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70 Piper Road
Acton, MA

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Town of Acton
Board of Selectmen
472 Main Street
Acton, MA

Dear members of the Board of Selectmen:

I am writing to voice my concern over the Morrison Farm project (MFIP), as both a former member of the Morrison Farm Committee (MFC), a Cemetery Commissioner and a member of the Historical Commission.

I have recently completed a questionnaire that was generated by Roland Bartl from questions addressed to the CPC for the Morrison Farm Committee. Bill Mullin assigned three members of the Historical Commission to respond by last Friday. The request could have resulted in a violation of the Open Meeting Law and therefore I responded utilizing our minutes and conferring with the Vice-Chair of the HC.

I left MFC as a disappointed member. I felt that the prior study committees had done their work and was pleased with the diligence that went into the previous studies. Since the studies involved cooperation with the Cemetery Commissioners and the fact that Brewster Conant was on the first study committee, I felt that my participation in Morrison Farm would be a continuation of that work.

The MCIP, in my opinion, has taken a course of action that ignores the previous work and I personally do not know where the project as it now stands came from. The CPC request for funding proposes to use the irrigation well that is used for the soccer field on Concord Road. The well is located on land that is part of Woodlawn Cemetery, purchased for and approved for burials. It is used by Recreation under a lease agreement with the Commissioners. The Cemetery Commissioners have not been approached about the well's use for the gardens. The eventual use of this property is for burials and this usage and the well and water lines would impact that usage. MFC initially proposed swapping a piece of land at the rear of the Morrison parcel for the front piece that surrounds the Captain Robbins house up to the soccer field. This was not included in the study and the Commissioners did feel that the back land was desirable as we already have land adjacent to it that can not be developed since it is designated as wetland.

The Cemetery Commissioners have had several meetings with the Morrison Farm Committee. Each time we met, the group representing MFIP increased and at the last meeting we had 9 people that Bill Mullin introduced. I do not believe that we took down names, but there are only three of us on the Commission and I do not like to be "bullied" by an opposing group.

The Historical Commission had knowledge of the elements of the previous study and with Arthur Krim's report of the historical assets, felt that the project would take a path of preservation. I am adamantly against the Morrison Farm CPC project since it does not preserve anything on Morrison Farm. The 1800's bridge behind Power's Gallery is not being restored but replaced with a modern looking structure. The ice house foundation is slated to be buried without any study of its importance. The barn is to be demolished and replaced with a structure of a different design even though we do not have another Depression Era barn in town. The Morrison house is completely overlooked without consideration of how it could be utilized. In short, the "new plan" removes the elements of Morrison Farm that make it "Morrison Farm".

Based on what I have seen, I am glad I left MFC since my suggestions fell on deaf ears and it appears that the authors of the several studies were treated the same way. In addition, Mr. Mullin has commented when questions have been posed about the Cemetery lands that it is all owned by the Town of Acton, not the Cemetery Department. Well, Acton voters purchased the cemetery land for cemetery purposes, just as they purchased Morrison for general municipal purposes and the ice house parcel for recreational use.

If MFIP is brought to Annual Town Meeting, I will not vote for it. I hope you realize that my name has been used to promote the acceptance of the project but the more I learn about it the less enchanted I am. The end result is certainly not "preservation" and in the end, this project totally replaces everything at Morrison Farm with something that has not been openly vetted. To "pave paradise and put in a parking lot" is not what Morrison Farm is about. We do not need a history/nature center to display that which is about to be destroyed.

While I have scanned the Town's Web Site for minutes of the Morrison Farm Committee, many are not available. I have tried to follow the process but find it difficult which has resulted in both the Violation of the Open Meeting Law and an increasing populace of upset residents. I am disappointed with the Selectman Liaison who is also assigned to the Cemetery Commission as this has created an uncomfortable feeling having him on both sides.

Having served this town now for 52 years and planning to continue on while I can, I do hope you will consider my thoughts seriously and take appropriate actions to "clean up the mess" that MFIP has created. Besides the bridge that will likely be built across Nashoba Brook, I hope that the Acton Board of Selectmen will consider my letter seriously and rebuild the bridge that Morrison Farm has destroyed between the Cemetery Commissioners, the residents and the groups who have come to know and love Morrison Farm.

Sincerely yours,
William A. Klauer