

# **HistWick Herald**

## **!! Update on Beechwood House Advisory Committee**

**April 2009**

**Volume 6, Number 2**

### **Letter from Histwick President Mike Dacey to the North Kingstown Town Council**

**North Kingstown Town Council**

**80 Boston Neck Road**

**North Kingstown, RI 02852**

**Dear Council Member:**

I write to you on behalf of the board of Historic Wickford, Inc. (HistWick) to share our concerns regarding the lack of comprehensiveness of the current process of review to determine the future of Beechwood House. Several HistWick members have attended the early morning tour, and other evening meetings hosted by the Advisory Committee. We recognize that all participants on this Committee are committed, and are working diligently to successfully complete the assignment in the prescribed, but limited 45 day period.

We are very concerned that there has not been a comprehensive audit and recent assessment of Beechwood House including its site placement by a qualified architectural/preservation firm. Given the historical and architectural significance of this 1873 home of former Rhode Island Governor Elisha Dyer, a current professional audit should take place, if the final outcome is to be credible.

Beechwood House is one of the few remaining Stick Style, early Victorian homes on the shore in Wickford, and deserves most careful review and deliberation. The April 2<sup>nd</sup> agenda of the Advisory Committee read "Potential demolition or Uses for Beechwood House." Without securing the services of a firm specializing in this field to determine the architectural and historic significance of Beechwood House we believe that the "demolition" alternative on the agenda was premature. Our concern goes further, in that under some scenarios related, other historic town buildings such as the Town Hall and former Wickford Library building could be sold or change hands... all without a professional architectural assessment or comprehensive community needs study. Also, given the current depressed real estate market it does not seem to be an appropriate time to liquidate valuable town buildings.

We have contacted the Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission and also Preserve Rhode Island who have indicated their willingness to assist the town and the community in this issue. They have knowledge and experience in this area, and would be willing to participate in appropriate meetings to advise on possible avenues to pursue in Grant Application that might fund additional professional assistance.

In order for this process to proceed in a reasoned, informed fashion with all of the appropriate information necessary we request that the 45 day time period be extended, and that the Advisory Committee explore a more thorough process including application for research funding for planning/feasibility study and reuse options for Beechwood House, and if appropriate, other town historic buildings.

....Continued on page 2

**Please know that we are very aware of the current tight financial times and that buildings cannot be kept vacant for indefinite periods. Our interest is simply to be sure that whatever decisions are made will be based upon comprehensive objective data, and in the best long term interests of the town and the citizens of our community.**

**Thank you for your attention and concern regarding this matter.**

**Very truly yours,**

**Historic Wickford, Inc.**

**Michael J. Dacey**

**President**

*Historic Wickford, Inc.*

*P.O.Box 261*

*North Kingstown, RI 02852*

### **Meetings and Events of Interest**

**Wickford Elementary and Beechwood Advisory Committee has been meeting on Thursday's. Check <http://www.egovlink.com/northkingstown/events/calendar.asp> for the calendar of future meetings.**

**On Saturday, May 9th, Preserve Rhode Island and the Historic Sites Coalition will be hosting a free statewide Open House from 11:00 AM- 3:00 PM. Sixteen houses across the state will be featured. For more information on this event please contact Susanna Prull at 401.272.5101 or at [sprull@preserveri.org](mailto:sprull@preserveri.org).**

**The Annual Rhode Island Historic Preservation Conference is taking place this Saturday, April 25, at URI. The Preservation is Local Summit portion of the program is free and will occur in two sessions...at 11:15 AM and at 3:45 PM. For further information check [www.preservation.ri.gov/conference](http://www.preservation.ri.gov/conference)**