

Special Meeting With Further Goals Of Both Town And Fishermen's Assoc.

by Susan Nickerson

Last week the Chatham Board of Selectmen set a special fall town meeting, so that the voters may consider allocation of monies from the Community Preservation Act fund toward the restoration of the historic property at 1566 Main St., West Chatham, the Captain Nathan Harding House. The Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association (CCCHFA) is seeking approval of these funds as a cornerstone to secure our ability to purchase the renovated property from the Oppenheim family.

While we understand the desirability of consolidating this funding request with articles to be on a late October special town meeting warrant, we have examined closely what this four-week difference would mean for the timetable for construction, and concluded that it would be unworkable to wait. In order for the interior work on the building to proceed over the winter and prepare the house for early summer occupancy by CCCHFA, the exterior must be completed by Thanksgiving, making the house tight to weather before winter rains, ice or snow set in. If the vote on CPC funds were to be in late October, there would only be four weeks to do this work, as opposed to eight, and that is simply not enough time for the exterior work to be completed. The result would mean pushing off the project until the spring, jeopardizing the timing and current commitment of contractors at extremely favorable rates. Because of increased costs, deferring the project until spring would very much affect the feasibility of the project for the Hook Association, particularly our ability to have the barn rebuilt, a critical component of the project for us.

We certainly acknowledge that the additional town meeting in late September requires more effort on the part of town staff, selectmen and the finance committee. We appreciate and thank them for that work. We also want to thank the other town committees which have worked hard to support this project, which they do unanimously: the planning board, the historic business district commission (HBDC), the zoning board of appeals (ZBA) and the historical commission. CCCHFA is willing to pay for the cost of holding this meeting. A September special town meeting to accomplish our goal while also preserving the integrity of West Chatham, is, from our perspective, reasonable and necessary.


CCCHFA is indebted to the Oppenheim family for making this opportunity available to us and for donating an extensive amount of their time and effort in the planning and design for the project, and in shepherding it through to completion. In addition, their generous \$100,000 gift to CCCHFA to support the project has helped our fundraising efforts substantially. We will be signing a purchase and sale agreement with Mr.

Oppenheim prior to the town meeting vote so that the townspeople can be assured that CCCHFA will become the owner of the property once renovations are completed early next summer. The Oppenheims will be conveying this property to CCCHFA at their cost. If town meeting approves the warrant unanimously recommended by the community preservation committee, the entire \$185,136 will go toward our purchase and ensure that the barn is rebuilt.

We look forward to the support of voters at the upcoming special town meeting.

Susan Nickerson is executive director of the Cape Cod Commercial Hook Fishermen's Association.

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