

June 3, 2021

To the Select Board, Town of Exeter, NH:

We the members of the Exeter Facilities Advisory Committee, write today 5-0 in support of the Raynes Farm Stewardship Committee's request for a matching funds warrant article for in conjunction with their grant application to the State's Land & Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) to restore the Raynes Farm Barn.

We have met with Committee members several times in the past 6 months, including a site visit this spring to become familiar with the Barn's restoration needs and agree with the work proposed.

The Raynes Farm Barn, built in 1860, is listed in the State Register of Historic Places. An Historic Structure Report first commissioned in 2012 and since updated in 2018 found that the property appears to be the site of the original Town landing on early maps, as well as the center of the Exeter Cattle Market established by Chase Wiggin. The property was acquired by the Town in 2002. Since acquisition, the vision of the Raynes Farm Stewardship Committee, under the Exeter Conservation Commission, has been to continue agricultural use as well as create a conservation center highlighting the historic and natural features of the property through public events and recreation. Past events thus far have included open air painting, full moon snowshoeing, pop-up disc golf, historic tours, birding tours, scavenger hunts, winter solstice celebrations, pumpkin smashes, hiking, guided star gazing, sledding and cocoa, and more, all held as field-centric events due to safety concerns about the Barn. The Committee has also had to turn away events due to the same concerns: folk music concerts, Shakespearian performances, story walks, elementary school field trips, and more.

Repairs have been ongoing (some with previous LCHIP support). The Committee has further visions for public events but is limited due to Barn condition. The Town funding we support, along with the LCHIP grant, will further preserve and protect the Barn as well as improve conditions to enable larger Barn-focused events for year-round public use. Proposed repairs include ameliorating the bowing of the north east wall, repair/replacement of various clapboards, doors, and windows, accessibility improvements, floor repairs, and more.

As the Facilities Advisory Committee, we appreciate the need for such repairs of this unique Town-owned property and agree that we should pursue maintenance now to prevent further decline and expense later as well as to support the Stewardship Committee's vision for an increase in public events held at the Barn.

Thank you for your consideration,
The Exeter Facilities Advisory Committee

Kris Weeks, Chair
Peter Lennon, Vice Chair
Rob Corson
Amanda Kelly
Mark Leighton