

# Sawin House Committee

Natick Board of Selectmen Update

September 5, 2017

# Background

- Directed by TM vote November 3, 2015 – see Certificate of Vote

- Committee Members

Duane Houghton, Chair

Henry Haugland, Vice Chair

Mike Marotta, Secretary

Moire Dobransky Balsam

George Sawin

Bill Proia (contributes pro bono legal assistance)

# Why Care?

- Built circa 1690, the Sawin property is the site of the oldest homestead in Natick, and one of the oldest houses in suburban Boston and all of New England.
- As home to Natick's first European settler as well as participants in the Battles of Lexington and Concord, and Natick's earliest abolitionist voice, it is a legacy of the values and courage that enabled us to become who we are as a nation.
- It symbolizes the unique partnership between Native Americans and European colonists in Natick's and America's history.
- As such, it is a candidate for the National Registry of Historic Places.

# Key Metrics

**Task: Examine relevant possibilities that would allow the preservation and maintenance of the Sawin House at its current location**

- First Meeting 29 Sept. 2016
- 18 Public meetings held
- Article will be filed for fall TM consideration
- This discussion is intended as a “heads up” that the article is coming
- Content will mirror the elements presented tonight

# Decision Criteria

- Preserve and protect the Sawin House - a “museum house” is not envisioned.
- Minimize financial exposure to Natick and eliminate it entirely for Mass Audubon.
- Ensure that the Sawin House is available to be visited by academic investigators, preservationists, historians and other small interest groups.
- Utilize the Sawin House as a symbol around which Natick history can be presented and further researched.
- Explore high school students and other interested parties as a resource to produce documentary videos and studies on Natick history (structured similar to RoboNatick).

# Recommendation

- The Town of Natick acquires the Sawin Homestead, consistent with the terms of the Stillman Deed that transferred the property to Mass Audubon and Mass Audubon's Articles of Organization.
- In parallel, a non-profit organization is formed that will lease the property from the Town and pursue fundraising to enable preservation and maintenance.

By having Natick as a partner, we believe this will facilitate fundraising and help protect and secure the Sawin Homestead over the long term.

# Key Points

- There is negligible financial or legal risk to the Town with this proposal. However, absent successful fundraising the property will be lost, whether through continued neglect or demolition.
- The Town always reserves the right to convey the property to another owner, consistent with the Stillman Deed and Mass Audubon's Articles of Organization.

# Suggested Deal Points with Mass Audubon

The following terms have been presented to Mass Audubon but are still under review and are therefore subject to change:

1. Sawin House not to be used as a permanent residence (already agreed).
2. No parking on street (this is already prohibited by Town regulation). Shared driveway easement and sufficient off-street parking area for both Sawin House visitors and Broadmoor staff.
3. House not to be used as a permanent ongoing office or meeting venue (perhaps further define as "for more than 5 or 10 or xx people at one time").
4. Broadmoor to be notified at least 48 (or 72 or xx) hours in advance of any large group tours or school visits to the house (i.e., over 20 or xx people at one time). Such large visits not to exceed more than once per month (or once per week?) on average, and a Sawin House docent or representative to be present for any large group tours or visit.
5. Sawin House and Broadmoor to agree in advance on any events at the Sawin House after dark or using amplified sound systems or portable lighting.
6. Sawin House visitors to be advised (by the on-site representative and signage) to only enter Broadmoor through the Visitors' Center on Route 16 unless they are already a Mass Audubon member.
7. Current utilities (well water, septic and electric) to be shared between Broadmoor and Sawin House. Sawin House to assume full responsibility for the well and septic service as long as Broadmoor does not restrict or significantly alter its usage (e.g., add any bathrooms or an irrigation system to its Maintenance Shed). Sawin House to install at its own expense a separate electric meter for the electric usage in the Sawin House (Broadmoor's net meter in the house could remain as it is).
8. Sawin House fully responsible for insuring and maintaining utilities (water, septic, and separately-metered electric) for the Sawin House.