

Plymouth Community
Preservation Committee



Memo

To: Selectmen's office
From: Community Preservation Committee
Date: Monday, February 21, 2005
Re: Article 16B Harlow House

ARTICLE 16B To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to acquire by gift, purchase or eminent domain, or otherwise, for historic preservation under the Community Preservation Program the fee or other interest in land located at 119 Sandwich Street in the Town of Plymouth, Massachusetts, known as the Harlow House and shown as Assessors Map 22 , Lots 104 containing 0.274 acres more or less, and more fully described in a deed recorded in the Plymouth County Registry of Deeds in Volume 1363,Page 218 & 219, said interest in land to be managed by the Plymouth Antiquarian Society, Incorporated; and as funding therefore to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds, transfer from the Community Preservation Fund, and/or borrow a sum of money pursuant to G.L. c.44B or any other general or special law for said acquisition, or take any other action relative thereto.

COMMUNIT PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

RECOMMENDATION BY THE COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE:
Unanimous Approval: On Thursday, February 13 the CPC voted to recommend to Town Meeting the Harlow House restoration in the amount of \$134,000 from the Historical CPA Fund.

The 1677 Harlow House is facing severe structural problems, including a deteriorating foundation and decaying framing, including sills, beams, corner posts and joists. These areas of structural weakness are sufficiently advanced to make the building unsafe for public access. There are problems of high moisture and water penetration causing decay and insect infestation, and threatening the integrity of the timber-framed structure. Complete loss of this structure is a real possibility if repairs are not undertaken as soon as possible.

Because of the extremely serious condition of the Harlow House- it may justifiably be considered Plymouth's most endangered historic property of significance at present – time is of the essence. If the property is to be saved, work must begin during the next construction cycle this spring. For this reason, the CPC makes this recommendation for consideration for Spring Town Meeting

The Harlow House, a State and National Register historic site is one of the few remaining 17th century buildings in the oldest established town in the Commonwealth. Some times called the “Old Fort House “. The property is historically significant as the home of William Harlow, a farmer and town official, who also served in the local militia and participated in the King Philip’s War. In 1676, Harlow was granted permission to salvage material from the Pilgrim’s fort-house on Burial Hill to use in the construction of his new dwelling.

The Harlow House has a history of broad public involvement. The first “living history” museum in the area and a site for educational program since the 1920s. Every spring and fall, local school groups visit the Harlow House to learn about the house and the family that lived there. In the summer, the house becomes the main learning resource for hands-on children’s program and a site for many public events, including a traditional fishcake breakfast annually for the past 71 years and the historical performance, “The Corn Planting,” performed by local school children since the 1920s.

The restoration of the 1677 Harlow House provides significant benefits to the Town of Plymouth from educational, economic viability of down town and the tourism industry for the Town of Plymouth.

The Harlow restoration project fully reflects the goals of the CPA specific to the preservation and restoration of historic resources. In all aspects of the restoration project, the Society is committed to preserving the historic appearance of the building. If funding is granted, a permanent preservation restriction would be placed on the property, establishing the Harlow House as a historic resource for the Town of Plymouth in perpetuity.

The Antiquarian Society also recognizes the importance of keeping the house alive and active as a learning resource. To help re-establish this unique site as a destination of interest, the Society will offer tours free of charge for all visitors for one year following the completion of the restoration and the re-opening of the house to the public.

The Society is requesting \$134,000 in funding. This represents less than half of the total estimated project cost of \$300,000. The Society is pursuing numerous additional funding sources and will soon announce a capital campaign in support of this project. To date, \$70,000 in matching funds has been raised. The Massachusetts Historical Commission has awarded a \$60,000 from the Massachusetts Preservation Grant Project, and an additional \$10,000 has been pledged by the William Harlow Family Association. The Society will either raise through individual donations and corporate support, or spend from its own existing resources to supply the remaining matching funds, in order to fully fund the project. Upon completion of the restoration project, the Society will set aside an additional \$5,000 for the Harlow House Preservation fund for future care and upkeep to the CPA funded restoration work.