons behind her concerns include people need yards that is why zoning was put in place. We of mid-Island are the workforce; housing needs to consider the workforce that's here. A main aspect not being recognized here is that people have stuff – boats, grills, kayaks; there is no place for them to put that. There is not enough parking; unless there are strict rules, parking will become a real problem with people parking all along the proposed road. The area residents should be respected; there shouldn't be such a huge difference between what is there and what is proposed. Doesn't see why they can't keep Mr. Coffin's house on site and rehabilitate it for affordable use.

**Cassidy** – He understands what Ms. Oliver is talking about but the idea Mr. Coffin's house was going to a Covenant lot has merit. There is generous storage proposed in the basement of each building. There are more parking spaces under the grass – 44 for 38 bedrooms. He hopes it will be a privilege for the residents to live here; he is not going to be involved in anything he would be embarrassed to drive past.

**Pohl** – He's looking for more space between units; the big one-way road is atypical to Fairgrounds Road. We have Mr. Coffin's ranch with other 1-story structures visible in the photo. The ranch remaining as a statement of what the area is. He doesn't want to have all the same windows, scale, roof colors, etc.; it should be more eclectic. Need more variety in the structures and less greenspace.

**Cassidy** – We are proceeding with the Planning Board. We will look at realigning some things; we can do something that's complimentary.

HDC Minutes for July 10, 2010, adopted Aug. 3

2. Coffin Farm	31 Fairgrounds Road	New Dwelling Unit A	67-149	Brook Meerbergen
3. Coffin Farm	31 Fairgrounds Road	New Dwelling Unit B	67-149	Brook Meerbergen
4. Coffin Farm	31 Fairgrounds Road	New Dwelling Unit C	67-149	Brook Meerbergen
5. Coffin Farm	31 Fairgrounds Road	New Dwelling Unit D	67-149	Brook Meerbergen
6. Coffin Farm	31 Fairgrounds Road	New Dwelling Unit E	67-149	Brook Meerbergen
7. Coffin Farm	31 Fairgrounds Road	Pavilion	67-149	Brook Meerbergen
Voting	Pohl, Coombs, Camp, Oliver			
Documentation	Architectural concept plans, site plan, and photos.			
Representing	Brook Meerbergen			
Public	None			
Concerns	See the overall concept discussion.			
Motion	<b>Motion to Hold for revisions Items 1-7.</b> (Coombs)			
Roll-call Vote	Carried 4-0//Oliver, Camp, Coombs, and Pohl-aye			Certificate #

III. OTHER BUSINESS	
Approve Minutes	None
Review Minutes	None
Other Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Next HDC Meeting Monday Old Business July 13, 2020 at 4:30pm and Thursday 7/16/20; 1:00pm-3:00pm (if needed)</li> </ul>
Commission Comments	None

List of additional documents used at the meeting:

1. None

**Motion to Adjourn at 12:02 p.m.** (Oliver) Carried unanimously//Camp, Coombs, Welch, Oliver, and Pohl-aye

Submitted by:  
Terry L. Norton