



# TOWN OF SWAMPSCOTT

## OPEN SPACE & RECREATION PLAN COMMITTEE

ELIHU THOMSON ADMINISTRATION BUILDING  
22 MONUMENT AVENUE, SWAMPSCOTT, MA 01907

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Board of Selectmen  
22 Monument Avenue  
Swampscott, MA 01907

January 14, 2017

Swampscott Board of Selectmen:

We the members of the Swampscott Open Space & Recreation Plan Committee are again writing to you regarding White Court. Since our letter of December 15, 2016, we have learned that the Saint Paul Foundation has withdrawn its proposal to purchase the property from the Sisters of Mercy. This being the case, we believe the Town should now consider taking steps to purchase this scenic and historic property thereby preserving it for generations to come. Nothing could be more aligned with the goals of the Town's Master Plan and Open Space & Recreation Plan to preserve the scenic character of the Town. This is an opportunity that should not be passed up, for once the property is sold, this valuable resource will be lost to the Town.

We therefore urge the Board of Selectmen pursue purchase of the property including development of a "business plan" for its use. The opportunities are considerable. Six acres of rocky headlands with stunning ocean views is a considerable asset for any community, but especially for Swampscott which has very limited open space. Moreover, the White Court building itself, with its history, could be used for educational purposes, to house a museum, and generally promote tourism. It could also be utilized for community meetings and activities, as well as rented for functions in order to generate income for Town. As we pointed out in our earlier letter, purchase of such historic properties has been done in a number of other Massachusetts communities such as Dedham (the Endicott Estate), Holyoke (Wisteriahurst), Waltham (Stonehurst), and North Andover (the Stevens Estate).

Back in the 1970s, a group of forward-minded individuals, realizing the value of open space and committed to the future generations of their community, formed the Swampscott Foundation. As the Town's earlier open space plan noted, this Foundation's members "pooled their resources with the aim of purchasing properties which were potentially valuable as conservation or recreation land but which were imminently threatened with development. Their efforts helped the town acquire the Chick Estate (now the Harry D. Linscott Park), the New Ocean House Property (part of which is now the Richard B. Johnson Memorial Park), and part of the Hastings property near the Stanley School (which is now the Charles M. Ewing Woods)."

Today, it is hard to imagine the Monument Area off Humphrey Street -- the gateway to our Town -- without Linscott Park. But if it wasn't for this small group of open-minded and open-handed residents, we'd have residential towers there instead of a park.

We need such forward-minded individuals today to help save the town's few remaining open spaces including White Court. The Swampscott Foundation is still in existence and so offers a vehicle for residents to better their community

and contribute to the purchase of White Court and fund its rehabilitation. Partnering with conservation organization, such as the Trustees of Reservations, to help maintain the property once purchased by the Town may be another avenue to explore. Or potentially contacting the Calvin Coolidge Foundation to assist by helping create and fund a library on the site.

The Open Space & Recreation Plan Committee is prepared to assist the Board in investigating ways to purchase and ultimately protect this treasured property.

Sincerely,

Open Space & Recreation Plan Committee