



TOWN OF ACTON
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
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25 February 2013

This letter is a follow-up to the Acton Historic District Commission's (HDC) earlier Letter of Support regarding Morrison Farm, dated 21 January 2013.

As noted in our earlier letter "there are always particular aspects of these types of plans that need further discussion and agreement...." Since our earlier correspondence, the HDC has become aware of additional aspects of the proposed project that are of concern and we urge that the following issues be addressed before proceeding further. Among them:

- The "MHC Opinion: Eligibility for National Register" concerning the Forbes-Morrison Farm dated 1 October 2008 appears to be missing from the application. The opinion notes that: *The Forbes-Morrison Farm comprises one of the last intact surviving farmsteads in Acton with original buildings...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.*
- Given the above opinion, the HDC believes that it is essential that the project proposal retain the ensemble of a farm- i.e, a house, barn, out buildings and fields/pastures and retain original structures. To remove an important element, such as the existing barn, destroys this ensemble and the essence of what should be preserved. The HDC urges the Morrison Farm Committee to find a use for the existing barn, a non-public use if necessary, such as storage. The HDC also suggests that the position of the overflow parking and new Nature and History Center be switched allowing the farmstead to take precedence over the new structure.
- The HDC notes that to secure CPC funding, projects must adhere to the Secretary of the Interiors Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. Under the four categories of Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing, there is no provision for allowing the total demolition of a building such as the barn. (The Reconstruction category is for recreating totally missing structures based on historical research and evidence).
- The HDC notes that barns are an endangered building type in Acton, New England and most parts of the country. Barns played a central role in Acton's history.
- Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) Inventory Forms appear to be missing from the application. The (MHC) Inventory Forms relevant to this proposed project are: ACT.O (Forbes-Morrison Farm), ACT.929 (Robbins House Cellar), and ACT.930 (Robbins Alarm

Stone). The HDC notes that all of the above components of the project are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as noted in the MHC Inventory Forms and in the 2008 MHC National Register Eligibility Opinion for the farm and the earlier MHC opinion for Woodlawn Cemetery. Each component of the project needs to be carefully and individually considered given this stature of eligibility.

We hope the above comments are helpful.

Sincerely,

Kathy Acerbo-Bachmann, Chair
Historic District Commission