



TOWN OF CONCORD

Planning Division

141 Keyes Road - Concord, MA - 01742

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MEMORANDUM

To: Historical Commission

From: Marcia Rasmussen, Director

Date: February 10, 2021

Re: **Update on the Wheeler Harrington House and Land**

Background from the 2020/2021 Community Preservation application

Harrington Park is a 15.6 acre parcel of former farm land bordered by Harrington Road to the south and the Assabet River to the north. This unique Town-owned property is the site of the Wheeler- Harrington house, an intact ca. 1745 farmhouse that has retained its original location and setting, but the parcel is far more than a residential house lot. The property was a working farm from the 1700s until 1974, when the Town purchased the property from its last owners, the LeBallister family. A plan was developed at that time to demolish the house and convert the site into playing fields, but as residents became aware of the history and significance of the former farmhouse, a grass roots effort spread to restore and preserve the house. This effort convinced the Town to abandon its original plan for the site, and in 1975 area residents banded together to restore and repair the structure.

Since the 1970s, the Town has rented the house to live-in caretakers, who have had some responsibilities for maintaining the land in close proximity to the house, and the remaining field to the adjacent farmer. The oversight of the property is divided between the Concord Historical Commission (CHC), which oversees the preservation of the house, and the Natural Resources Commission (NRC), which oversees the land. Managing the lease agreement for rental of the house is the responsibility of the Town Manager's Office. In recent years, both the CHC and NRC have taken steps to develop a better understanding of the property and make use of its potential. Through a series of projects, two of which were CPA funded, the CHC has succeeded in adding the property to the National Register of Historic Places, completing a much needed Historic Structure Report for the building, and having CPA funds allocated to make much needed repairs to the historic house. In respect to the grounds, the NRC has developed a new trail system linking the site along the Assabet River to Second Division Brook. These trails were made possible by a series of recent land and easement acquisitions, partially funded with CPA project funds, which have opened up new possibilities for a network of pathways to connect the Town open spaces throughout this area. All of this work has taken a step towards reconnecting Harrington Park with the larger community, and the proposed project is intended to take the next step in developing the future of the site.

Update on the current tenants at the Wheeler-Harrington House

In September 2020, the Town informed the current tenant that the Town will not be opting to renew the Lease Agreement upon its expiration in December 2021. This was done to provide the tenant with more than a year of notice to help ensure they would be able to find suitable alternative housing. In January 2021, the Town learned that the tenant would be moving out over the summer after the school year is completed.

Brief Community Preservation Project Summary

The Town has requested funds to hire a consultant to assist with public outreach in determining future use and plans as they relate to the Wheeler-Harrington House and Harrington Park. This property is a unique Town-owned parcel containing a historic structure on 15.6 acres of fields, wetlands, trails and riverfront in West Concord. A site with tremendous potential as a recreational and open space destination, it is primarily known as the home of the ca. 1745 Wheeler Harrington House. The Town, through funding provided by the Community Preservation Act funds, previously conducted a historic survey of the house, contracted to have the property surveyed, and has been working with the preservation consultant who dismantled the Ball-Benson house and barn about the potential to relocate the barn to this site. The Town proposes to hire a professional facilitator to help with public outreach that will result in developing a community specific plan for the site. The first step in this process will be to ask the Historical Commission and the Natural Resources Commission meet later this spring to discuss the potential of relocating the Ball-Benson barn and house to this property and how this effort could benefit both agencies and the Town.

Wheeler-Harrington House and Harrington Park - \$20,000 requested

- Community Preservation funds were used to:
- & Conduct an Historic Structure Assessment and an Environmental Assessment;
 - & Prepare a topographic survey plan of the property (exclusive of floodplain)
 - & Requested for roof repairs, but the funds were not utilized, and will be returned for reallocation.

WHEELER-HARRINGTON HOUSE
Concord, Massachusetts



HISTORIC STRUCTURE ASSESSMENT

CULTURAL STRUCTURAL &
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS

THE WHEELER-HARRINGTON PROPERTY
West Concord, MA

February 2015

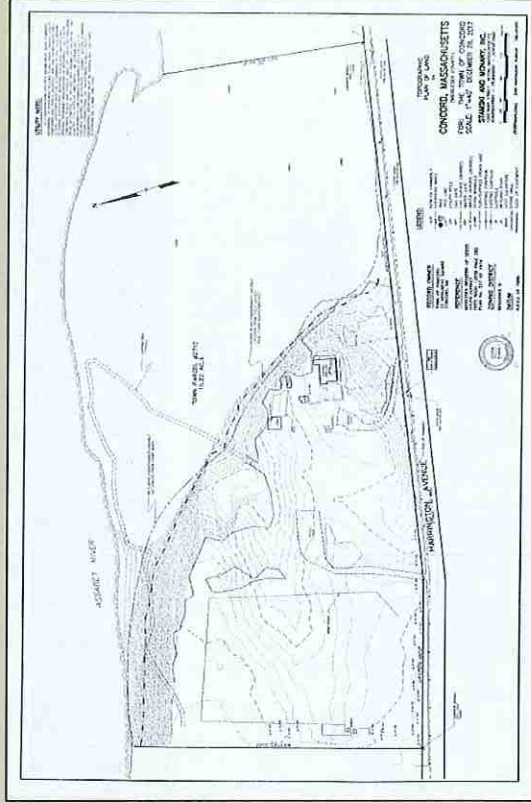
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Wheeler-Harrington House and Harrington Park - Community Engagement

Why a Community Engagement process?

- ⌘ To provide two-way communication between government and the public,
- ⌘ Provide a platform for people to voice their opinion and inform decision-making,
- ⌘ Inclusive community engagement practices have the capacity to create a shared vision for the property's future.



The Wheeler-Harrington House and surrounding landscape were added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2013.

Wheeler-Harrington House and Harrington Park - considering future use

Two Town Boards (CHC & NRC) have oversight of the property; to set the stage for a robust discussion about future uses with residents we need assistance:

- & Compiling information obtained to date,
- & defining areas of concern for each Town board, and
- & identifying the range of potential uses for the site.

