

From: [Terra](#)
To: [Board of Selectmen](#)
Cc: [Anne Forbes](#); [Michaela Moran](#); [John Sonner](#); davidhonn105@gmail.com; [Historical Commission](#)
Subject: Fwd: Fwd: Re: Re: Forbes-Morrison Farmhouse
Date: Monday, October 17, 2016 1:16:06 PM

Dear Board members...

I echo Anne's comments below. I am glad that a decision would go to TM.

Because of an important water meeting that I was asked to go before it was clear that Morrison would be discussed tonight, I can't get to the meeting tonight.

And so I'm writing in support of Anne's comments, but also to highlight that an important part of Morrison Farm's recent political history is NOT INCLUDED in the packet.

For example, there was a significant "uprising" relative to the use of the meadow. If I'm remembering correctly, there was a petition and a significant number of letters that came in to protect the meadow for nesting birds (rather than cut it short for a recreation field).

Also, wasn't there a Town Meeting vote that indicated that plans put forth by the Re-Use committee were not acceptable? Perhaps these plans are modified. Either way, I think if you're going to put the history to support the a specific position into the packet, then I think it's warranted that the "other" history also be included.

Further, I wasn't even aware that the Re-Use Committee has been meeting. When was their last meeting? Who is pushing the agenda item, if not the Re-Use Committee?

It is very difficult to find information on what the ReUse committee is doing, when it meets, etc. Look at the agendas/minutes. <http://www.acton-ma.gov/Archive.aspx> The most recent minutes posted are from 2013. The committee isn't listed as a Board/Committee on the Town website. If you search the Town Calendar, you can only see meetings from 2013 and 2012. The DocuShare folder hasn't been modified since 2013.

Has this Re-Use Committee start meeting again? If so, when did they meet last? If it was in 2013, then who is pushing a decision on Morrison Farm? and when was the plan to push it discussed in an open meeting?

Terra

~*~*~*~

Terra Friedrichs
+1 978 808 7173

----- Forwarded Message -----

Subject:Fwd: Re: Re: Forbes-Morrison Farmhouse
Date:Mon, 17 Oct 2016 10:57:11 -0500 (CDT)
From:Anne Forbes <anneforbes@verizon.net>
To:davidhonn105@gmail.com, terraf@compuserve.com,
michaelamoran1@earthlink.net

Just forwarding this, in advance of our discussion tomorrow:

-----Original Message-----

From: Anne Forbes
Date: Oct 17, 2016 11:55:28 AM
Subject: Re: Re: Forbes-Morrison Farmhouse
To: pjberry@comcast.net

Thanks, Peter

This agenda only appeared two days in advance, so that would have been no help to the public, and of course they wouldn't have seen the letter that went out to boards and committees. As recently as last Wednesday I wasn't sure the 9/17 meeting was still on, because it wasn't appearing on the calendar.

In contrast to the true public forums that were held for (as I recall) the Acton 2020 plan, Kelley's Corner, etc. which got the word out to the public through newspaper announcements, flyers, etc., this one truly seems to have been directed just to boards and committees. I would bet that most town residents don't go regularly to the TV channel or the website just to find out what may be going on. In this case the calendar, of course, would have been no help.

I'm glad to hear about the ultimate Town Meeting vote on this. In the meantime, I hope you will see that the name of the Morrison Farm Committee is corrected in the packet of information. The error I referred to would be funny if it wasn't so sad.

Anne

On 10/17/16, Peter J. Berry<pjberry@comcast.net> wrote:

Anne: I would also point out that the Selectmen tape a show on Acton government access tv before every meeting going into detail about all items on the upcoming agenda. I urge you to get the word out to citizens to read agendas in advance and watch the show if there is an issue of particular interest.

I expect the elected and appointed Town boards who oversee the various interests in the property will present the range of options.

Although the Morrison Farmhouse may be a larger issue than most, it is difficult to write notices to the papers and post notices for all the issues the Selectmen discuss during our meetings. Ultimately, we depend on individual citizens to keep themselves informed of the workings of their government.

It also appears that any final decision on the disposition of the Morrison Farmhouse will require a future town meeting vote.

Peter J. Berry
39 Faulkner Hill Road
Acton, MA 01720
(508) 423-0467 (c)
(978) 264-0265 (h)
Pjberry@comcast.net

> On Oct 17, 2016, at 11:08, Peter J. Berry <pjberry@comcast.net> wrote:

>

> Anne: Thank you for you comments. They will be added to the packet for tonight's meeting.

>

> The Morrison Farm discussion is on the Selectmen's posted agenda, besides notice being mailed to all boards and committees. I will ask the Selectmen to consider that wider publicity may be appropriate.

>

> Lisa: Please add Ms. Forbes' comments to the Morrison Farm 2016 packet. Thanks.

>

> Peter J. Berry
> 39 Faulkner Hill Road
> Acton, MA 01720
> (508) 423-0467 (c)
> (978) 264-0265 (h)
> Pjberry@comcast.net

>

>> On Oct 17, 2016, at 10:20, Anne Forbes <anneforbes@verizon.net> wrote:

>>

>> To the Board:

>>

>> In preparation for the forum on the Morrison Farmhouse, I am resubmitting my comments from last January (below). They, along with some other comments submitted in advance of the 1/25/16 Selectmen's meeting, haven't been included in the relevant background material on DocuShare. (It seems that only the memo from that time in the collection is the 1/19 submission by the so-called Morrison "Farmhouse"[!] Committee.)

>>

>> I believe that what I said at that time is still relevant, and I hope you will take it into account now. In addition, I would like to add that if your conclusion from tomorrow night's discussion is that the Town should retain ownership of the building, then I'm sure, as some submitted memos have suggested, you can develop a viable plan for leasing it.

>>

>> There are many good models for doing so. The Mass. DCR Stewardship Program, for instance, rents out historic buildings in state parks and other properties owned by the Commonwealth. Historic New England has long had a similar stewardship program. With both of these, the lessees bear the cost of maintenance and improvements. In addition, many of Acton's neighboring towns are currently renting out all or part of municipally-owned houses and other buildings.

>>

>> You are all familiar with the town-owned Steele Farm in Boxborough, which has both a historic house and barn on 17+ town-owned acres. But the closest comparison to Morrison Farm is probably Concord's Harrington House, which stands on 15+ acres of conservation land overlooking the Assabet. It has had one set of tenants for decades, who maintain both the house and the area immediately around it. I'm sure anyone on the Concord Planning or Natural Resources staff would be glad to tell you about the arrangement.

>>

>> In the event that the Town cannot find a public use for the farmhouse, carving out a small parcel with the house, either for lease or for sale, is the only responsible way to ensure the preservation of such an important building. I remind you that Morrison Farm, with its intact farmstead, has been found officially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. Please add the attached Mass Historical Commission eligibility opinion to the background material in DocuShare. It was received in 2008, and its absence is another glaring omission from the relevant record.

>>

>> Forbes-Morrison is Acton's last intact Depression-era farmstead. Please treat it with the respect that it deserves.

>>

>> Anne Forbes
>> 25 Martin Street

>>

>> PS. I notice that in the 7/11/16 invitation to all Boards and Committees it is mentioned that feedback from residents will also be solicited on the 17th. However, I have seen no published public announcements about it in

the usual form of newspaper publicity, posters hung around town, etc. Can you tell me how the public has been informed about the forum? Most town residents I've spoken to seem quite unaware of it.

>>

>>

>>

>> -----Original Message-----

>> From: Anne Forbes

>> Date: Jan 25, 2016 4:28:37 PM

>> Subject: Forbes-Morrison Farmhouse

>> To: bos@acton-ma.gov

>> Cc: hc@acton-ma.gov

>>

>>

>> To the Board:

>>

>> I was greatly alarmed to see that, after what looked like some encouraging news about a workable possibility for the use and upkeep of the Forbes-Morrison Farmhouse (and some hard work on the part of town boards and staff), the Morrison Farm Committee has taken the extraordinary step of recommending the demolition of the building.

>>

>> I know you are planning to discuss this matter tonight. I hope you will not be hasty in acting on any recommendations of this advisory, clearly landscape-oriented committee. I believe that most Acton residents understand that the value of the property we call Morrison Farm lies in much more than just its open space. Preservation of the character of the farm--indeed, of any farm, historic or otherwise--involves the retention of all types of resources that contribute to that character. That includes objects, structures, and of course, buildings.

>>

>> The 2008 Mass. Historical Commission statement that found the farm to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places describes its importance in a nutshell:

>>

>> "The Forbes-Morrison Farm comprises one of the last intact surviving farmsteads in Acton with original buildings dating

>> to the 20th-century. It is recommended for National Register consideration at the local level under Criteria A for its

>> association with the early history of Acton and Concord, and Criteria C for its historic agricultural landscape, intact

>> since the 17th century, and the well-preserved Depression-period farmstead of house, barn and out buildings."

>>

>> We all know that it is much more difficult for a municipality to preserve, and find uses for, its historic buildings than for open land. Doing so inevitably requires compromises. It also is likely to involve letting go of some reservations, such as the hesitance to become a landlord or to sell a parcel in order to save the building(s) that may stand there. Yet many communities have done so, with successful results.

>>

>> I am sorry that the Morrison Farm Committee sees a sale of the house as "giving away" anything, when in fact, the Habitat proposal would be one way to preserve this valuable historic resource. According to the committee's opinion of January 19 they also now seem to regard the house as an "impediment" rather than an asset. In truth, it is the committee's recommended demolition of the building that would "give away" an important piece of our history, leaving only--what? signage?--to tell its part in the "story of Acton's farming and industrial history.". And some of the concerns mentioned in the 1/19 opinion--about the need to put in a new driveway, or the fact that some visitors are confused about the farmstead, seem small in comparison to the larger question of how to preserve the farmstead. Even the projected upgrade cost of \$109,000 (which many homeowners would not consider to be very large,) may be borne by the purchaser. Alternatively, at least part of the expense would appear to qualify for CPA funds if the Town were to pay for it.

>>

>> Demolition, of course, would not be covered under the CPA. And as was pointed out two years ago, CPA funds cannot be used to fulfill a plan that goes against the purposes of any of the CPA areas. One positive aspect of the potential Habitat project, as long as Secretary of the Interior's Standards are followed in any Town

rehab. work, is that there would be no conflict between any of the four CPA purposes, meaning that Morrison Farm would still be eligible for CPA funds in the future.

>>

>> I would submit that it is not up to the Morrison committee to determine that "possibilities about what to do with the farmhouse" have been exhausted. I urge you to take another look at the stated priorities in tandem with other Town entities, and to bring to the table not just the Selectmen, Morrison Farm Committee, and the ACHC, but also the Acton Historical Commission, who, by statute, are the protectors of Acton's historic assets.

>>

>> Anne Forbes

>> 25 Martin Street

>>

>>

>>

>>

>>

>>

>>

>> <Forbes-Morrison Farm elig 10.01.08.pdf>