

22 January 2015

Buddy Baker-Smith, Chair
Community Preservation
Committee Dartmouth Town Hall
400 Slocum Road
Dartmouth, MA 02747

Dear Mr. Baker-Smith,

I write this letter in support of the Dartmouth Heritage Preservation Trust (DHPT) application for a Community Preservation funds for continuing work at the historic Elihu Akin House in South Dartmouth. The Akin House is a unique community resource. It inspires curiosity about the past and has the potential to make significant contributions to public service missions of education, heritage, and civic engagement, as well as to an understanding of town history. Perhaps most significantly, the house provides a physical link to the past and its lessons, which are otherwise all too easily neglected.

I directed archaeological excavation at the Akin House in 2007 through 2009. The results were submitted to the Office of the State Archaeologist and are on file at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth library, along with the thousands of artifacts recovered. It is my hope that DHPT utilizes these material finds and findings, moving forward with site management in close consultation with the Dartmouth Historical Commission, Massachusetts Historical Commission, and State Archaeologist's Office to fulfill the potential of the historic Akin property.

The Akin House generates personal connections to a communal past. For example, two prehistoric stone tools are small but potent reminders of Dartmouth's deep history and ongoing Native American presence in our town and region. Thousands of artifacts teach us about other occupants' experiences during the late 18th through 20th centuries. The property reminds us of what we, collectively, may have forgotten: Dartmouth's millennia of history; traditional construction techniques; ravages of the Revolutionary War; working-class economies of the earlier 20th century; Colonial Revival fantasies; shifting notions of virtue; and the changing meanings of home and family over the past three plus centuries. These are powerful, sometimes unexpected stories with both local and national importance.

When the house was open for archaeology, visitors stopped by every day and participated in volunteer activities like washing and excavation. It was especially gratifying to introduce children to the site. Time and again, we heard that people had long *wondered* about the house; were glad something was being done; wanted to know about its history; and looked forward to visiting the Akin House again in the future.

It is my hope that a Community Preservation Fund proposal will support stabilization and interpretation of the Akin House and allow the group that has stepped forward to care for this significant property—DHPT—to serve a mission of stewardship. I hope the project will be part of a gathering effort to promote, preserve, and protect the Dartmouth's non-renewable cultural resources.

Sincerely,



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