Town of Wareham October 13, 2021

Planning Board

54 Marion Road Wareham, MA 02571

Attn: Kenneth Buckland

Re: ”Maritime Haven” Proposed Definitive Subdivision Plan, Robinwood Road” and “Waivers”

Mr. Buckland,

I submit this letter in response to the August 30, 2021 GAF Engineering Inc. proposed Definitive Subdivision Plan for what is being called “Maritime Haven” on Robinwood Road in Onset and its separately submitted four waiver requests from the town’s Rules and Regulations Governing the Subdivision of Land. It is my understanding that these items are to be the subject of Planning Board hearing on October 18.

I request my letter be included in the official record for the proposed project.

My house is located at 13 Sias Point Road. I am not an abutter, but a neighbor who will be negatively impacted by the proposed project, both during and after construction, as will all residents of Sias Point Road and all abutters of the proposed subdivision plan.

Waiver Item 1.

Subdivision Rules and Regulations Section IV, Definitive Plan, at B. par 23, requires a drainage plan to include “an estimate of the present rate and volume of runoff as well as an estimate of the rate and volume of runoff that would occur after completion of the proposed subdivision”. The submitted drainage plan does not include any of that information. Instead, a waiver of this requirement is requested.

Stormwater drainage and runoff is and must be a concern with respect to this and indeed any subdivision proposal at this location. Significant ponding occurs at the site with every major rain event, including ponding in the immediate vicinity of the abutter to the south. A good example of this Is that it took 5 days for the stormwater to subside after Ida came through. Significant ponding covered most of proposed lot 54 and additional ponding occurred behind the existing garage in the immediate vicinity of the neighbor to the South’s boundary. In addition, there is regular ponding of stormwater on Robinwood Road just South of the proposed site, as well as along Fairview Lane. There are existing wetlands on the site and a marsh across Robinwood Road from the site. In other words, not only is the proposed subdivision site susceptible to flooding, so too are areas South and West of it. Ida may have produced an unusual amount of rain, but we are being advised by climate scientists that we are experiencing “the new normal”. Responsible planning requires we plan for the future, not for the past. The engineer’s conclusory statement suggesting there will not be discharges of stormwater to adjacent properties is wishful thinking. Any changes to the existing drainage at the proposed site give rise to the potential for runoff to abutting properties, roads, adjacent bodies of water and marsh.

Although the engineer proposes a series of steps to minimize that possibility of stormwater flooding and runoff, (presumably recognizing that the cul-de-sac road and house footprints will reduce the land area available for drainage and also existing drainage problems), his calculations fail to take into account the impact of driveways. None of the 7 driveways is anywhere depicted on any plans, nor reflected in drainage calculations.

Given the history of stormwater ponding and the questionable methodology of calculating storm drainage loads, it is critical that estimates of current and future runoff be included in the drainage plan. Indeed, those estimates will be one of the few vehicles by which owner and engineer may be held accountable and liable for damages resulting from runoff and other drainage problems associated with the work. Moreover, given the complexity of the maintenance of the drainage system (see discussion at page 3) such information will be critical in determining why drainage failures are occurring in the future (i.e. design or maintenance).

The requested waiver ought not be granted.

Waiver Item 2

Subdivision Rules and Regulations Section VI F. calls for the planting of 12’ trees on each side of every street…wherever, in the opinion of the Planning Board, existing woodlands or suitable individual trees are not retained. A waiver of the planting of 12’ trees is sought.

The Existing Conditions and Demolition Plan depicts both existing individual trees and wooded areas, but nowhere is any effort made to show trees or even areas of trees that will be retained and undisturbed. What it does show is a proposed raingarden running straight through a densely wooded area. No houses or driveways are depicted and that raises the question as to where will they be located and how many trees will be removed in the process of the installation of utilities, the placement of driveways and the construction of houses. This despite the Section V Design Standards that provide that the design will reduce the number of mature trees removed. How is the Planning Board to make a determination of whether or not the tree requirement is suitable for waiver, when the most basic tool for making such a determination is missing?

The waiver request must be denied.

Definitive Subdivision Plan

GAF Engineering seeks approval of the Definitive Subdivision Plan, notwithstanding its failure to provide complete drainage plans (Waiver 1) and road tree plan (Waiver 2). In addition, the plan does not meet Subdivision Rules and Regulations Section V Design Standards. The Design Standards at. V. A. state that “the design shall 1. Reduce to the extent reasonably possible, the following: c. Number of mature trees removed; d. disturbance of natural drainage patterns or increase in peak rates of stormwater transport from the site; e. disturbance of important wildlife habitats; g. The impact to abutting neighborhood.”

The plan fails to address the issue of mature trees.

The plan clearly depicts significant disturbance of natural drainage patterns.

The plan makes no reference to wildlife habitat even though there are clearly shown areas of existing trees and wetlands, both of which are critical as wildlife habitats. The area is home to deer, fox, coyote, skunks, rabbits, squirrels, migrating and resident birds, including geese, hawks, ducks, osprey, hummingbirds, sparrows, wrens, and crows. The massive disturbance to 8 acres of low-lying land represents damage from which wild life and wildlife paths are unlikely to recover. Some effort to mitigate such damage ought be required at a minimum.

In addition, the plan reflects no effort to reduce or mitigate damage to the neighborhood. For example, there is no proposed buffer zone of trees to reduce the visual and noise impact during and after construction. There is no proposal or suggestion to widen Robinwood Road, notwithstanding the fact that the road is less than 20’ wide in areas where Robinwood Road fronts on the site, and therefore already hazardous. Robinwood Road is barely passable for two regular cars. When larger vehicles are on the road, traffic is brought to a halt. The road is already heavily pot holed, cracked and crumbling. There can be no doubt that repeated passage by heavy construction equipment will add to existing damage, leaving it more dangerous for transit by neighbors. In addition to the hazards directly posed to neighbors by a more deteriorated road, the construction phase will pose an additional hazard and negative impact on neighbors. The impact of construction equipment on the road will bring traffic to a halt, delaying those travelling to and from work and engaging in their normal activities. Worse, delays caused by such construction vehicles are likely to prevent emergency vehicles (ambulances and firetrucks) from bring assistance to all of Sias Point Road. There is no proposal to deal with these problems and no proposal for the repair of the road after construction.

At Rules and Regulations Governing the Subdivision of Land, Section V B. 1. Drainage, that section provides that “The Planning Board will not approve any design …that…will not function without frequent maintenance…”.

The Planning Board ought not approve the plan because it will not function without frequent maintenance. Post Construction operation and maintenance (Long Term Operation and Maintenance Plan) is proposed to include: multiple ongoing inspections, including swales (2x a year), raingarden(annually and also during and after major storms), inline drains (monthly inspection plus cleaning 4x per year) and check dams (after significant rainfall event and when maintaining the swales, plus maintenance, cleaning and repairs to all the elements of the system, mowing, fertilizing, liming, watering , pruning, weeding and pest control, removal of grass clippings, and sediment and debris removal. In addition, the swales are to be checked for slope integrity, soil moisture, vegetative health, soil stability, soil compaction, erosion, ponding and sedimentation. The raingarden is to be inspected for subsidence, erosion, cracking or tree growth.

By any definition, this is frequent maintenance of a drainage system. Surprisingly, the suggested annual cost of all this ongoing maintenance is only $1500. Such an estimate cannot be based on reality. Rather, it seems to want to suggest that the maintenance is not that big of a deal.

It is clear that the drainage system is complex and requires frequent maintenance, without which, it will fail.

The Plan ought be denied approval.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa Fast