

**Preserving the “Untold” Story of Concord, Massachusetts**  
**A Lesson in Civic Involvement**  
Milde Waterfall, Don Wilson, Peter Zopes

**Purpose:**

To introduce students to local civic involvement and participation through a Structured Academic Controversy involving questions of historic interpretation, preservation, and private ownership.

**Objectives: Students will**

- 1) Read background articles and documents related to the question of the preservation of the Caesar Robbins House in Concord, MA. This activity is based on a recent conflict in the town of Concord, known for both its role in the American Revolution and the nineteenth-century Intellectual Revolution of the Transcendental Movement.
- 2) Participate in the process in various roles – acting as members of the Board of Selectmen, representing the various public and private interests, and the community, or as concerned citizens attending a Board of Selectmen’s meeting.
- 3) Negotiate a final conclusion – offering suggestions and compromises as seen fit.
- 4) Vote on a final decision proposed by the Board of Selectmen, based on proposals, questions, compromises offered by the group.

**Opening Activities Discussions**

- Questioning preservation uses
- Establishing how we interpret the past
- Exploring conflicts between private and public uses of historic places
- Discussing accepted interpretation vs. new interpretations based on new evidence
- Learning about eminent domain – when is the taking of private property for public use justified?

**Conflict in the Activity**

- Simulated planning committee
- Conflicting views expressed by different groups in the community
- Students representing various committees will make presentation and offer proposals for the Caesar Robbins House
- Other students act as board members or concerned citizens
- After each presentation, questions can be posed by any one present, following formal rules of order.

**People / Groups Involved: (Can be reduced as needed)**

- 1) Owner of property
- 3) Drinking Gourd Project Representative
- 3) Concord-Carlisle Human Rights Council representative
- 4) The Concord Historical Commission representative
- 5) The Old Manse representative
- 6) Minute Man National Historical Park representative
- 7) Community Coalition representative
- 8) Members of the Board of Selectmen (3 to 5)
- 9) Community Preservation Committee representative

## Questions for Board of Selectmen and citizens regarding Caesar Robbins House

- Move, preserve, or reproduce historic structure?
- Knock down or restore?
- What to allow in its place
- Question of private property
  - o Use of eminent domain to preserve history? At what cost?
  - o What of public use? When is it appropriate, if ever?
  - o Supreme Court case – *Kelo v. City of New London (Connecticut)*
  - o Conflict within historic preservation community – apply to Caesar Robbins House: to preserve where it is (in situ); move to a new location; preserve in its current condition, or restore to its historic appearance; use it in a manner fitting its historic importance – as a museum of the history of civil liberties.

## Process - Board of Selectmen

- Research rules for board meeting (Perhaps follow a modified version of Roberts Rules of Order, used by most formal boards across the nation! Make it something useable for this activity. All persons must follow these rules or lose their chance to participate.)
- Allow each group to make a presentation – time limit 3 minutes. Can use images, architectural plans, etc.
- Open meeting to questions from participants and citizens
- Weigh proposals
- Make proposal for solution
- Have proposal voted on by board and citizens

## Persuasive Essay Assignment

Having become familiar with the various stakeholders (and their respective positions) and the arguments pertaining to the several options regarding what to do with the property located at 324 Bedford Street; you are to assume the role of a member of the community and write a persuasive letter communicating your position on the issue to the town council.

In addition to simply stating your preference for one of the various options debated during the in class discussion (you also of course could always suggest some other course of action), you will need to include the rationale for your position citing evidence presented by the various participants in the class discussion.

Students will be graded on their expression and inclusion of the different details of the proposals from the different groups and the final proposal from the Planning Board or Selectmen.

## Additional Resources:

- 1) *Boston Globe* article on Concord's attempt to preserve the Cesar Robbins House
- 2) Agenda Item A for board meeting – Memo dated December 16, 2009
- 3) Agenda Item B for board meeting – Memo dated January 20, 2010
- 4) Overview of Town Meeting
- 5) Historical Stakeholders
- 6) Town of Concord Groups Involved
- 7) Private Stakeholders
- 8) Civic Debate Note Taking Form

**boston.com**

THIS STORY HAS BEEN FORMATTED FOR EASY PRINTING

## In Concord, a bid to save tie to abolitionist days

**The Boston Globe**

By Peter Schworm, Globe Staff | September 14, 2009

CONCORD - Amid such historical touchstones as Walden Pond and the Old North Bridge, the quaint cottage barely merits a second glance, just another Revolutionary-era New England house in a town steeped in the past.

But the brown shingled house on Bedford Street, built in the 1780s by the town's first freed slave, is the last of its kind, a crucial but long-forgotten link to the town's early black community and abolitionist movement. With the house in danger of being demolished, its history has emerged from obscurity, and advocates have mounted a spirited campaign to stave off its demise.

The owners, who were bequeathed the property, had applied for a permit to level the one-story house in hope of selling the land, while the town wants to save the house for posterity. A six-month stay issued by the town expired Saturday, and while there are no immediate plans to level the house, advocates are scrambling to raise \$30,000 for moving costs to keep it from harm.

While tourists flock to Concord for its famed battle sites, cemeteries, and homes of literary giants, the town's history of slavery, and the lives of former slaves and their descendants, is sadly overlooked, local historians say. Bringing it to light, they said, would help make the town's storied history whole.

"It's really the only physical structure left that links to that era," said Polly Attwood, a member of The Drinking Gourd Project, whose name was inspired by a spiritual song that once instructed fugitive slaves to head to freedom in the North by following the Big Dipper, symbolized by a gourd.

The organization, part of the Concord-Carlisle Human Rights Council, is seeking to turn the house into a museum chronicling Concord's African-American and abolitionist history.

"This is a true part of the town's history, and I think we do a disservice if we don't include all of it," Attwood said.

For nearly a century, three generations of black residents descended from a freed slave named Caesar Robbins lived in the house. A veteran of the American Revolution, he was freed in 1780, the year that Massachusetts enacted a Declaration of Rights stating that "all men are born free and equal," said Lou Sideris, chief of planning and communications at Minute Man National Historical Park.

The house is also closely associated with the abolitionist movement, and once hosted a meeting of the local Female Anti-Slavery Society.

Until recently, this rich history was scarcely known. But after the house's last owner, Agnes Mackino, died, the house was bequeathed to several heirs, who last spring applied for a demolition permit. That quickly drew the attention of advocates who, after learning of the house's storied history, urged the town's historical commission to intervene. Convinced of the site's importance, the commission granted a six-month reprieve.

"People are astonished it's still there," Attwood said. "It tends to fade into the background."

The house's front yard is badly overgrown, with vines crawling up the lamppost out front. In comparison to the neatly kept yards along the street, the green jumble gives the house a fittingly mysterious feel. The only nod to history is a wooden marker that reads "Peter Hutchinson C. 1780."

Those working to save the house have raised \$7,000 and are busily writing grant applications to historical groups for additional funds.

The house, which is assessed at \$384,000, is currently on the market, but the size of the property might prove a deterrent. Marcia Rasmussen, the town's director of planning and land management, said that at less than half an acre, the lot is too small to build on without a special permit.

Still, owners could sidestep the zoning requirement by overhauling the house without officially building anew, preserving its grandfathered status.

A Concord lawyer representing the heirs could not be reached for comment. Rasmussen said she has had only preliminary discussions with the attorney about the town's interest.

The realtor selling the property, Tammy Nuenighoff, said the house is being eyed exclusively as a tear-down, and that the buyers would probably be happy to have it taken off their hands.

"It's cheaper to tear it down than renovate it, so it would save them the trouble," she said. "The price is really for the land."

The town hopes to relocate the house to property it owns near the Old Manse, a 1770 house on the Concord River near the Old North Bridge. The town leases the land to the Minute Man park, which has expressed strong interest in adding the house as a destination.

"It's a huge story and wonderful opportunity," said Nancy Nelson, park superintendent.

Advocates believe the house's links to freed slaves and the abolitionist movement will make it a destination for history buffs.

Caesar Robbins's daughter, Susan, hosted at least one abolitionist meeting there. A later resident, Peter Hutchinson, the first black who registered to vote in Concord, was described by Henry David Thoreau as "a dexterous pig-butcher."

Hutchinson is buried down the road in an unmarked grave, a symbol of a legacy that deserves better, preservationists say.

"We always think of Concord's history through the lens of the white male contribution," said Maria Madison, who belongs to the Drinking Gourd Project. "Yes, they are phenomenal. But there were other incredible contributions from women and African-Americans in promoting civil liberties, and they should be recognized, too." ■



**TOWN OF CONCORD**  
**Department of Planning & Land Management**  
141 Keyes Road . Concord . MA . 01742

**To:** Christopher Whelan, Town Manager  
**From:** Lara Kritzer, Senior Planner  
Via Marcia Rasmussen, Director  
**Re:** **Information and update about the Caesar Robbins House**  
**324 Bedford Street**  
**Date:** December 16, 2009

The Caesar Robbins/Peter Hutchinson House, located at 324 Bedford Street, is a significant historic resource because of its age (circa 1780) and association with Concord's African American and Abolitionist history. The house has been for sale since the spring 2009, after the owner had passed away. The Drinking Gourd Project, a Division of the Concord-Carlisle Human Rights Council, has been working with the Concord Historical Commission since April 2009 to find a way to acquire the house and relocate it to a site closer to its original location on "the edge of the Great Field" near the Old Manse with the goal of creating a Civil Liberties Museum.

After several attempts to work with the estate to acquire just the house, the Drinking Gourd Project amended its application to the Community Preservation Fund in mid-November seeking to acquire the property (house and the land) rather than to simply restore the house. They have also worked with the Department of Planning & Land Management to identify a potential site for relocation of the house on what is now believed to be a town-owned parcel of land (1945 legislation authorized the Trustees of Reservation to transfer the land to the town, but we are still searching for the deed) in the area near the Old Manse and the Bullet Hole House on Monument Street, near the Great Field. That site is just north of the North Bridge parking lot land that is leased by the Town to the Minute Man National Historical Park.

At this time, we anticipate that there are several actions for the Town: a) support of the Board of Selectmen and b) approval by Town meeting to lease the town-owned land to the Drinking Gourd Project to relocate the house and establish a museum; c) Town Meeting approval of the Community Preservation funding and, potentially to d) be the purchaser of the house and property using Community Preservation Act funds as authorized by Town Meeting. If the Town purchases the property using CPA funds, the property must be restricted to one of the four purposes of the CPA – historic preservation, community housing, open space and recreation; we will not be able to sell the property for redevelopment. This raises several other questions about the ultimate use of the

property once the house is relocated because of the existing characteristics of the lot, however, this decision can be postponed.

Current Status of the property at 324 Bedford Street - The house remains vacant and no offers have been made on it in recent months. The Demolition Delay on the property ran out in September 2009 and a new property owner could appear at any time and significantly alter the historic structure. Demolition of the house could occur after the new owner seeks and obtains a special permit or variance from the Board of Appeals and construction of a new house could begin after issuance of an Order of Conditions under the Wetlands Protection Act.

The existing lot at 324 Bedford Street is a nonconforming parcel: the lot area is 17,614 sq. ft. (20,000 is the required minimum lot area); the current front yard setback of the house is 6+ feet (required front yard setback is 20 feet); the current side yard setback of the house is 3-4 feet (required side yard setback is 12-15 feet); and the existing driveway is over the adjacent property with the current owner's permission (which could change). Additionally, there are wetlands at the rear of the property, such that any work to the house or garage will likely require review and an Order of Conditions under the Wetlands Protection Act.

CPA Funding Application - The Drinking Gourd Project initially applied for funds to restore the house and has since amended their application for funds to purchase the house and property. The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) is currently considering bonding up to \$300,000 for the purchase of the property. If the CPC moves forward with this recommendation, there are three ways in which the purchase of the property could be done.

- 1) The CPC could recommend bonding for the property under Historic Preservation. A deed restriction is required for any land acquisitions using CPA funds, which means an historic preservation restriction would need to run with the land as well as the house. However, if the house is relocated, there is the question of what exactly would be left to be restricted on the land for historic preservation purposes.
- 2) The CPC could recommend bonding funds under historic preservation for the house itself, and other (Open Space/Recreation/Community Housing) for the land. The Community Preservation Coalition has offered several examples of warrant articles used by other communities to purchase land for undesignated CPA fund eligible uses, which would allow the Town to determine the best end use of the property at a future date.
- 3) The CPC could recommend bonding for the purchase of only a preservation restriction on the house - since CPA funds would not be used to buy the land, no restrictions would need to be placed on it and its future sale would not be restricted to any specific purpose. In this case, the Drinking Gourd Project would then be purchasing the property on their own and the Town would own the preservation restriction on the house. It should be noted that the restriction would be valued at far less than the property, so the Drinking Gourd Project would have to raise the

additional funds for the land purchase. However, after obtaining a special permit from the Board of Appeals, they would then be able to sell the property to a developer or buyer who could build a new house and use the proceeds of the sale for the restoration of the house.

Other information:

- The Drinking Gourd Project has raised about \$45,000 to move the building to an alternate site. However, the sellers of the property are only interested in selling the entire property, which is currently on the market for \$300,000.
- The Drinking Gourd Project has an estimate (\$40,000 +/-) for relocating the building and have begun working with local Preservation Architect Larry Sorli to assess the condition of the building and identify work required to restore it.
- The Drinking Gourd Project is also working to address other project concerns on their own including the following:
  - 1) Completing an independent appraisal of the property to confirm the value with and without the house. This is scheduled for next week.
  - 2) Hiring an Engineer to look at both the current and potential new site. They have met with a local firm who has offered their services pro bono to the project and have taken a preliminary look at the properties. However, the owner's attorney has been reluctant to let them survey the property - they are working on convincing her of the necessity of this work but it has slowed them down. The engineers have been asked to consider any wetlands issues and how the new utilities (water/electricity) could be brought to the locations.
  - 3) Completing the paperwork for Non Profit Status - Nancy Grohol of the Thoreau Farm Trust is working with the group to get their paperwork completed for 501(C)(3) status.
  - 4) Looking into future costs and liabilities - They are aware of the need for insurance for the property and have spoken with a local firm about setting this up once they own the property.



**TOWN OF CONCORD**  
**COMMUNITY PRESERVATION COMMITTEE**  
141 KEYES ROAD, CONCORD, MA 01742  
TEL. (978) 318-3290 FAX (978) 318-3291

**MEMORANDUM**

Date: January 20, 2010  
To: Board of Selectmen  
Chris Whelan, Town Manager  
Through: Gary Clayton, Chair, Community Preservation Committee  
From: Lara Kritzer, Senior Planner  
CC: Marcia Rasmussen, Director, Planning and Land Management  
Re: **Update on the Caesar Robbins House Project**

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On behalf of the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) and the Drinking Gourd Project (DGP), the Planning Division presents this memorandum to update the Board on the current status of this complex project. At this time, it is anticipated that support from the Board of Selectmen will be needed for 1) the purchase by the Town of the existing house and lot at 324 Bedford Road; 2) the transfer/lease of the building to the DGP for the purpose of relocating it to land at the North Bridge Parking Area and restoring the house in that location; 3) an amendment to the lease/agreement between the Town, Minute Man National Park (MMNP) and the DGP for the use of the North Bridge Parking Area, and; 4) the ultimate disposition of the land at 324 Bedford Road when, and if, the house is removed.

**1. Purchase by the Town of the existing house and lot at 324 Bedford Road**

In December, the CPC unanimously voted to recommend this project for funding at the 2010 Annual Town Meeting in the amount of \$300,000 to be raised through the bonding of future CPA funds. This is the first project for which the CPC has considered bonding, and that action was taken based on the unique nature of this project and its historical importance to the community.

In an update on this project provided to the Board in December, 2009 (see attached), several options were outlined for moving forward with this project. The CPC has since had an opportunity to further assess the project and the bonding process with both Town Counsel and Finance Director Tony Logalbo. If Town Meeting agrees to bond CPA funds for this purpose, then state law (MGL. Ch. 44) requires that the property be acquired by the Town itself. Once the Town owns the property, it can choose to assign the management of the property to another non-profit organization (such as the DGP) or to sell the property (for a public purpose such as historic preservation) once the bond itself has been repaid. At present, the CPC anticipates that the funds will be bonded for a three year term.

## **2. Transfer/lease of the house**

The CPC anticipates that the Drinking Gourd Project will pursue a long term management agreement with the Town for the use and maintenance of the Caesar Robbins House. In order to demonstrate this organization's capacity to sustain such a venture, the CPC requested that the DGP undertake and document a variety of key programmatic and operational issues prior to Town Meeting. These activities are enumerated below as a series of conditions that the CPC believes must be fulfilled prior to Town Meeting. After each of these conditions there is a brief update on the current efforts of the DGP in addressing such actions.

Condition 1: That a professional appraisal be completed that determines the fair market value of the property both with and without the existing house in place.

*Response: A copy of the professional appraisal was received by the CPC on January 13. The land has been valued at \$250,000 with, or without, the house. .*

Condition 2: That the Drinking Gourd Project meet with the Board of Selectmen and secure their understanding and support for this project including the possibility that the Town may serve as an interim owner of the property.

*Response: The DGP has been in contact with Board Chairman Stanly Black and is prepared to meet with the Board at their convenience. The purpose of this memo is in part to address this condition.*

Condition 3: That a written agreement be established between the land owner of the future site for the Caesar Robbins House and the Drinking Gourd Project. This agreement could be in the form of a Memorandum of Agreement between the two parties establishing the right of the Drinking Gourd Project to use the land and who will be operating and maintaining it. Also, that the Drinking Gourd Project work with the Town to draft a Warrant Article for the 2010 Town Meeting to approve the disposition of the existing property, the new location of the house and its operation and maintenance.

*Response: A Warrant Article has been completed and is included in the Warrant for the 2010 Town Meeting. Town Staff is working with the DGP to address the initial ownership questions (See below).*

Condition 4: That a civil engineering report be completed for the building to verify the condition of the structure and its ability to be relocated.

*Response: DGP has had a civil engineering firm survey and evaluate the site and their report is pending. DGP is currently in the process of hiring a structural engineer to evaluate the building itself to confirm that it can be relocated.*

Condition 5: That the Drinking Gourd Project apply for non profit corporation status. *Response: DGP has submitted their applications for Non Profit status and prepared Bylaws, signed Articles of Incorporation in Massachusetts, voted in officers, and completed the process for acquiring a tax ID number. The DGP anticipates that it will be 2 to 4 months to receive the necessary State and Federal approvals.*

Condition 6: That the Drinking Gourd Project provide a plan for moving forward with this project which includes information on the future use and configuration of the building.

*Response: The DGP has submitted to the CPC a detailed plan of action for work to be completed between January and June of this year.*

The CPC plans to continue to meet with DGP representatives on a regular basis prior to the Annual Town Meeting to review the project's progress.

### **3. North Bridge Parking Area/Alternative Location**

One of the primary goals of the project is to relocate the historic ca. 1780s portion of the building from its current position on Bedford Street to a location which would provide easier access and visibility for the new museum. The building is known to have been originally located not far from the Old Manse near what is now the Great Meadows. For some time, staff has worked with the DGP to develop a plan for relocating the building to the North Bridge Parking Area (made up of two land parcels #1260 and 1261 – see attached GIS map). This location is considered to be an ideal place for the building due to its high visibility, proximity to the Minute Man National Park (MMNP) and Old Manse, and close associations with the original location of the building.

The use of this location, though, is not without its hurdles. An initial review of the property found that parcel #1261 was not owned by the Town, as was previously thought, but by the Trustees of Reservations (TTOR). Further research at the Middlesex Registry of Deeds located a 1929 deed conveying a portion of the land to the Town (parcel #1260 - site of the current parking lot), a 1939 deed conveying the remainder of the land (parcel #1261) to TTOR and legislation passed in 1945 which allowed the TTOR property to be transferred to the Town of Concord. However, this transfer does not appear to have been consummated. Staff is working with Town Counsel to correct this problem and ensure that the Town is the owner of the property. To date, TTOR has been receptive to the idea of formalizing this agreement and completing the transfer of the land. Further research is still needed to verify what steps will be necessary to complete this process.

Several other questions have also been raised concerning this location as part of the deed investigation. Town Counsel has reviewed the agreement between the Town and the MMNP for their exclusive use of the existing parking lot (parcel #1260). This agreement between the Town/DGP and MMNP will need to be amended to allow access through the parking lot to the Caesar Robbins House. The MMNP participated in the early discussions on the possible use and locations for the building, and has been very supportive of the project to date (See attached letter). In addition, discrepancies have been discovered between the property boundaries and area of each parcel in the early deeds and legislation. This issue will also need to be dealt with before the issues concerning the Town's ownership of the land can be addressed.

### **4. Ultimate Disposition of the land at 324 Bedford Road**

The use of CPA funds for the initial purchase of the property at 324 Bedford Road requires that a permanent restriction – Historic Preservation, Open Space, or Community Housing – be placed on this land before it can re-used or sold. The question of what type of restriction is most appropriate to the project is still under review at this time.

## Overview of Town Meeting

Problem – Decision on freed slave’s cabin.

Stakeholders:

Historical societies

- Drinking Gourd Project (a Division of the Concord-Carlisle Human Rights Council)
- Concord Historical Commission
- Old Manse
- Bullet Hole House
- Minute Man Historical Park

Real Estate people

Town selectmen

- Department of Planning & Land Management (Town of Concord)
- Community Preservation Fund

Ringers?

Potential town options

1. Support of the Board of Selectmen
2. Approval by Town meeting to lease the town-owned land to the Drinking Gourd Project to relocate the house and establish a museum
3. Town Meeting approval of the Community Preservation funding and, potentially
4. Be the purchaser of the house and property using Community Preservation Act funds as authorized by Town Meeting.

If the town purchases the property using CPA funds, the property must be restricted to one of the four purposes of the CPA (Community Preservation Fund):

- Historic preservation
- Community housing,
- Open space and recreation
- No sale of property for redevelopment

Doc Agenda Item B doc may be useful here.

Doc C is the *Boston Globe* article.

## WHO WAS CAESAR ROBBINS AND WHY IS HIS HOUSE SO SPECIAL?

This humble house is a link and a witness to some of the most important and real history that we have. It is the only standing house built by an early African resident of Concord. In it, we have been given a unique gift: the opportunity to create a center where we can teach these stories to our youth and the visitors from across the US and the Globe who come to Concord each year.

<http://drinkinggourd.cchumanrights.org/blog/who-was-caesar-robbins-and-why-is-his-house-so-special/>

## Historical Stakeholders

### **The Drinking Gourd Project -**

Background: <http://drinkinggourd.cchumanrights.org/>

The Drinking Gourd Project is a newly formed Concord-based nonprofit organization focused on raising awareness of Concord's African and Abolitionist history from the 17th through the 19th centuries. Our mission is to shine a light on this history and make it even more accessible to residents and visitors in a way that will add a new layer to our understanding of our past and a deeper appreciation for the complexity of Concord and its role in creating a diverse America.

Caesar Robbins and his house.

- House moved from site across from Old Manse to present site
- CR's enlistment record indicates he fought in the American Revolution while enslaved by Simon Hunt of Concord
- 1783 – Slavery was formally ended in Massachusetts when CR built his house.
- Cr was the only African citizen of Concord listed as a landowners in the 1798 Direct Tax enumeration, listing all the property owners in Concord.
- Born 1746 (unknown place), married Phebe Bliss owned by Rev. William Emerson and Phebe Bliss Emerson (his wife). One daughter, Phillis who remained with her mother as an Emerson slave. Later married and lived in poverty with Cato Ingraham in Walden Woods.
- Second marriage, Catherine, extensive family who occupied the house for six continuous generations.
- Grandson, John Garrison worked with Henry Thoreau on the famous Wedding Garden for the Hawthornes.
- Concord's Female Anti Slavery Society hosted a meeting in the house.
- Peter Hutchinson, family member was the first Concordian of African descent to vote in Concord.

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## CONCORD-CARLISLE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

<http://www.cchumanrights.org/about/>

The **Concord-Carlisle Human Rights Council** is a community organization of volunteers working together to foster respect, understanding, good will, and conciliation among individuals and groups in the community. It is dedicated to the belief that all people are entitled to dignity and respect. The role of the Human Rights Council is one of education and advocacy.

The role of the Human Rights Council is one of education, advocacy, and mediation. Through representatives on its Executive Committee the Human Rights Council provides an opportunity for many community groups to network their activities, working together toward common goals.

Membership in the Human Rights Council is open to all persons living or working in, or in close association with the Concord-Carlisle community.

The Human Rights Council serves as the official liaison with local, national, and international human rights observances.

N.B. This group is leading the cause to save the house and working with the Drinking Gourd Project.

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## **The Concord Historical Commission**

Recognizing the need to balance reasonable and needed growth with a proper respect for the accomplishments of its past, in October, 1997, the Concord Township Board of Supervisors enacted our township's Historic Ordinance. The Ordinance created the Historical Commission, a group of volunteer residents charged with administration of the terms of the Ordinance. The Historical Commission exists to protect Concord's legacy; the living memory of the struggle for religious toleration and of the industrial and agriculture saga of America's westward expansion. The Commission meets the 1st Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. The Commission operates through negotiation in the short term, and education in the long run, seeking to raise public awareness through public programs. [http://www.twp.concord.pa.us/hist\\_com.htm](http://www.twp.concord.pa.us/hist_com.htm)

This group will be directly involved in the financial transactions and will have a historical and financial interest.

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The following groups are secondary and important players in the decision.

**The Old Manse** – This home was owned by Reverend William Emerson, grandfather of Ralph Waldo Emerson and owner of Phebe Bliss, Caesar Robbins' wife. The Old Manse sits directly across the street from the original site of the house which is where the Drinking Gourd Project would like to move it. The Old Manse directorship is very much in favor of this move and supports it strongly.

The Old Manse – 269 Monument Street, Concord, MA

<http://www.thetrustees.org/places-to-visit/greater-boston/old-manse.html>

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- CR's enlistment record indicates he fought in the American Revolution while enslaved by Simon Hunt of Concord
- 1783 – Slavery was formally ended in Massachusetts when CR built his house.
- CR was the only African citizen of Concord listed as a landowner in the 1798 Direct Tax enumeration, listing all the property owners in Concord.
- Born 1746 (unknown place), married Phebe Bliss owned by Rev. William Emerson and Phebe Bliss Emerson (his wife). One daughter, Phillis who remained with her mother as an Emerson slave. Later married and lived in poverty with Cato Ingraham in Walden Woods.
- Second marriage, Catherine, extensive family who occupied the house for six continuous generations.
- Grandson, John Garrison worked with Henry Thoreau on the famous Wedding Garden for the Hawthornes.
- Concord's Female Anti Slavery Society hosted a meeting in the house.
- Peter Hutchinson, family member was the first Concordian of African descent to vote in Concord.

<http://drinkinggourd.cchumanrights.org/blog/who-was-caesar-robbins-and-why-is-his-house-so-special/>

**Minute Man National Historical Park** - The Park includes the site suggested to move the house to as well as a much larger piece of land. The Park would be involved economically in the restoration and eventual presentation to the public. At this time they are working with the Drinking Gourd Project to secure the house. These people have a very large interest and a wide base of historical sites on their land.  
Park <http://www.nps.gov/mima/index.htm>

Caesar Robbins and his house.

- House moved from site across from Old Manse to present site
- CR's enlistment record indicates he fought in the American Revolution while enslaved by Simon Hunt of Concord
- 1783 – Slavery was formally ended in Massachusetts when CR built his house.
- Robbins was the only African citizen of Concord listed as a landowner in the 1798 Direct Tax enumeration, listing all the property owners in Concord.
- Born 1746 (unknown place), married Phebe Bliss owned by Rev. William Emerson and Phebe Bliss Emerson (his wife). One daughter, Phillis who remained with her mother as an Emerson slave. Later married and lived in poverty with Cato Ingraham in Walden Woods.
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## **Town of Concord Groups Involved**

### **Community Preservation Committee**

[http://www.concordma.gov/Pages/ConcordMA\\_CPC/index](http://www.concordma.gov/Pages/ConcordMA_CPC/index)

The Concord Community Preservation Committee (CPC) is pleased to announce its recommendations for Community Preservation Act funding at Concord's 2010 Annual Town Meeting. Concord's CPA fund received twelve applications for the \$1,106,100 available this year for potential distribution. In accordance with the state CPA statute, a minimum of 10% of the available funds must be allocated to each of the three categories of Community Housing, Historic Preservation and Open Space. The remaining funds may be distributed between the categories as recommended by the CPC and approved by vote of Town Meeting.

The CPC received a number of compelling applications this year for a wide variety of potential projects in all four CPA funding eligible categories: Community Housing, Historic Preservation, Open Space and Recreation, and included a number of significant Town resources. The CPC evaluated each project in accordance with the criteria established in the Town's Community Preservation Plan, conducted a group site visits to each of the represented properties, and presented the applications at a public hearing in November. With these assessments in mind, the CPC completed its review in December and established the following funding recommendations:

**Caesar Robbins House Preservation and Acquisition** - Drinking Gourd Project, Inc: \$60,000 to assist with the relocation of the Caesar Robbins House currently situated at 324 Bedford Street. The Drinking Gourd Project, a division of the Concord Carlisle Human Rights Council, is working to acquire the ca. 1780s structure built by one of Concord's first freed slaves and plans to relocate it to public land, restore the original structure, and convert it into a Civil Liberties Museum which will be open to the public.

### **Board of Selectmen**

[http://www.concordma.gov/Pages/ConcordMA\\_BOS/index](http://www.concordma.gov/Pages/ConcordMA_BOS/index)

The Concord Board of Selectmen has five members who are elected to serve three year terms, as defined by the Town Charter and the Term of Office Bylaw. The Town Charter, Bylaws, and the General Laws of Massachusetts grant the Selectmen broad powers to govern the Town.

The Selectmen appoint more than 20 boards and committees (permanent and ad hoc). The Selectmen act as the primary policy-making body for a wide variety of issues, which affect the Town's development and provision of services. They recommend the budget to the Annual Town Meeting, approve the reorganization of Town departments; provide oversight for matters in litigation; and act as the licensing authority for a wide variety of licenses and permits. The Selectmen also enact Rules and Regulations for such matters as traffic control, underground wiring and street lighting.

The Board of Selectmen generally meets on Monday nights at 7:30 pm at the Town House in the Selectmen's Meeting room from September to June.

## Private Stakeholder Background Information

### Property Owner

#### **Background:**

You inherited the property at 324 Bedford St, Concord, Massachusetts, when the previous owner died. The buildings (house and garage) on the lot were included in the estate. You are not interested in occupying the house on the lot and as you are responsible for the taxes on the property would like to sell it. The lot (with buildings) has an assessed value of \$414,400 and you have placed it up for sale for \$300,000. You are not interested in selling the house by itself.

**Motivation...** You are not interested in the historical significance of the property but are merely interested in selling it for its fair market value. If the city (or any one of the various private historical preservation societies) would offer you the asking price you would sell, but should a private offer be made you would take it as opposed to waiting to see what course of action that those interested in preserving the site would pursue.

Income from the sale would possibly help with paying off debt (college, mortgage, credit card), help with paying for future needs (more education for you or your kids, retirement, investments, etc.)

**Economic Involvement...** Currently you are responsible for the taxes on the property which were raised in 2009 from \$4,442 to the present rate of \$4,931.

**Goal...**To sell the property for fair market value at the earliest possible chance.

### Adjacent Land Owner

#### **Background:**

You own the lot immediately adjacent to 324 Bedford St, Concord, Massachusetts. Currently the driveway providing access to the lot next to yours is on your property and as you are in the process of selling your house (and a condition of sale is that the easement granted to the previous owner of the property next door be revoked). You want the owner of the lot to remove the driveway and restore the landscape.

**Motivation...** You are not interested in the historical significance of the property next door but are merely interested in complying with the conditions of the sale of your property.

**Economic Involvement...** Since the driveway providing access to the property next door is on your property, you are paying taxes on it but it provides no benefit to you.

**Goal...**To see that the property is sold and the easement is revoked.

## **Community Coalition**

### **Background:**

You represent the local home owners who would like to see the vacant lot located at 324 Bedford St, Concord, Massachusetts, cleared and a local park and playground constructed. The property in its current condition is an eye sore and drives down property values in the neighborhood.

**Motivation...** You are not interested in the historical significance of the property but are merely interested in the physical condition of the lot being cleaned up and its use as a recreation site.

**Economic Involvement...** You have currently raised approximately \$50,000 to be used towards purchasing the lot and creating a public park.

**Goal...** To persuade the Town Council to purchase the land and create a park and playground for the community.

# **Civic Debate Note taking Guide**

**Issue**

**\*Stake Holder**

**Interest Represented**

**-Position**

**-Arguments In Favor**

**\*Stake Holder**

**Interest Represented**

**-Position**

**-Arguments In Favor**

**\*Stake Holder**

**Interest Represented**

**-Position**

**-Arguments In Favor**