**Draft Form Letter for Support of OB Grant Appplications**

Mr. Louis A. Elisa, Executive Secretary

Massachusetts Seaport Advisory Council

Town Hall, 40 Center Street

Fairhaven, MA 02719

RE: Oak Bluffs Public Access Improvement Project

Dear Mr. Elisa:

I am writing to support the Town of Oak Bluffs’ application for financial assistance for the above-referenced project. Oak Bluffs is a water-dependent, island resort community. The proposed project is a major economic development improvement for the Town that will will also enhance public access, recreation, public safety and coastal protection along the downtown shoreline.

Phase I of the project consists of the following improvements to the North Bluff section of the Oak Bluffs shoreline:

* A ADA-accessible boardwalk on top of the seawall to connect the thousands of boaters, ferry passengers, other visitors, and residents from the Oak Bluffs Harbor to the Steamship Authority terminal, in-town beaches and the downtown commercial area to stimulate business activity.
* A new seawall to replace a failing seawall and anchor the public walkway
* (Also, a state-funded public access, ADA accessible fishing pier off the new seawall/boardwalk, will be built in 2013.)

The Town’s shoreline is its economic backbone. The seawall and boardwalk will provide a safe and scenic walkway between the ferry ports, beaches, waterfront Ocean Park, historic neighborhoods and the downtown commercial area. These linkages will greatly improve the attractiveness and ease of access of our business community for residents and visitors alike.

The project will also enhance waterfront and beach access while protecting the coastal infrastructure. The road above the North Bluff seawall is the main access road to the Oak Bluffs Harbor; it links the harbor and Steamship Authority terminal that together provide ferry service to Woods Hole, Falmouth, Hyannis, New Bedford and Rhode Island, and it provides parking for both ferry sites. Should the seawall fail all this service would be severely disrupted.

In the past five years the Town, state, federal government and the Steamship Authority have committed over $9 million in improvements to this downtown shoreline, which have included a new Steamship Authority terminal and pier, replacement of the eastern Harbor bulkhead, the restoration of a coastal bank after a portion of seawall collapse, restoration of a public restroom facility, and proposed fish pier, This project serves as the capstone of these efforts by providing the necessary pedestrian linkages to bring all of the major downtown and waterfront areas together as one.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,