

To the residents of the Town of Raynham from the RAYNHAM HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

We would like our fellow citizens to know that the Raynham Historical Society was adamantly opposed to the demolition of the Hathaway House, an irreplaceable part of Raynham's heritage, located at 366 South Main Street. Please see below the February 15, 2018 letter that was sent to the Board of Selectmen by the Society. Our letter was not responded to until April 3, 2018 by the acting Town Administrator (see below). We believe the issues raised in our letter could have, and should have, been addressed. We are also puzzled by the letter directing the Society to contact the Conservation Commission. The Conservation Commission was cc'd on our letter, but did not respond to us.

We believe this situation would not have occurred if the Town of Raynham had preservation by-laws, a demolition delay ordinance, and established historic districts, as most other Massachusetts towns do.

The Society first became aware of the pending bank foreclosure auction of the Hathaway House, which was saleable, sound, and occupied, in March of 2017. Upon inquiry of the Raynham Building Inspector in April of 2017, the Society was told that a person interested in purchasing the property had contacted him to find out if the house could be torn down and a "school" built on the site.

In April of 2017, the Raynham Historical Society contacted the Raynham Historical Commission with its concerns about the possible destruction of the priceless Hathaway House. The Commission's single responsibility is to identify, catalog and protect historical buildings in the town.

It is important the citizens of Raynham understand the distinctly different roles and separate responsibilities of the Raynham Historical Society and the Raynham Historical Commission within our community.

The Raynham Historical Society is a 501c3, voluntary, non-profit organization whose mission is: to engage in the collection, holding, and preserving of documents, papers, furniture, pictures, data both personal and real, books, memoirs and other matters relating to Raynham's history. Our meetings are free and open to the public and we encourage members of the community to join the Society.

The Raynham Historical Commission is a town board established by the Raynham Selectmen for the specific purpose of creating historic districts. Chapter 40C of Massachusetts General Laws, which govern historical commissions, is very clear regarding the size of the commission, what should be the composition of the commission and who is eligible to serve, and its function to study and report on the historical and architectural significance of buildings, structures and sites to be included in historic districts. It is the responsibility of the Historical Commission to designate the historic districts and to propose balanced by-laws to protect these structures, including a demolition delay ordinance.

A demolition delay ordinance is a preservation tool that simply puts in place a designated waiting period before a structure can be demolished in order to explore other options. In the case of the Hathaway House, it would have been far better to explore other more desirable and readily accessible sites for a daycare facility than to destroy a historic treasure of such significance.

Thoughtful, well-crafted historic preservation laws and by-laws are designed to support and protect both home owners and our common, shared historical heritage, and do not, and cannot, in any way impinge on personal property rights.

We believe the concerns raised in our letter to the Selectmen regarding the potential, irreversible damage to the wetlands abutting the Hathaway property and the safety and traffic issues created by a daycare at a dangerous curve are valid and still need to be addressed before a building permit is issued.

April 30, 2018

February 15, 2018

Board of Selectmen  
Town Hall  
558 South Main Street  
Raynham, MA 02767

Dear Members of the Board:

The Raynham Historical Society wishes to express its opposition to the demolition of the Hathaway House, located at 366 South Main Street, and the building of a daycare facility at that site. We would like to point out that this situation has arisen because we don't have any preservation bylaws or preservation planning for our community. The Hathaway House, that has stood for almost 300 years and which is the entire time that Raynham has been incorporated as a town, is the most historically significant and historically important building in Raynham. It is imperative that it be preserved because it represents the history and patrimony of Raynham and it must not be lost to future generations.

During King Philip's War (1675 -1676), members of the Raynham settlement built a fort on the land that would eventually become the site of the Crossman farm and home. Samuel Crossman, who was very active in the early Raynham settlement, is believed to have built the house on the farm, which land grants indicate was 182 acres. The exact date when the house was constructed is not known. The first deed to the property dates back to 1733; however, a 1728 map of Taunton shows the property and a dwelling on the site owned by Samuel Crossman. In 1783, Cyrus Crossman sold the property to Abraham Hathaway. Members of the Hathaway family lived in the "Hathaway House" until it was sold by Alida Hathaway Cole in 1939.

The lives of these seven generations of Hathaways, and the Crossmans before them, and the Hathaway house itself, tell the history of Raynham. Members of the Hathaway family fought in the Revolutionary and Civil Wars; Abraham Hathaway was a selectman and the town's representative to the Massachusetts General Court; they ran a tannery and founded a bindery; Sarah Hathaway's diaries record the political rallies of Daniel Webster and Henry Clay that she attended.

As described in M. Patrice White's "The History of Raynham" the house itself is an outstanding architectural example of an early colonial home. The house, in addition to the hand-hewn beams that are pegged together, has one of only two authentic arched ceilings known to be in existence in the country. Because of the secret passageways that were believed to have existed in the house, it was thought to be a stop on the Underground Railway.

The Raynham Historical Society is requesting that prior to any consideration of the issuance of a demolition permit/or building permit, the following considerations be acted upon.

1. The Raynham Historical Commission finish their historic district study of that area of South Main Street. It is imperative that the historical and architectural significance of the Hathaway House be recorded by the Commission because this is the permanent and official record that will remain that explains and details the Hathaway House's construction.

The Historical Commission, during the past 15 years, has not completed a study of any historic district, or recommended the establishment of a historic district. They also have not drafted a “demolition delay” ordinance or bylaw, which the majority of towns in Massachusetts have enacted to protect their local historic resources. This situation has left the Town of Raynham with no preservation tools to work with and threatens the existence of other historic structures.

2. The Town of Raynham’s Conservation Commission must complete a comprehensive wetland and endangered species study. The Hathaway property is situated on the Forge River, a tributary to the Taunton River. Ms. White’s book also mentions a natural spring in the cellar of the house. We do not believe that the site could accommodate a school building(s), the parking spaces, and a large enough vehicle ingress and egress without inflicting serious damage to the wetlands both immediately and over time.
3. Route 104/South Main Street is an extremely busy road and the Hathaway House is located near a curve that restricts visibility. If there is not ample parking located on the site itself, which we believe will damage the wetlands, vehicles will be lined up on Route 104 where there is no parking. We believe the placement of a daycare facility at that site poses very serious traffic and safety issues.

The Raynham Historical Society would also like clarification pertaining to the exact nature of the entity itself. It has been brought to our attention that the entity has been described as a “school” and also as a daycare facility. If the application to the Town has been processed and considered as a school, which would constitute very different zoning considerations, we would like to receive a copy of the application and/or accreditation as a private school from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and a copy of the approval of the Bridgewater-Raynham School Committee, which is required as part of the “Notification of a New Private School” to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

It is our understanding that a Community Learning Center within a daycare does not qualify as a school.

It is imperative that the Town preserve the Hathaway House. There are far more suitable sites on which a daycare could be built.

Respectfully,

Raynham Historical Society, Inc.

cc: Conservation Commission  
Planning Board



**TOWN OF RAYNHAM**  
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April 3, 2018

Raynham Historical Society  
PO Box 136  
Raynham Center, MA 02768

Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for your letter regarding the "Hathaway House" located at 366 South Main Street Raynham. The Raynham Board of Selectmen understands and shares your desire to protect and preserve historical sites and locations within the Town of Raynham. Unfortunately, the Selectmen have no regulatory, statutory or jurisdictional control in regard to what a property owner wishes to do or not do with their property in this situation.

At this time, we would have you direct any inquiries or concerns to the Raynham Building Department, Raynham Zoning Board of Appeals or Raynham Conservation Commission as these agencies may have some manner of jurisdiction of the property and how it may be altered or improved.

Thank you again for your concern and attention.

Sincerely,

David D. Flaherty Jr.  
Acting Town Administrator  
Town of Raynham

Cc: Board of Selectmen  
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