

From: William Mullin [WMullin@wcu.com]
Sent: Sunday, February 10, 2013 10:05 PM
To: Community Preservation Committee
Cc: Morrison Committee
Subject: Answers to Questions
Attachments: Response to Questions for CPC 02.10.13.docx

Dear CPC Members-

Of course, I am very grateful for your work on behalf of our Town.

- After the Morrison Farm Committee's presentation to the CPC, we received copies of two lists of questions asked by two people.
- The Morrison Farm Committee did not receive these questions directly, but we thought that you might want to hear our thoughts, in any case.
- The Morrison Farm Committee was not able to meet to write the answers to the questions as a committee of the whole. So, the answers below represent the information and belief of me, the Chair of The Morrison Farm Committee, Bill Mullin, based on my understanding of the viewpoints and experience of the Morrison Farm Committee.
- The questions have been compiled into one list and the answers assume that the CPC has familiarity with the application by the Morrison Farm Committee, submitted on behalf of the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Acton, with respect to the Morrison Farm Implementation Plan.

I do want to say something of a personal nature. I have been civically involved for about 30 or 40 years. (I am getting so old, I forget, exactly.) But, I do know one thing: the opportunity to do something of a long term, permanent good, is a rare opportunity. In my 30 or so years of doing stuff, I can count on one hand the things that have been permanently positive. As a member of the BoS or FinCom, I have negotiated deals, put together financial plans, fought for the schools etc. But the things that I remember, and people still thank me for my involvement, are the ones that are lasting: Ice House Pond, NARA Park, Camp Acton, Leary and Lower Fields.

So, I ask you one thing: Please, do not think "small and delayed"; please, think "big and forever". I think this is your chance.

Sincerely,

Bill Mullin
Chair, Morrison Farm Committee

Morrison Farm Committee

Response to Questions

Note: Questions were submitted to the CPC by Nancy Tavernier and Belle Choate and were forwarded to the Morrison Farm Committee for comment. The questions are quoted verbatim, below. To maximize responsiveness, certain questions were deconstructed into their component parts. Below please find answers to those questions.

Please note that the Morrison Farm Committee was not able to meet to write the answers to the questions as a whole committee. So, the answers below represent the information and belief of the Chair of The Morrison Farm Committee, Bill Mullin, based on his understanding of the viewpoints of the Morrison Farm Committee. Any errors or mis-statements are his alone, and not of the Morrison Farm Committee,

The questions have been compiled into one list.

The answers assume that the CPC has familiarity with the application by the Morrison Farm Committee, submitted on behalf of the Board of Selectmen of the Town of Acton, with respect to the Morrison Farm Implementation Plan.

Bill Mullin
Chair, Morrison Farm Committee

No.	Question
1	<p>I want to know how this building is going to be used and how those uses are provided for now unless they are new uses.</p> <p>Overview:</p> <p>The uses of the Morrison Nature & History Center are only limited by the imaginative uses of the land, water, nature and history of this wonderful site.</p> <p>Please see Exhibit F “Morrison Farm--Potential Uses” of the Morrison Farm Committee’s application.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> That exhibit provides a comprehensive listing of potential uses for all of the elements of the Morrison Farm plan.<input type="checkbox"/> Dozens of ideas are listed therein; in essence, for whatever activity may take place at the Morrison Farm and environs; should the desire be for folks to gather before, during or after that activity, the MN&HC serves that utility.

No.	Question
	<p data-bbox="310 235 1869 300">❑ Just as we did with NARA Park, by providing a venue to gather, the events will evolve, based on the desires and interests of our people of Acton.</p> <p data-bbox="262 341 1354 373">A core principle of the Morrison Farm Committee is the old saying, “Form follows function”.</p> <p data-bbox="262 414 1753 446">The primary reason for the building is for people to <u>use</u> it; to gather, to sit, to meet, to listen or just to enjoy the environment.</p> <p data-bbox="262 487 619 519">The gatherings could include:</p> <ul data-bbox="310 527 1900 876" style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ History programs, perhaps some presented by the Historical Commission but under the auspices of the Recreation Department; ❑ Nature programs from birding identification lectures, plant identification, Nature Camp, etc. run under the auspices of Natural Resources; ❑ Curricula designed especially for elementary school children on the history of Acton as it is represented by the Morrison site--the same for adults & high school students; the Morrison Farm Committee is working with Eileen Sullivan, Curriculum Coordinator, to develop an elementary level program; ❑ Activity classes run such as Yoga in the evenings; exercise in the early AM; walking tours of the grounds; ❑ Boy and Girl Scout meetings; sign up for all the youth teams, soccer, baseball etc.; ❑ Meeting for local businesses--companies that want to "show/sell/interest" people in a special program—or for internal meetings; ❑ Small private parties---birthdays, bar mitzvahs, post-burial gatherings, etc. <p data-bbox="262 917 850 950">The uses are many, the demand in Town is large.</p>
1a	<p data-bbox="262 958 1113 982">Using the description in the proposal of the uses, I ask these questions:</p> <p data-bbox="262 1031 1932 1096">a. to provide public facilities and meeting space for the Acton Recreation Department to organize programs and activities. How and where is that done now?</p> <p data-bbox="262 1136 367 1161">Answer:</p> <p data-bbox="262 1177 1911 1307">The majority of Acton Recreation outdoor activities are held at NARA or town athletic fields. For activities requiring indoor space, the instructors provide private space (Chinese Martial Arts, All Seasons Tennis Club, Gymnastic Academy of Boston); some instructors teach from home business facilities; other town indoor facilities are used in a limited capacity: Town Hall Room 204, Senior Center building. Use of the Morrison Nature & History Center would be to run programs and events that are nature & agriculture specific.</p>
1b	<p data-bbox="262 1315 1932 1414">b. to provide meeting space for the Historical Commission to conduct seminars and to permanently display historical artifacts depicting the history of the farm and the area. Are seminars done now? If so where? What historical artifacts are available for display? Are these artifacts that you anticipate digging up during the archeological work? Will you be removing artifacts from the Library or the Historical</p>

No.	Question
	<p>Society facilities? Do you have their permission to do so?</p> <p>Answer:</p> <p>The theme of the Morrison Farm implementation plan is: “Living History: Four Centuries/Four Seasons”. We also have thought about it along these lines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ 1675: A Colonial Farm ❑ 1775: The Dawn of the American Revolution ❑ 1875: The Railroad and Industrial Revolution ❑ 1975: The Rebirth of Patriotism <p>We also look forward to another date: the year 2025, the 250th Anniversary of “The Shot Heard ‘Round the World”, where our Morrison Farm theme could be “The Acton Freedom Trail Begins Here”.</p> <p>We envision 4 large permanent panels on the walls, explaining the 4 centuries and how that history is important to Acton. No artifacts have been identified at this time; it would be premature to do so; however, we envision displays that will change periodically. Part of the interest in connecting to the Robbins Homestead and Alarm Stone area is to better improve our citizens understanding of the events of April 19, 1775 and Acton’s role.</p> <p>Obviously, the internal outfit of the Morrison History & Nature Center has not been finalized, but in discussions with the Historical Commission, they felt some form of permanent display about the 4 centuries would be important. Please see “Exhibit H: “Letter from Historical Commission”, dated 12/12/12.</p> <p>The Historical Commission’s letter very clearly states their view: “In our view, the Morrison Farm program, including all of the elements described above, is and will be significant in the history, archaeology, and culture of our Town of Acton.” This language mirrors the CPA law.</p>
1c	<p>c. to include a kitchen and smaller back rooms, resembling their original farmhouse counterparts. Why? Is this to support the function rooms or is it the plan for the Recreation staff to move to the building creating yet another off-site department?</p> <p>Answer:</p>

No.	Question
	<p>The Morrison Farm Committee is not aware of any plan to move the Recreation Department or any other town function to the Morrison Nature & History Center. The kitchen, bathrooms and smaller back rooms are designed to be code compliant vehicles to allow for people to gather for their enjoyment. Having two small rooms, in conjunction with the larger room facilitates having more than one gathering at a time or to have breakout rooms for an educational program, such as Nature Camp.</p>
1d	<p>d. to provide bathrooms. Why? Outside of NARA and some of the town play areas bathrooms are not provided and if they are, they are port-a-potties.</p> <p>Answer:</p> <p>It has always been the intent for Morrison Farm to be <u>used by people.</u> Simply stated, when people gather, especially in larger numbers, it is important to provide bathrooms. Or course, portable toilets could continue to be the option we choose to supply, but, in the view of the Morrison Farm Committee, providing indoor plumbing is a better option.</p>
1e	<p>e. to provide a covered porch to afford individuals respite during the summer or function as a convenient meeting place for wintering activities such as snow shoe walks and crosscountry skiing. Do you really need a \$985,000 building to do this? Not to be sarcastic but really a tree makes a great shelter and meeting spot.</p> <p>Answer:</p> <p>As noted above, the uses of the Morrison Farm and environs are only limited by the land itself and a person’s imagination. Some people may not like snow shoe shoeing or cross country skiing, but to other Actonians, it may be the recreational activity they want to do above all other. We are not serving “special interests”, we are serving <u>all</u> interests. The Morrison Farm Committee and the CPC are in receipt of a letter from the folks who were the driving force behind the Miracle Field and they, also, see a lot of potential for less-abled folks to garden, fish, enjoy nature, etc., and a building with handicapped useable features would be important to encourage that activity.</p> <p>There are many public parks that encourage deep winter activities and they become very special when people can come in out of the cold with their friends and families. We believe that an indoor shelter is more appropriate and useful than an outdoor shelter, especially in winter.</p>
1e	<p>Of course, the cost of the building is not solely for this one purpose, but for the all of the uses that are listed in the application.</p>
2	<p>If this project is bonded, do the annual bonding payments come out of the allotment for the 3 CPA functions each year at say \$200,000 a year? Does that mean they have to be voted every year by the CPC and town meeting?</p> <p>Answer:</p>

No.	Question
	<p>The maximum amount of the bond payment per year is approximately \$190,000, which will decline year after year due to straight-line amortization. The CPC will need to determine the appropriate allocations from each of the 3 functions comprising the Morrison Farm program. The Morrison Farm Committee has made recommendations on the split. Please see Exhibit C “Financials/Allocations to Segments of CPA”. If the CPC were to adopt the Morrison Farm Committee recommendations, the costs would be allocated approximately as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Space: 11% • Historical: 36% • Recreation: 54% <p>Once voted, the bond payments will automatically be part of the annual CPA funding.</p>
3	<p>Has the neighborhood been consulted about the proposed 100 seat function hall and the 75+ parking spots to support it? Have there been any neighborhood meetings at all about the plan?</p> <p>Answer:</p> <p>There have been no neighborhood specific meetings to date, during this phase of implementation planning. Of course, all of the Morrison Farm Committee meetings are open meetings. The MFC has met over a dozen times at posted meetings and the subject of the program been posted on the agenda at another 15 or so public meetings, for a total of over 25 public meetings since last summer.</p> <p>We are now in the midst of our community outreach program, which has already included a Focus Group, specifically for the Organic Gardeners and in the future will include an Open House at Town Hall and 2 Site Walks. The MFC is open to meeting with all people about the program and encourages continuing participation as the design ultimately is shaped, once the funding is in place.</p>
4	<p>Here is my overarching question and one that I am really surprised and disappointed that it was not asked last night.</p> <p>Can this plan go ahead without the building? Can it be phased so that bonding will not be needed?</p> <p>Answer:</p> <p>Yes, of course the plan can go forward, should that be the decision of the Community Preservation Committee, without the Morrison Nature & History Center. It just will not be the Living History Park that the Morrison Farm Committee has proposed. And, it will not be the plan that has been endorsed by the Board of Selectmen, the Historical Commission, the Recreational Commission, among others.</p>

No.	Question
	<p>If you are baking a loaf of bread and someone convinces you to take out an ingredient or two, say the flour or the yeast or the milk, you will still have something: it just won't be a loaf of bread.</p>
5	<p>The application package seems to be missing information such as:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="327 383 1877 448">1. Historic inventory forms for Morrison house barn, icehouse etc, Robbins house site, Robbins Boulder, and Woodlawn Cemetery which would help in understanding the historic significance of the parcels. <p>Answer: Copies have been supplied to the CPC.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="327 613 1906 678">2. While it mentions generic permits in the cost sheets specific permits required along with their likelihood of approval are not listed which goes to the feasibility of the total project. <p>Answer: A comprehensive listing of permits and a complete project plan will be developed once the funding is in place to pay for the professionals to create the detailed project plan, including the comprehensive list of permits. The estimates for the cost have been provided by professionals including architects, landscape architect, and civil engineer and have been vetted through town staff; but, please recall, they are estimates.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="327 915 1906 1013">3. There is nothing about the future maintenance and operation budget, which also goes to establish feasibility. Department resources are strained and will continue to be in the future. There are issues maintaining existing facilities. What is the worst-case scenario if revenues don't meet expectations and outside fund-raising declines. <p>Answer: The Morrison Farm Committee supplied information in the Supplemental Information handout. The plan is to develop a program so that the operating costs are covered by revenues, just as the Recreation Department has done at NARA.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="327 1221 1831 1286">4. There is no listing of the architects and engineers preparing the plans. In presentations the concurrence of all the architects involved in the design has been mentioned. Who are they? <p>Answer: The architects and engineers who have consulted with the Morrison Farm Committee are Tom Ryan landscape architect; Bruce Ringwall,</p>

No.	Question
	civil engineer; and Peter Grover (MFC Committee member), Bill Dickinson, Nancy Dickinson and Anita Rogers, all local architects.
6	<p>A site plan for new building showing details of utilities, septic, parking, storm water runoff, lighting. Including ADA access from building to gardens be completed.</p> <p>Answer: A complete set of construction drawings, suitable for formal approval, must be done and will commence upon approval of the funding to do so.</p>
7	<p>An explanation of the changes to the design from the Kelleher Feasibility Study. In particular why the new building is so disconnected from the original farm buildings. Why it is sited into the open agricultural landscape. Why the number of permanent parking spaces is more than originally planned when there were playing fields. What are the plans for the Morrison Farm house and the area around it? How will it's future uses impact on the overall scheme. It sits at the mid point from EAV Green to the Robbins Memorial. Are we creating another Asa Parlin?</p> <p>Answer: There are a lot of parts to this question. The <i>overlap</i> of the current Morrison Farm Implementation is far greater than <i>differences</i> with the original concept of subsequent planning efforts. Put another way, as an analogy, the glass is about 80% full, not 20% empty.</p> <p>The Kelleher study is on the Town website, so CPC members can make their own judgment about changes, but the two fundamental contextual differences are that, 1) due to the energy and imagination of Town citizens, the demand for large active recreation spaces has been solved elsewhere in Town and 2) the farmhouse and barn are not reasonably changeable, due to code and cost, to the uses envisioned by the plan.</p> <p>Once one has made the determination that the farmhouse and barn could not be reasonably used as the community space envisioned, a new building was the natural conclusion, and, as with all construction, is placed in the context of the constraints around it.</p> <p>A principle of the parking solution is to distribute it. The number of spaces is based on accommodating an event at the Morrison Nature & History Center of about 75 people, while still providing spaces for other uses. An unknown factor at this time is how the opening of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail will impact parking at the Ice House area.</p>

No.	Question
	<p>The Morrison Farm Implementation Plan does not incorporate any changes to the existing farmhouse. It is currently a listed asset and is protected from the elements. Several ideas have been mentioned in the past including using it for an affordable housing unit or a caretaker's residence, both of which sound exciting. The MFC feels that it is the purview of the Board of Selectmen to make this decision, in consultation with community groups.</p>
8	<p>How many of the existing garden plots are lost to the new building? Will those be replaced by expansion of the area? If not replaced what impact on potential revenue as the gardens are part of recreation's self-funding model</p> <p>Answer: The final plan for the Morrison Nature & History Center will be developed, including its final siting, once funding is approved, so the number of garden plots that will be lost or changed or moved is not known. It is likely that some garden plots will be impacted negatively. If so, the Morrison Farm Committee recommends that the gardens be expanded and reconfigured so that all current gardeners will still have a space for their use. So, there will be no change in revenue.</p> <p>We sympathize and understand that the Organic Gardening community may be impacted by the increased use of the Morrison Farm by other people. As such, the Morrison Farm Committee has conducted a Focus Group with the Organic Gardening community, listened to their concerns and has undertaken to create a couple more possible siting plans, that might be less impactful to the gardening community. On the other hand, we hope that this group takes the "long view"—that we are trying to create a Living History Park that will be in operation for our imaginable future, so short term dislocations may yield very long term gains for our Town of Acton.</p>
9	<p>Since these are all organic garden plots the close proximity of the parking lots to the gardens is a concern. Pollutants from vehicle emissions and runoff from lots. Snow storage from the lots especially the upper lot will drain to the gardens as well.</p> <p>Answer: Drainage plans will steer runoff away from the gardens.</p>
10	<p>Has the impact the building will have on sunlight for the gardens been considered. It is very close in this concept plan to the west of the gardens and appears likely to shade them.</p> <p>Answer: The issue of shade was discussed with the Organic Gardeners at the Focus Group and some adjustments to the site plan are being considered. There is no perfect solution to this question.</p>

No.	Question
11	<p>Proposed well for garden plots is not a typical irrigation well as it is not supplying underground sprinklers. Would it be non-potable?</p> <p>Answer:</p> <p>The water would be potable. Per article 9 of the BOH regulations, this well would require testing of the water at annual intervals for some tests and triennially for others to verify that the water meets EPA standards.</p>
	<p>Why isn't an archaeological survey being proposed for the area of the new building? Why is it just limited to the Robbins house site? The mapping done by PAL as part of the CPA funded Archaeological Survey designates most all of the farm and icehouse areas as high sensitivity for both Pre-contact and Post-contact.</p> <p>Answer:</p> <p>The extent of the survey will be determined in consultation with archaeological survey experts, the Historical Commission and Town staff. The scope and survey will begin once the project is funded.</p>
13	<p>Since most if not all of the historic elements in this project are now eligible for National Register listing how do the proposed activities impact on that eligibility? Given the emphasis on the truly historic nature of both the Robbins house site and the agrarian landscape dating to the 1600s it seems something we would want to have in place.</p> <p>Answer:</p> <p>As with the answer to the prior question, the Morrison Farm Committee seeks to work with archaeological survey experts, the Historical Commission and Town staff to determine the correct scope and approach. This work will begin once the project is funded.</p>