The February 12, 2020, Regular Meeting of the Woodbridge Board of Selectmen was convened at 5:00 p.m. in the Town Hall Central Meeting Room.
Present for staff: Administrative Officer/Director of Finance Anthony Genovese; Town Counsel Gerald Weiner; Assistant Administrative Officer Betsy Yagla; and Mrs. Shaw, Clerk.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
First Selectman Beth Heller led those assembled in the pledge of allegiance.

WOODBRIDGE BOARD OF EDUCATION – Superintendent Robert Gilbert
Superintendent Gilbert reported that:
• Enrollment stands at 857
• School has experienced only one snow day
• Currently a small surplus of $20,000 is projected for end of FY2020
• There is a spending freeze on all non-salary and non-contractual expenditures
• The proposed FY21 budget shows a .76 percent increase over FY20
• Interviews are being held in the principal search
• Work is continuing to update the strategic plan
• Attended the CABE legislative breakfast
• Thanked the Town for inclusion in the LED upgrade
• The annual survey seeking input re the school calendar and strategic plan revision process will be available in March
• The PTO Booster Fund Raiser realized over $30,000

EXECUTIVE SESSION
5:08 p.m. - The Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (Dey – Stein) to move into executive session pursuant to Section 1-200(6) of the Connecticut General Statutes – re Security at Beecher Road School and invited to attend: consultant Eric Twedahl; Superintendent Robert Gilbert; Administrative Officer/Director of Finance Anthony Genovese; Ad Hoc Committee Chair Andrew Esposito; Town Counsel Gerald Weiner; and Assistant Administrative Officer Betsy Yagla.

5:45 p.m. - The Board of Selectmen moved out of executive session and returned to the regular meeting. No motions were made or votes taken in executive session.

FIRST SELECTMAN’S REMARKS
"This evening we have a long Board of Selectmen meeting with four executive sessions. Shortly we will be discussing the proposal for the Country Club of Woodbridge. As a reminder, the current proposal is for the Town to sell approximately 60 of the 155 acres for $5.4 million for construction by Insite/Wernert of no more than 120 units of free standing active adult (55+) housing. After completion of all units, the Town will realize approximately $1.5 million in tax revenue every year from the residents who purchase these homes, plus additional tax revenue for personal property.

The Town will retain approximately 95 acres and we have set aside funding for a landscape architect/land use analyst to advise us on the best passive recreational uses for the undeveloped land that the Town will retain. After the referendum on the property I plan to establish an ad hoc committee of residents who will work with the consultant on the design to optimize the property as an important Town asset.
I think we all agree that we must reduce our mill rate and bring relief to taxpayers. I also think we all know that the Town has few opportunities to grow much-needed revenue. Our debt on the property is not due to be paid off for another 12 years. With the sale we will pay off the debt on this property (saving $500k every year in principal and interest payments) and also retain $1.4 million dollars for other needed projects.

As I have stated so many times before I am voting in favor of scheduling this referendum because I believe that the voters should decide this most important issue. Tonight we will not discuss the issue of the Darling House/Historical Society and Koan Farms. I believe all of the members of the Board of Selectmen are in agreement that this issue should not be decided in a quick few minutes without further extensive discussion. I have decided to give both a little more time and I am hopeful that we will have a positive meeting with them later this month. At our January meeting both parties agreed to meet and attempt to come to a solution that will enable the Historical Society to continue to run the Darling House museum (which is what they have done for many years), and allow farming to continue on the property, independent from the museum. Perhaps I am naïve, but I still am hopeful that if both parties compromise just a little bit we will be able to resolve this. We will have a special meeting on February 25th at 5 pm to listen to both parties, and hopefully make a decision that settles this amicably.

Since our last Board meeting I attended the retirement dinner for former Human Services director Mary Ellen La Rocca.

I attended the monthly South Central Regional Council of Governments meeting on January 22. I was elected to serve as the chair of SCRCOG for this calendar year. On January 24 I attended the wake for the Orange Fire Marshal who sadly passed away in a tragic accident here in Woodbridge.

I attended the Commercial Property Owners Forum at the JCC, organized by the EDC on Tuesday Feb. 4. I have also had several meetings with Woodbridge business owners over the past month regarding economic development.”

EXECUTIVE SESSION
5:48 p.m. – The Board of Selectmen voted unanimously (Crisco – Stein) to move into executive session pursuant to Section 1-200(6)(D) and 1-210(b)(1) of the Connecticut General Statutes – re contract negotiations for the proposed sale of a portion of the former Country Club of Woodbridge property and invited to attend: Administrative Officer/Director of Finance Anthony Genovese and Town Counsel Gerald Weiner.

5:58 p.m. – The Board of Selectmen moved out of executive session and returned to the regular meeting. No motions were made or votes taken in executive session.

LIAISON REPORTS
Ms. Stein: Library Commission – concerned about the lack of lighting in both parking lots used by patrons. Assistant Library Director Lynn Serra is retiring in April. A reception will be held on Tuesday, March 31st from 4 – 6 p.m. in the Library community room.
Mr. Crisco:  Fire Commission – discussed age and repair issues with some of the fire trucks. Announced that Commissioner Karen Kravetz has resigned. The Inland Wetlands Agency agreed to entertain an application for expansion of the proposed storage shed behind the firehouse at 100 Center Road. The Fire Marshal has completed 49 inspections since January 1, 2020.

Mr. Rowland: Inland Wetlands Agency (“IWA”) – made a site visit to the area of the proposed storage shed behind the fire house at 100 Center Road. The Fire Department will submit an application to the IWA once plans for an expanded shed are complete.

Human Services Commission – the Volunteer Tea is scheduled for April 23, 2020. The deadline for applications for the Human Services Director’s position is February 14, 2020. A conference regarding vaping will be held in Orange. 3,500 copies of the December/January newsletter were mailed to residents.

Mr. Dey: No report

PARKING LOT EXPANSION AT FITZGERALD FIELD
Adam Parsons presented his plan to add an additional 24 parking spots at the Fitzgerald Field by expanding into the field that borders the existing lot. Ms. Stein inquired if there were any plans to enlarge the entrance driveway entrance from Beecher Road. A proposal for a redesign of the entrance will be referred to the Traffic Authority.

GIRL SCOUT TROOP 60164 REQUEST TO INSTALL A “LITTLE FREE LIBRARY” AT PEASE PLACE
Members of Girl Scout Troop 60164, Aliza, Maggie, Mila, and Tai, presented the Troop’s plan to install a “Little Free Library” at Pease Place. The installation and maintenance is to be handled by the Troop at no cost to the Town.

The Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (Heller – Crisco) to grant permission to Girl Scout Troop 60164 to install a “Little Free Library” at Pease Place as described in the presentation.

FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY REQUEST TO INSTALL A BANNER ON THE OLD FIREHOUSE TRIANGLE ANNOUNCING BOOK SALE
Donna Lehman, 4 Carriage Drive, a member of the Friends of the Library distributed an image of the proposed banner.

The Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (Dey – Crisco) to grant permission to the Friends of the Library to install a banner on the Old Fire House triangle announcing the book sale the first weekend in June 2020.

PUBLIC COMMENTS
Ms. Heller made the following remarks prior to the start of Public Comments.

“I’d like to remind everyone what I said last month about public comment. It is each board and commission chair’s prerogative to set parameters for public comment. Going forward we will respond if there are any personal attacks and/or when facts are incorrect. Public comment should be an outlet for residents to share their ideas or concerns. It is not an opportunity to misrepresent facts, intentionally or
not, and it is not a platform for accusations. Hopefully everyone will be respectful of each other – we are all Woodbridge residents and we all care about what we believe is best for our Town.

Because I suspect that we have so many people here for public comment tonight and because we have a very long agenda (even longer than last month), I will ask that you try to not repeat what others have said and that you keep your comments to two minutes – Betsy has a timer that she will be using to help us all be mindful of each other’s time. Thank you.”

The following residents all spoke in favor of the Town approving the updated agreement with the Amity-Woodbridge Historical Society:
- Chuck Pyne, 162 Center Road - speaking for the Republic Town Committee; Amey Marrella, 184 Rimmon Road; Barbara Baldwin, 46 Orchard Road - read a letter from former Town Counsel Joanne D’Angelo; Lynn Donato, 23 Mettler Street; Ginny Rinehart, President of the Orange Historical Society; Lynn Piascyk, 80 Woodfield Road - read a letter from Senator George Logan; Martha German, 1171 Johnson Road – read a letter from Andrew German (author of Thomas Darling’s biography); Catherine Suttle, 78 Beecher Road; Phyllis Genel, 30 Richard Sweet Drive;
- Adrienne Micci-Smith, 15 Ansonia Road; Melissa Silverstone, 31 Penny Lane; Margaret Dilloway, 1196 Johnson Road; Barbara Fabiani, 20 Dillon Road - listed other CT properties on the National Registry of Historic places; Will Brinton, 168 Sperry Road, Bethany – Bethany Historical Society Board of Directors; Karen L’Huchan, 21 Westward Road - also stated that she was sending a letter to the States Attorney General requesting that office investigate the Board of Selectmen’s actions; David Lober, 35 Wepawaug Road – claims the Board of Selectmen supports the farmer and not the Town’s agent for the care of the Darling House; Alison Johnson, 46 Newton Road; Donald Menzies, 1880 Litchfield Turnpike – read a letter regarding his commitment and years of volunteer work at the Darling House.

Rebecca Harlow, 1112 Johnson Road – stated that the caretaker model is considered best practices for a house museum. She also alluded to someone’s home being vandalized because of their support of the Historical Society. Ms. Heller asked whose home and if there was a police report. Ms. Harlow would not give the information and said she was not aware if a report had been filed.

Lisa Flaherty, 139 Beecher Road – informed the Board that if the Board of Selectmen did not sign the updated agreement, the Historical Society was prepared to remove the contents of the Darling House following the February 25th meeting.

Thomas Weil, 70 Woodfield Road – he supports the work of the Historical Society. He also asked that copies of the contract with the proposed developer of the Country Club of Woodbridge property be available to the public.

Karen Lombardi, 315 Rimmon Road – spoke of the importance of the countless volunteer hours that Leland Torrence dedicated to the historic preservation of the Darling House and the loss to the Town of his expertise because the Historical Society’s Board of Director’s disagreed with his views on tenant farmer.

Richard Wies, Architect and preservationist with the firm of Gregg Wies & Gardner said he was present at the request of Dick Blackwell. He spoke of the need to protect the Darling House, the contents and
increase public access. He listed some of the historic buildings he has preserved in the New Haven area. He offered to participate in an oversight group to preserve, protect, and promote public enjoyment of the Darling property.

Richard Blackwell, 15 Park Lane - distributed photos showing the decline of the buildings on the property. He also distributed a brochure entitled Thomas Darling Property Oversight Group. The brochure identified the proposed group’s mission statement and outlined required maintenance of the property and buildings.

NOTE: Copies of all documents presented at the meeting are attached to this permanent record.

AWARD FARM LAND LEASES FOR THE 2020 GROWING SEASON
The Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (Heller – Crisco) to amend the language in paragraph 4 of the lease to read: "Now therefore, for $10.00 and other valuable consideration.........................” and to award leases as outlined in the list dated February 6, 2020.

Note: Unless otherwise noted – the “hay” harvested is existing growth

Tim Kriz – 13 Bear Hill Road
a. Zwick Property - 282 Seymour Road
   Note: Access is very difficult. He has an agreement with owners of the adjacent property to access the field through their driveway
b. 1936 Litchfield Turnpike
   c. 1966 Litchfield Turnpike - Eicher Property
   d. 1907 Litchfield Turnpike - Field north of stonewall
      Lower field adjacent to West River

Chris Sorensen – 420 Amity Road
a. 1910 Litchfield Turnpike - Field behind yellow barn
b. As a courtesy to the Town, Chris mows the Town Owned “Meiss Property” on Rimmon Road to keep the scrub down

Keith Arnold – 127 Beecher Road
a. Fitzgerald Property – Two front fields and lower field. Keith seeds the three fields and harvests the resulting hay.
   b. Peck Hill Road - Elderslie – hays three fields

Kristyna & Oliver Hulland – 48 Center Road
a. Alegi Property, 160 Pease Road and portion of 52 Center Road
   Note: Last year there was an agreement with the Recreation Dept. allowing cars to be parked on a portion of the property during soccer season.
   Note: The Hulland’s request that the Town consider a five year lease
      See request attached

7:35 – 7:42 p.m. – the Board called a brief recess.

SCRCOG RESOLUTION – REGIONAL PERFORMANCE INCENTIVE PROGRAM PROPOSALS
The Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (Heller – Stein) to adopt the South Central Regional Council of Governments resolution re Regional Performance incentive Program Proposals.
REGIONAL WATER AUTHORITY HAZWASTE COLLECTION 3 YEAR RESOLUTION
The Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (Heller – Stein) to adopt the Regional Water Authority HazWaste Collection Three (3) year Resolution as presented.

UPDATE TRANSFER STATION OPERATIONS – Warren Connors
Public Works Director Warren Connors reviewed the operations since the scale was installed at the transfer station. Fees collected (only from commercial haulers) are not covering the cost to haul and dispose. The Board agreed that residents should not be charged for household waste disposal. There was discussion of increasing demo and bulky waste fees. It was agreed that closing the transfer station for one day and assigning the attendants elsewhere was not an advantage to the Town.

FUNDING REQUEST – Tree Work – Warren Connors
Mr. Connors explained that the fund for tree work needed additional funds. He explained that per the Town’s purchasing policy he could not request a purchase order for work if the funds were not in the account.

The Board of Selectmen VOTED to recommend the following funding request to the Board of Finance:

#1920-15 - Allocation
  To:   Public Works – Rental Equipment (1310-00/53610)
  From: Board of Finance Contingency (1170-00/56800)
  For: Fund removal of diseased and storm damaged trees.

(Heller – Rowland) Unanimously approved

BID AWARD – DUMP TRUCK BODY
The Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (Rowland – Stein) to award the bid for two (2) heavy duty dump truck body, sand spreader, central hydraulics and snow plow combinations to H.P. Fairfield, LLC in the amount of $147,476 or $73,738 per unit.

REVALUATION UPDATE – Assessor Betsy Quist
Ms. Quist explained that State requires a property revaluation be done at least once every (5) five years. She explained that current residential sales show that the value of larger homes has decreased and that of smaller and multi-family homes has increased. This year the total of the grand list reflects this shift in property values and other data resulting in a reduced grand list.

Revaluation totals reflect a Real Estate reduction of -4.43% and Personal Property of -0.65%. There is a 0.13% increase in Motor Vehicle.

ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER’S REPORT
Event Applications – Ms. Yagla presented two applications for events to be held on Town property.

The Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY to approve the following event applications:
April 25, 2020 – Beth-Wood Baseball League Opening Day (Heller – Crisco)
June 6, 2020 – Town of Woodbridge – “Woodbridge Community Day” (Heller – Rowland)
Sustainability Committee Recommendation – Ms. Yagla said that the Sustainability Committee identified that many residents do not know that recycling is done at the transfer station and recommend that the name be changed.
The Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (Stein – Crisco) to accept the recommendation of the Sustainability Committee to change the name of the Transfer Station to The Woodbridge Transfer and Recycling Station.

Approve Title VI Documents — Ms. Yagla introduced the State Title VI documents the Board is to adopt to comply with the requirements for the transit grant applied for by the Human Services Department.

The Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (Crisco – Dey) to adopt as presented, the “Town of Woodbridge Language Assistance Plan” effective February 12, 2020.

The Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (Heller – Dey) to adopt as presented, the “Town of Woodbridge Transportation Program Limited English Proficiency Plan” effective February 12, 2020.

The Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (Heller – Crisco) to adopt as presented, the “Town of Woodbridge Transportation Program Public Participation Plan” effective February 12, 2020.

EXECUTIVE SESSION
8:25 p.m. — The Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (Heller – Crisco) to move into executive session pursuant to Section 1-200(6)(E), 1-210(b) of the Connecticut General Statutes re negotiations of agreements/contracts — American Medical Response Contract and invited Emergency Medical Services Commission Chair Roy Ivins and member Dr. Alan Davidson to attend.

9:25 p.m. — The Board of Selectmen moved out of executive session and returned to the regular meeting. No motions were made or votes taken in executive session.

ACTION ON MATTER DISCUSSED IN EXECUTIVE SESSION
The Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (Heller – Crisco) to extend the current American Medical Response agreement to December 31, 2020.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER/DIRECTOR OF FINANCE’S REPORT
Monthly Report — Mr. Genovese reported that as of January 31, 2020 he projects a budgetary surplus of $154,000 at the end of the fiscal year (June 30, 2020) resulting in a fund balance of $6.1M or 12.14% of annual projected expenses. He also noted that the $671,459 returned from the Amity School District in fiscal 2019 is not included in the surplus calculations.

TAX REFUNDS
Pursuant to Section 12-124 thru 129 of the Connecticut General Statutes and the recommendation of the Tax Collector, the Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (Crisco – Dey) to refund Real Estate taxes in the amount of $3,726.71 and Motor Vehicle Taxes in the amount of $5,886.96 for a total refund of $9,613.67.

FUNDING REQUEST
#1920-13 — Allocation
   To: Board of Selectmen Gen’l Professional Svc. (1110-00/52100)
   From: Board of Finance Contingency (1170-00/56800)
   For: Phase II of the Security Assessment for Beecher Road School
   (Heller – Crisco) Unanimously approved

TOWN COUNSEL’S REPORT
Mr. Weiner reported that he has written an opinion to clarify the Town Ordinance granting a tax abatement to qualified firefighters. The opinion grandfathers in the abatement for a firefighter whose property is held in trust provided the trust predate the date the Board adopted the ordinance.

TOWN CLERK’S REPORT
The Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (Heller – Crisco) to acknowledge receipt of the Town Clerk’s Reports for the month ending January 31, 2020 and cumulative from July 1, 2019 through January 31, 2020

MINUTES
The Board of Selectmen acted on the following minutes:
- December 10, 2019 – Tour of the Darling House with correction: “At 2:21 p.m. those present held a (brief) round table discussion”. (Heller – Crisco) Approved - Abstained: Heller, Dey
- December 10, 2019 – Joint Boards of Selectmen and Finance Capital Budget Presentations approved as submitted (Heller – Crisco)
- December 12, 2019 – Joint Boards of Selectmen and Finance Capital Budget Presentations approved as submitted (Heller – Crisco)
- January 1, 2020 – Regular Meeting approved (Heller – Crisco)
- January 21, 2020 – Joint Boards of Selectmen and Finance Operating Budget Presentations approved as submitted (Heller – Crisco)
- January 23, 2020 – Joint Boards of Selectmen and Finance Operating Budget Presentations approved as submitted (Heller – Dwight)

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE REPORT
The Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (Crisco – Heller) to ratify the recommendation of the Personnel Committee that retroactive to January 22, 2020, Senior Center Director Jeanette Glicksman be named interim Human Services Director at a salary of $65,500 per year and that the hours of part time employees be increased as necessary.

EXECUTIVE SESSION
9:40 p.m. – The Board of Selectmen VOTED UNANIMOUSLY (Crisco – Heller) to move into executive session pursuant to Section 1-200(6)(C) of the Connecticut General Statutes for the discussion of Public Safety.
9:50 p.m. – The Board of Selectmen moved out of executive session. No motions were made or votes taken in executive session.

ADJOURNMENT
The meeting adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Geraldine S. Shaw
February 12, 2020

Board of Selectmen
Town of Woodbridge

Re: Darling House

Dear members of the Board of Selectmen:

I offer this letter to express my thoughts on the dispute surrounding the Darling House property.

Without getting into the specifics, I suggest you consider the overarching interests of the town that are reflected in the dispute. On balance, it is far more important for the Town to renew its cordial partnership with the Amity-Woodbridge Historical Society (AWHS) than to allow one person to farm on town land and/or rent a town-owned apartment.

The volunteers of the AWHS offer a fine example of the dedicated volunteerism on which our town depends to function and thrive. These volunteers and their predecessors have enriched our town for many, many years. The AWHS has engaged in research, preservation, and stewardship of our history and historical objects. Through AWHS publications, these volunteers have shared their research results with the broader community. Annual AWHS programs including tours, Tavern Nights, and Ice Cream Socials bring our community together for fun and fellowship.

In support of the AWHS’ efforts, the caretaker apartment at the Darling House was always rented out to someone whose sole involvement with the Darling House property was taking care of the buildings and grounds. Only recently did a tenant seek to farm as well. Howsoever one assesses the current tenant’s efforts, the reality remains that the tenant is subject to a year-to-year lease that time limits both his access to the apartment and his ability to farm town land.

I hope you will agree with me that the Town’s larger and longer-term interests warrant focus on continuing cooperation between the Board of Selectmen and the AWHS.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Amey Marrella
Testimony
February 12, 2020

In Support of Protecting the House, Grounds and Outbuildings of the Darling Homestead and Museum also known as The Darling House.

First Selectman Beth Heller, Deputy First Selectman Mica Cardozo, Selectmen Joseph Crisco Jr, Joseph Dey, Dwight Rowland and Sandra Stein:

I am Sen. George Logan, and I offer this testimony in support of efforts towards a resolution between the Town of Woodbridge and the Amity & Woodbridge Historical Society (Historical Society) to protect The Darling House and assure a long-term/sustainable plan so that current and future generations will have the opportunity to learn and experience the rich heritage of this truly historic site.

The Historical Society has demonstrated a long and consistent commitment to preserving history and educating the community via various programs, activities, and collections. Working in partnership with the Town of Woodbridge, I am convinced the Historical Society is the best organization to preserve and run a historical house museum on the Darling House property now and long into the future.

In addition, it is important to the Town of Woodbridge and the Greater New Haven Area that the Historical Society have the support to take advantage of hard to come by state grant funding to complete a capital project (a new kitchen) at the museum. The new kitchen is currently needed and would be a significant improvement to the building and the property with a regulatory code compliant bathroom and fire mist suppression system for improved safety. Also, I believe completion of this capital improvements along with a revised long-term agreement will be helpful towards securing additional state grants and perhaps federal grants to accommodate additional improvements and on-site activities for the community to enjoy.

This is a precious opportunity for today’s local leaders and community to come together and make a bit of our own history by securing a revised long-term agreement between the Town of Woodbridge and the Historical Society to ensure the preservation of the Darling House property and establish a way forward that will minimize instances of future misunderstandings between the two parties.
To the Selectmen of Woodbridge

Greetings:

I grew up in Woodbridge. While I no longer live there, I did write the biography of Thomas Darling, and I have an abiding interest in the stories and values represented by the Darling House and property.

Born 300 years ago this month, Thomas Darling did not grow up in a wealthy family, but he was a promising young man who attended Hopkins and Yale, graduating with Benjamin Woodbridge, for whom this town is named. After teaching at Yale, Darling married the minister's daughter, Abigail Noyes, and began a life of private enterprise and public service. An enlightened man of his enlightened age, Darling was interested in manufacturing, from ropemaking to glass making (for which he consulted Benjamin Franklin), and in developing the commercial fortunes of New Haven.

But above all he was known for his good judgment. Though not a lawyer, he was a great proponent of English common law and a close follower of legal precedent. For years he served as a justice of the peace—then sort of a mediator or court of first appeal—dispensing thoughtful resolutions to small disputes between individuals or situations that challenged the peace and good order of the community. He also served as a judge of the county court, and he was often appointed to committees to resolve colonial land disputes.

Neither a revolutionary nor a reactionary, he sought a mediated solution to the political conflicts that led to the Revolutionary War. Though opposed to war, he valued Jefferson's articulation of American rights to liberty enough to keep one of the first printed copies of the Declaration of Independence.

In 1774 Thomas Darling completed his home in Amity Parish and moved out of contentious downtown New Haven. As early as 1779 he was on the committee pushing for the conversion of the parish to a town and mediating the many issues involved in separation. When Woodbridge was incorporated in 1784 he was one who walked the line to establish the boundaries, and he served the new town as a selectman and justice of the peace. He thought a lot about the boundaries between individual and community, between rights and responsibilities, between expertise and enthusiasm, between passions of the moment and sober contemplation.

In 1787 the framers drafted a constitution to bring order to the chaos that followed the Revolutionary War. Darling spoke strongly in favor of its ratification, viewing it as a rare opportunity to choose a form of government that protected personal liberty and private property and prevented the "supreme legislative body" from enslaving the people. When he died 231 years ago, Thomas Darling was commemorated as "a gentleman of strong mental powers, well improved with science and literature, habituated to contemplation and reading in moral reasoning, of deep penetration and
sound judgment, respected for modesty and candor.” In sum, he represented the best
values of the age when independent America was born.

But the Darling House and property should not be seen as a monument to an elite
white couple from a distant past. Thomas and Abigail Darling lived in the age of
slavery. Darling employed a free black man to help build his house, and when it was
done the Darling slaves Timothy and Cloe and their children probably moved into the
attic. While Cloe cooked and did housework, Timothy worked the fields and woodlot.
Even after Darling freed them in 1777, Timothy and Cloe continued to work for the
family. So, in an age when links to early African-American history, and the transition
from slavery to freedom, are so hard to find, the stories and the evidence are here
and can serve as an object lesson in American history for all.

Now, as the town considers the uses of the Darling property, I would respectfully
suggest that any decisions be made in the judicious, unbiased spirit of Thomas Darling
himself. It is a property with many specific stories to tell that reflect upon America’s
origins and values. As town property, it would fit Darling’s concept of the commons,
the communal grazing ground open to all and not to be improved to one individual’s
benefit. As community property, its uses should not be altered in ways that do not
serve the community at large, or without the will of the people being expressed.

Thomas Darling would find this an engaging case about the intersection of personal
interest and community responsibility. Don’t disappoint his spirit with a rash decision.

With sincere consideration,
Andrew W. German
I have watched and listened to the drama unfold at Town meetings between the
Town's tenants at the Thomas Darling House, the farmer who pays $12,000 a year
in rent and the Woodbridge Historical Society that pays $1.00 a year in rent. As a
bi product of this feud, I have watched in disbelief and disappointment as the
historical society “fired” the one volunteer, a renound professional historical
preservationist, named Leland Torrence Sr. who has, for years, kept and would
have continued to keep the Thomas Darling house maintained true to period.
What I fear will happen now with no qualified replacement for Mr. Torrence, is
that the Thomas Darling House will deteriorate beyond the point of no return.

It is my understanding that Mr. Torrence donated countless hours and expertise as
well as skilled craftsmen to tend to the upkeep required of a house built in the
1700's. Through Mr. Torrence's dedication to the historic preservation of the
Thomas Darling House he has saved the Town thousands of dollars. One must ask
what motivated the decision by the Historical Society to remove Mr. Torrence
from providing oversight of the building known as the Thomas Darling House?
And, in fact how did the Historical Society have the authority to ban Mr. Torrence
from the property? It appears simply to employ an age old method of divide and
conquer due to the Historical Society's belief that Mr. Torrence supported the
Farmer tenant's position and not the tenant Historical Society's position in this tug
of war. It is a sad day for Woodbridge, these actions will only hurt everyone that
professes to care about the Thomas Darling House. The baby will be split in half,
and everyone will suffer. To believe otherwise is simply foolish.

I do not have a horse in this race, nor a dog in this fight. My only connection with
the Thomas Darling House is that I love Tavern Night and applaud the great job
that is done at those events. However, the immature, unfounded, uncooperative,
holier than thou, divisive behavior that has been on display by some members of
the Historical Society would give me pause to ever want to support them again.
For that I am sorry.
Threats, by the Historical Society, to remove historical artifacts connected to the
Thomas Darling House in an effort to “bully” the Town in to seeing things their
way is childish at the very least. I say, let them take them! Then perhaps the Town
and those that truly care about the Thomas Darling House can go on without the
incessant toxic negativity, threats and bullying being heaped upon us all by certain
current Board members of the Historical Society.

I implore you all to find a way to heal this divide, or sever the diseased parts and
move on. No good will come of extending this senseless stalemate.
Mission Statement

The main goal of the oversight group would be to create, for visitors, an immersive experience of understanding what it was like to live and farm in 18th and early 19th century Woodbridge using house tours, landscape tours and farming tours create multi-faceted education programs. The oversight group hopes to teach our children that produce isn't grown in the supermarket, colonial life was difficult and families and neighbors had to stick together.

Oversight Group Goals

- Enable the AWHS to focus its expertise on managing the interior of the museum, their collections, sponsoring events and providing museum tours.
- The Oversight group with develop plans:
  - For farming the land that supports both a modern farm and a historic property.
  - To stabilize the yellow barn and clean out its contents while preserving documents and other important artifacts.
  - For an 18th century consistent landscaping with period flowers and shrubs and enhance curb appeal.
  - Regarding the oversight of the groundskeeper's duties and apartment.
  - For a comprehensive security plan that protects the museum, outbuildings and grounds that is inline the the Nation Park Service Museum Operations guidelines.

Our Vision

"Optimizing the historic 153 acres to be a more period authentic and visually appealing property"

Thomas Darling Property Oversight Group
The Grounds

The grounds at the Thomas Darling House property are as much of a treasure as the house itself. The intact outbuildings and barns offer a unique perspective into what life was like in the 18th and 19th centuries. The oversight group is committed to making this experience better for everyone. Currently there are only a few time period flowers and gardens. With the generous seed capital from Mr. Dick Blackwell the oversight group will develop a historically accurate colonial landscape and add more time period flowers to improve the current gardens. The oversight group will be dedicated to further improving the curbside appeal by reseeding and maintaining the front lawn, seeding wild flowers, restoring the historic rose bushes, cleaning and reestablishing stone walkways, clearing fence lines and stone walls and clearing the carriage house to reflect its original purpose of housing period specific items. With the groundskeeper maintaining the property and the guidance of the oversight group to improve the property, they will work together to preserve the historical fabric and make it more eye catching for all who pass by.

The Museum

The Thomas Darling House Museum is a unique and incredible asset to the Town. The Darling family possessions, located in the house for hundreds of years were donated to the AWHS in the 1970’s by Berenice Baldwin with the intention of keeping a true and intact history of Woodbridge available for anyone to see. Since the 1970’s the AWHS and it’s volunteers have done an incredible job setting up the house as a museum, accumulating appropriate time period items, garnered a wealth of knowledge about Thomas Darling and his legacy and improved the house so it can be toured and preserved for hundreds of years to come. The Darling Family possessions are invaluable and one of the main goals of the oversight group is to make sure that these unique possessions stay in the Darling House where they belong. By creating an oversight group who can help manage the responsibilities of maintaining the exterior of a 250 year old house and associated property, the AWHS can use their expertise and create a better experience for the museum visitors.

The Farm

Thomas Darling purchased this property and built this home in the late 18th century as an entrepreneur and prospective farmer. By the end of his life in 1789, the farm was growing rapidly. He passed the business on to his son, who had worked for him as he aged and could no longer do the physical labor. Unfortunately over time, the lands became overgrown and farming practices were mostly halted. But, since 2013 the surrounding properties adjacent to the museum have been reclaimed to their original roots, with a modern touch. A regenerative and sustainable modern farm has been providing the community with local vegetables and eggs.

Though the farm is not certified organic, everything produced here has been grown under organic guidelines as the town requires all public land to be managed organically. The small farm is representative of how food was produced for hundreds of years before the introduction of our current food system. It is one of the goals of the oversight group to connect the modern farm back to the history of the home. The oversight group would support using the farm as a tool to educate students and community members about where their food comes from, what it means to grow your own food and how important agriculture is to the local economy is an essential part of the Thomas Darling House experience.
Thomas Darling House Museum & Farm / notes for 2/12/2020 Town Meeting

Hello, I’m Rick Wies, an architect and preservationist with Gregg Wies & Gardner Architects, New Haven and I’m here at the request of Dick Blackwell. I’ve preserved a variety of historic buildings ranging from New Haven’s Center Church on the Green and Yale Law School to Branford’s Stony Creek Puppet House (now Legacy Theatre) and many others.

You have an absolute gem here – a distinguished 18th century farmhouse complete with furnishings, artifacts, outbuildings and 150 acres with great public visibility (Rte. 69 has about 9,000 vehicles passing by daily); and there are unique advantages in operating a farm together with a historical museum - successful examples of this are Dudley Farm, Guilford, Parmelee Farm Killingworth, and Nathan Hale Homestead in Coventry.

Farmland and historic buildings are disappearing at an alarming rate and maintaining these properties requires perseverance and commitment. Unless repairs are undertaken in the near term, you will start losing bits and pieces of your buildings and the landscape needs attention before nature runs completely amok. And more should be done to protect museum artifacts and increase public access.

It’s time to put in place a long-term plan, coupled with a comprehensive maintenance and repair program. You are unique in your assets and well positioned to receive more State grants like the recent “Good to Great Grant”. And incidentally, these State grants don’t require a full-time caretaker.

Find ways to further enhance these assets to reach a broader audience while providing a much-valued link to our past. Seize this opportunity to provide educational experiences for the public and promote tourism in our State. And use the best practices available - the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties - well established goals and standards which will make you eligible for further funding.

I’d be happy to be part of an oversight group to preserve, protect and promote public enjoyment of this property. Let’s all do our part to continue the vision of Thomas Darling and honor his family’s gift to the Town of Woodbridge.

Richard N. Wies AIA
Deteriorating Chicken Coop
Front yard Fence
View of home heading south on Route 69
Facing East in the back yard, (Deteriorating wine barrel on the right) 
Main view when walking from the parking lot to the museum
Over Grown Lilac and covered stone walkway