



Sakonnet Preservation Association

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To All Sakonnet Preservation Association Members

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This letter is intended to address the permanence of conservation easements, development rights and the acquisition of property ownership outright by conservation organizations working in Little Compton. Misleading assertions about the permanence of conservation easements have been made at a meeting held to discuss the draft proposal for a voluntary conservation development zoning ordinance and in a letter to the editor of the Sakonnet Times.

The Sakonnet Preservation Association (SPA) can assure our supporters and the generous land donors who have conserved land with the conservation organizations working in our town that the conservation wishes of a landowner drive the disposition of land they wish to conserve. Any conservation organization overriding those wishes by selling for development an acquired property the owner intended for permanent conservation, or by selling such a property to a developer to allow for denser development on an abutting property, would be risking grave legal consequences and the inevitable dissolution of the trust of the community. Either would undermine the organization's mission and likely put it out of business. The terms of properly drafted conservation easements and deeds to development rights do not allow for the sale or transfer of those rights to anyone other than a qualified conservation organization.

The Planning Board and Town Council are attempting to draft a voluntary conservation development zoning ordinance that would permanently protect, with conservation easements, important and vulnerable natural features on sub-dividable property by allowing a reduction in lot size while maintaining the overall current standard of 2 acres per house within a development. This option would not be allowed, according to the current draft of the ordinance, unless the responsibility of permanently protecting those conserved assets were held by two legitimate conservation organizations.

SPA has not yet taken a position on the proposed conservation development ordinance. But this organization is not in the business of selling or otherwise disposing of conservation easements or SPA-owned land in order to facilitate development. We are and will remain a land conservation organization.

Sincerely,
Abigail Brooks, President