

Siasconset Beach Preservation Fund
PO Box 2279
Nantucket, MA 02584

May 2, 2017

Nantucket Conservation Commission
Town of Nantucket
Nantucket, MA 02554

Dear Commissioners:

The purpose of this cover letter is to provide some background and context for the attached memo from our environmental consultants, Epsilon Associates entitled: Responses to Third Party Review. This memo responds to comments received in April on our Annual Report which was submitted as required in December 2016.

As you recall a working group of individuals from Siasconset Beach Preservation Fund and the Town of Nantucket (BOS and Con Com members) reached an informal settlement agreement on the appeals relating to the geotube project leading to the approval of the current Order of Conditions by the Nantucket Conservation Commission in the fall of 2015. That was about 18 months ago. Since then we have focused our efforts on three main activities:

1. Completing the build-out of the geotube project involving the construction of a 4th tier of geotubes and angled returns at the north and south end, the installation of a storm drainage system that has stopped the erosion of the bluff from the top, and more vegetation of the face of the bluff with beach grass.
2. Managing the volume of sand covering the geotubes so that sand is available as designed to wash away during larger storms in a manner that mimics erosion from the unprotected bluff, and
3. Monitoring the project in accordance with the OOC. In addition to the Annual Report mentioned above from December, a preliminary report and in-person presentation and discussion took place at a Con Com meeting last August. It is our hope that the monitoring effort leads to improved communications and dialog about the performance of the project.

We look forward to our meeting on May 22 as a time where we can engage in a useful discussion of the data and how to best manage the effort for the future. As you know, the 1000 feet of bluff currently being protected fronts the portion of Baxter Road that was most threatened with possible closure in 2013. We are pleased that not only is the road still open, but from both engineering and environmental impact points of view the project is working very well. Once installed, erosion has been stopped and there is no evidence of harm to the

neighboring shorefront areas. The beach in front of the geotubes is easily walkable at virtually all times, except for during and right after large storms, times when the beach in front of unprotected bluff to the north is sometimes also unsafe for walking. The future questions are about ongoing maintenance in order to avoid negative impact on others, expanding the project so that other threatened homes can be protected, and finding an economically sustainable organizational format to meet the ongoing costs. As we have explained on numerous occasions our ability to continue to protect the bluff depends on expansion since most of the financial support comes from homeowners who need protection and support the project in its current limited location as a way of demonstrating that an expanded project can be effective.

We recognize that this is a unique project with many dimensions and appreciate the cooperative and fact-based approach that our island's leaders have taken to its oversight. For our part we will continue to be as direct and transparent as possible in tackling the details and complexities. We believe that the more people observe, learn, and understand about this project, the more constructive will be the discussion and decision-making. As you know SBPF operates a viewing area at 87 Baxter Road that is open to the public with educational posters and an audio tour explaining the erosion process and characteristics of the project. During the summer months student interns are often on site to answer questions. Traffic is steady all year long with at least 10,000 visitors stopping by, sometimes 300-400 in a single day. Erosion is an increasingly important fact of island life, not just for Sconset but for many parts of the island. One solution is not likely to work everywhere, but we hope that what we learn on this project can be helpful elsewhere on Nantucket and beyond in this era of sea level rise and climate change.

See you on May 22.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Josh Posner', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Josh Posner
President