

June 26, 2025

Dear Trustees of the Governor Stoughton Trust,

Thank you for the opportunity to serve on the Town Farm RFP Review Committee. As you know, the committee met for the first time on January 30, 2025. We have met eight times plus conducted a well-attended site visit and hosted a public forum where we heard the ideas of fifty-five residents both in-person and from written communications.

While there is a wide range of opinions on town farm among committee members and town residents, I believe there is a strong consensus forming in town that the remaining four acres of one of the last remaining poor farms should include permanently affordable housing. What that housing looks like, how many units, and who should live there are all questions where there isn't full agreement. But most residents seem to agree that housing for the "poor" is part of the history of the site dating back to 1805 and should be part of its future.

Our committee heard from many Milton residents who support that position. **Fully forty of the fifty-five commenters supported some form of affordable housing on the site.** Some said it should be senior housing. Some preferred rental housing while others pressed for homeownership. We heard from residents about a "Home Inc" style development featuring townhouses while many commented positively on the farmhouse style design reusing existing buildings featured in one of two RFP responses. A dozen commenters opposed affordable housing on the site and another three expressed other concerns.

We listened to several ideas about alternative uses and heard creative proposals around a public farm to support the Milton Food Pantry, a non-profit animal shelter for people that need to find a home for their pet while they work toward stable housing, an organic farm/beehive, and hybrid ideas such as a land trust or co-housing, food forest, environmental education park, childcare facility, nonprofit incubator, or veterans housing. We heard from some that the land should be sold, similar to the 30 acres on Woodlot Drive, to a developer to build market-rate homes and the interest on the proceeds used to increase support for the Food Pantry and Milton Residents Fund.

I strongly recommend that the Governor Stoughton Trustees pursue a plan for the site that emphasizes affordable housing in perpetuity. It is my opinion that this use for the property best matches the letter and spirit of the 1701 will and respects the historic use of the site from 1805 onward. There are many details to be worked out, of course. How many units? Can the developer and the town address legitimate infrastructure concerns of neighbors? Can existing structures be saved? Can the site include community gardens or small farm with affordable housing?

This site has been a political football for far too long. Serious debate about the future of Town Farm began over twenty years ago. In 2011, the town sold 30 acres to Pulte Homes but left the remaining four acres for future Trustees to decide. We have a

chance to save one of the last remaining poor farms and now is the time to do it. Both neighbors and the town as a whole deserve certainty about the future of this historic piece of land. **It is my recommendation that the Governor Stoughton Trustees move swiftly to open a conversation with the local development team that responded to the RFP to see what is possible on this important site.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "The Call", enclosed in a light gray rectangular box.

Thomas Callahan
16 Orono Street
Member of the Town Farm Review Committee
Member of the Affordable Housing Trust
Precinct 4 Town Meeting Member