

Chronological Review of Town Activities Relative to the White Cliffs Mansion

2014 – Present Day

Prepared by: Norm Corbin, White Cliffs Reuse Committee and Laurie Connors, Northborough Planning Director

2014 (For Sale)

In January 2014, the Northborough Historical Commission (NHC) was notified that the White Cliffs property may be up for sale. In short order, the Chair and Vice Chair of the NHC met with the manager of the facility for confirmation and discussions as to why. The owners at the time were the LaCava Family. The father purchased the property in 1985 and it was now managed by his siblings. The family also owned the Best Western Hotel and Conference Center on Route 20 in Marlborough. NHC members were told that the family decided to focus their efforts on the Best Western property and sell off the White Cliffs property as the White Cliffs property was underutilized.

Members of the NHC contacted the realtor for the White Cliffs Mansion and offered their support in marketing the property for sale to historic preservationists. The NHC effort included spreading awareness of the property to niche and non-traditional buyers beyond the reach of the typical commercial realtor. They contacted historic preservation organizations such as the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC), Preservation Massachusetts and the Community Preservation Coalition for guidance on selling the historic White Cliffs Mansion. Letters and e-mails were sent and phone calls made to non-profits, boutique hotel builders, high-end restaurateurs, and the Smith & Wesson Company (see Appendix-A). The NHC spent time investigating the history of the property so they could educate others about its significance and why it should be saved. A series of articles were published in the local Community Advocate Newspaper that spread awareness of the property and highlighted the life and accomplishments of Daniel Wesson, the famous manufacturer of Smith & Wesson Company fame and philanthropist who commissioned the construction of the Mansion as a summer home for his family. Completed in 1886, the Mansion's spectacular architectural and design features were highlighted in the articles, as well as the important role the mansion played in many lives as a popular event venue hosting the region's weddings, showers, proms, and showers over a period of more than 60 years.

The NHC explored whether Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds could be used to purchase the property and what that would entail. Section 12A of the Massachusetts Community Preservation Act requires placement of a permanent restriction on any "real property interest" acquired using CPA funds to ensure that the property continues to be used for the applicable CPA purpose (in this case, historic preservation). In September 2014, in response to an inquiry from NHC, the Massachusetts Historical Commission found the Mansion ineligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and a perpetual preservation restriction due to the presence of 1960's and 1970's additions that "*obscure parts of the exterior, and by the enclosure of character-defining exterior porches*". This was a significant setback as it would not allow use of CPA funds to purchase White Cliffs. One year later (December 1, 2015) after a site visit by U.S. Representative Jim McGovern and MHC representative Michael Steinitz (Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer), the Massachusetts Historic Commission reversed their decision citing the

“remarkable quality and integrity of the interior architectural fabric of the building and clarified that the enclosures of the south entry and southeast and southwest porch areas... could readily be restored to their historic appearance and configuration”. In summary, they found that the property does qualify for a Perpetual Preservation Restriction in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 184, Sections 31-33, which opened up the possibility of using CPA funding if needed.

An update detailing the Northborough Historical Commission’s 2014 activities supporting the sale of White Cliffs was sent to the Town Administrator and Town Planner on January 30, 2015. The Update mentioned the NHC primary goals of educating the general public about the property to promote interest in its preservation and supporting the realtor by investigating historic preservation options and examples. The initial focus was to review the property’s history in some detail and identify the key historical attributes of the Mansion including the exterior and interior architecture, the original landscaping, the advanced system used to bring water to the property, and the famous owner Mr. Daniel Wesson of Smith & Wesson Company. In 2015, the Chair of the NHC completed and distributed a report on the property (link to the report: <https://www.town.northborough.ma.us/white-cliffs-committee/files/white-cliffs-architecture-and-history-2015>). Historical information was supplied to media outlets including; the Worcester Telegram & Gazette, Northborough Patch, Metro-West News, Community Advocate, Northborough Villager, YouTube and the Northborough Historical Society. Letters and emails were sent and phone calls made to non-profits, universities, high-end restaurant chains (such as Ruth’s Chris), boutique hotel builders (The Kendall Hotel in Cambridge), and news organizations including a segment on WCVB’s Chronicle TV program. An open house at White Cliffs was organized with the Northborough Historical Society so the community could have one last walkthrough before the doors were locked on December 31, 2014.

2015 (Demolition Request & Potential Buyer)

On January 21, 2015, the White Cliffs owners submitted an application for a demolition permit to the Northborough Building Inspector. In accordance with the requirements of the Demolition Delay Bylaw (Town Code, Chapter 2-36), the Building Inspector forwarded the demolition permit application to the Northborough Historic District Commission for review. At their meeting on February 12, 2015, the Commission determined that the mansion is a “historically significant building”, which put forth a 180-day freeze on issuance of a demolition permit for the building. The Historical Commission also prepared a “Single Building Historic District Study Report” in preparation for establishing a “White Cliffs Local Historic District”. The driver for this effort was that a property listed in a Local Historic District is protected from demolition in perpetuity. The “Study Report” was accepted by the Massachusetts Historic Commission, which enabled establishment of the “White Cliffs Local Historic District” to be placed on the April 2015 Annual Town Warrant. The article was ultimately passed over at Town Meeting when the owners voluntarily agreed to extend the demolition delay to December 31, 2015.

As part of the demolition delay negotiation, the Town used CPA funds to commission Kirk & Company to prepare a “Best Use Study” of the property. The report was completed in September 2015 (See <https://www.town.northborough.ma.us/white-cliffs-committee/files/use-study-kirk-company-09-11->

[2015](#)). The “Mixed-Use Market Study for White Cliffs” found that “the site is ideally located for commercial office space and meeting event space”.

On October 19, 2015, Historic District Commission member Norm Corbin and Kathleen Polanowicz, District Director for Congressman Jim McGovern, provided the Board of Selectmen with a brief overview of the history of the White Cliffs Mansion and an update on its status. They informed the Board of the findings of the “Best Use Study” and that the HDC submitted an application for reconsideration to the Massachusetts Historical Commission regarding the building’s eligibility for placement on the National Registry of Historic Places. Eligibility for National Register placement was a prerequisite for financially supporting a buyer with CPA funding if requested.

In October 2015, a potential buyer of the property came forward. Ms. Pride-Fahs of Shrewsbury was interested in continuing the property’s use as an event venue, approaching the Town with a request for \$1 million in CPA funding to support her purchase. Fortunately, in December 2015, the Massachusetts Historic Commission reversed its prior decision relative to the property’s eligibility for National Register listing and a perpetual preservation restriction. With the door now opened, the Community Preservation Committee discussed Ms. Pride-Fahs’ request for funding at their meeting held on December 3, 2015. With the Committee’s support, efforts were under way to place her request on the April 2016 Annual Town Meeting Warrant. Everything was falling into place, until it wasn’t. In February 2016, Ms. Pride-Fahs withdrew her offer to purchase the White Cliffs Mansion.

2016 (Authorization for Town Purchase & an Oil Leak)

The February 2016 withdrawal of Ms. Pride-Fahs’ offer effectively closed the door on the private sale and preservation of the White Cliffs Mansion. The realtor had no offers on the table that would save the Mansion. Recent e-mails (February 21, 2023) from Michael Durkin, who was the realtor for the property, acknowledged that there were “72 showings over the 2 years of it being on the market and approximately 12 offers of various strategies”. Yet, none of the offers materialized into a purchase. He also mentioned that back in 2014-2015, at least 6 estimates were prepared for improvements costing between \$4 to \$8 million that were necessary to make the mansion a functional building. Armed with this information and no potential buyers in hand, the owners decided to pursue Plan-B- demolition of the mansion to make way for a subdivision of single-family homes on the 7-acre property. With the demolition delay expiring on December 31, 2015, the owners removed all historic stained-glass windows, many antique light fixtures, outside water features, lamps, light fixtures, and fireplace components and shipped them to Skinner Auction house. Demolition of the building was imminent.

Considering the lack of interested buyers and the imminent demolition of the Mansion, the Town began seriously pursuing acquisition of the property using CPA funds to buy additional time to find a buyer or partner to reuse the property. With only 8 weeks until the April 25th 2016 Town Meeting, the Town and property owner settled on a purchase price of approximately \$1.77 million, which was slightly less than the appraised value of \$1.83 million. Despite walk-throughs of the property, it was widely acknowledged that this was a very high risk purchase for the following reasons:

- There was no detailed professional assessment of the building condition (structural integrity, systems, handicap access, etc...);
- The building and site had not been evaluated for asbestos, mold, lead, or other environmental issues;
- There was no identified reuse strategy for the property;
- The Town did not have cost estimates relative to repairs necessary to reopen the mansion.

A copy of the warrant article for purchase appears in [Appendix-C](#). The request for \$2.4 million included the acquisition cost of approximately \$1.77 million along with an additional \$630,000 for emergency repairs to secure and preserve the building, 3 years of anticipated carrying costs (insurance, utilities, security, artifacts storage, etc...), and professional services costs associated with evaluating the property. A detailed breakdown of all the anticipated costs provided to support the 2016 acquisition as well as the actual costs accrued as of the end of January 2023 appears in [Appendix-D](#). After much debate, the motion passed the mandatory 2/3 vote with 218 in favor vs 67 opposed with 285 total votes taken. The Town signed the Purchase and Sales Agreement on May 20, 2016 contingent on completion of an environmental evaluation.

The Town engaged Capital Environmental LLC to prepare the Phase I Environmental Assessment Report for the property at a total cost of \$38,050. The Report, dated July 18, 2016, included an interior asbestos survey, lead paint survey, lead in drinking water survey, interior mold survey, and PCBs in building materials survey. One of the most notable findings was the possible existence of a heating oil tank under the main parking lot that was estimated to hold 8,000 gallons. Intrusive testing confirmed the existence and location of the underground storage tank. Soil boring test results included in a follow-up report prepared by Capital Environmental LLC dated August 31, 2016 revealed petroleum contaminated soil in the vicinity of the underground storage tank. The Town used these findings to renegotiate the terms of the acquisition, refusing to purchase the property until the tank and all contaminated soil were removed from the property and the site was certified as clean by a Licensed Site Professional (LSP). The property owner subsequently engaged Corporate Environmental Advisors to oversee removal of the tank and contaminated soil and perform post-excavation sampling and site restoration activities. The tank was removed on October 18, 2016 and up to 975 cubic yards of fuel oil impacted soil was excavated and disposed of off-site over the course of the following week. Three bedrock monitoring wells were installed to assess impacts on groundwater quality within the vicinity of the contaminated soils. A report prepared by Corporate Environmental Advisors dated January 17, 2017 memorialized cleanup and assessment activities to date and recommended ongoing monitoring/assessment activities. Certification that all oil residue was removed required about 9 months of monitoring the wells for contamination. Upon receiving certification from Corporate Environmental Advisors that the site was clean, the Town purchased the property in September 2017.

2018 (Establishment of the White Cliffs Committee and Initial Evaluation of the Property)

Upon completion of the White Cliffs purchase, the Board of Selectmen established the White Cliffs Reuse Committee to *“to explore the long-term viability of the property and be involved in all phases of the process.*

The intent of the committee is to present recommendations to the Board of Selectmen for consideration at the 2019 Annual Town Meeting". The Board of Selectmen directed that the Committee shall consist of one member of the Board of Selectmen, one member of the Community Preservation Committee, one member of the Historic District Commission, and two at-large members. The first meeting of the White Cliffs Committee occurred on January 18, 2018.

The first task undertaken by the Committee was to prepare a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to recruit a firm to fully evaluate the property as follows:

- recommend the priorities for securing the building envelope to keep it from further deterioration;
- conduct a thorough conditions assessment (structure, utilities, handicap access ...);
- investigate the history of the building (ownership, old fire damage, 1960s and 1970s additions ...);
- inventory and evaluate the condition of all the historic articles removed from the mansion (now owned by the town) that went to Skinner Auctioneers,
- prepare drawings of the current floor plan and landscape; and
- model the financials for potential reuse options.

The RFQ was released on July 6, 2018 with proposals due one month later, on August 7, 2018. Fourteen submissions were received. Four were selected for interviews before the White Cliffs Committee. At the October 23, 2018 meeting, the Committee identified DBVW Architects and Spencer, Sullivan & Vogt Architecture as the top two firms and recommended that the Town Administrator initiate contract negotiations with DBVW Architects.

2019 - 2022 (White Cliffs Assessment and Reuse Study and Property Stabilization)

The Town executed the contract with the consultant team led by DBVW Architects in January 2019, ultimately paying \$126,120 for their services. The White Cliffs Committee held a kick-off meeting with the consultant team on February 22, 2019 and continued to meet with them during the two years it took to complete the effort. The detailed Study was finally completed in December 2020 after being delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic and associated shutdowns.

The Study (see: <https://www.town.northborough.ma.us/white-cliffs-committee/files/dbvw-white-cliffs-assessment-and-reuse-study-final-presentation-0>) included an overview of the property history, description of the building components and condition assessment, identification of priority components and repairs, discussion of ongoing maintenance requirements, as well as an analysis of 3 potential reuse options and their feasibility. The Executive Summary appears in **Appendix-B**. Below are some key findings:

- White Cliffs is a remarkable example of Queen Anne / Shingle Style architecture, and despite several additions and renovation campaigns, retains much of its original historic fabric;
- White Cliffs is a highly significant historic property, especially with respect to decorative finishes and features;
- The historic portion of the White Cliffs Mansion is in very good structural condition;
- Additions installed in the 1960's and 1970's are in very poor condition due to significant water

intrusion and should be demolished;

- Deferred maintenance and 9 years of vacancy pose challenges to the longevity of the structure and ultimate reuse potential. In its present state, the building cannot be occupied by the public;
- Portions of the exterior of White Cliffs are intact and display a significant amount of historic fabric. All of the original features should be restored or replaced in-kind;
- Any reuse should be designed to preserve the spectacular and largely intact decorative features and finishes that adorn the interior of White Cliffs. The interior is in relatively good condition;
- All of the systems – mechanical, electrical and plumbing – require replacement due to the long period of inactivity;
- The distribution, lighting, life safety, and fire alarm systems are outdated and not salvageable;
- A sprinkler system will be required for any commercial use;
- A market feasibility analysis was performed for three potential reuse options (event space, municipal office building and multi-family residential use). The analysis included a market data survey as well as identification of capital costs specific to each potential re-use option. Note that all cost estimates are based on 2020 pricing and should be adjusted to account for inflation.
- Of the three reuse scenarios, the most expensive was use of the mansion as municipal office building, which would entail constructing a large addition. The cost was estimated at \$29,732,710.
- The most economically viable reuse option was a hospitality/event venue, which would entail rehabbing the historic mansion and building a new ballroom and kitchen addition. The estimated cost was \$15,048,460.
- A fourth “Preservation Lite” option examined the feasibility and costs associated with stabilizing the property and improving the building and site conditions, but not to the extent of occupancy. That cost was quoted at \$5,964,980.

With the completion of the DBVW Study, it became clear to many that any reuse of the White Cliffs property would require a significant financial investment- one which Northborough’s taxpayers may not be willing to take on given significant capital improvements on the horizon such as a new fire station, upgraded athletic facilities at the high school, a new town hall or significant upgrades to the existing town hall, and a multi-year, multi-phase downtown revitalization project. But, it also became clear that some investment in repairs and improvements were necessary to stabilize and secure the property until a long-term plan could be mapped out. Below is a list of emergency repairs and improvements made to the property between 2019 and 2022:

- Roof: In 2020, Richard Roofing Co., LLC replaced all sloped asphalt roofs on the historic portions of White Cliffs with new fiberglass shingles and membranes, installed new EPDM roofing at the flat turret roofs and all new flashings at the skylight and chimneys, replaced fire damaged roof decking and structure at the west gable, replaced the failed cricket behind the southeast chimney, and resealed all glazing at the existing skylight. The total cost of these repairs was \$119,837, which included \$94,100 for roof replacement and \$25,737 for carpentry work. Despite their poor condition and clear evidence of water intrusion, the Town decided not to replace the flat roofs on the two large additions because they will likely be demolished.

- **Windows:** Locations where windows broke due to vandalism or stained-glass windows were removed for safekeeping were covered with plywood.
- **Chimneys:** The south chimney, which is the most ornate, began collapsing in spring 2022. In June 2022, the Town hired N.E.L. Corporation to disassemble the terracotta cap and the chimney to just above the roof line. 80-85% of the bricks were salvaged and are stacked on site. A temporary cap was fabricated and installed over the remaining section of the chimney. The cost of this work was \$55,400. The chimney will have to be rebuilt and repointed. The other three chimneys are in better condition exhibiting moderate deterioration. They are also in need of repointing.
- **Interior woodwork of the original Mansion:** Condition of the woodwork is largely very good. On the first floor, there are areas with moisture-related mildew/mold build-up on the surface of carved ornament millwork, especially where adjacent to the 1960's additions. The woodwork on the second floor is in very good condition with no moisture-related damage. In June 2022, the Town hired Belfor to conduct mold testing and analysis services and, as a consequence of those findings, installed a temporary electrical panel and dehumidifiers to reduce the moisture content of the first and second floors of the original building. The costs of the analysis and remediation activities totalled \$10,111.
- **Miscellaneous Improvements:** Additional investments were made to increase the security of the building including purchase and installation of security cameras, fire alarm upgrades, and installation of no trespassing signage. Also, miscellaneous trees fell down or needed to be removed due to damage. One fallen tree damaged an abutters fence resulting in repair costs.
- **Ongoing Expenses:** Ongoing costs associated with the White Cliffs Mansion includes insurance, electricity, fire alarm service fee, artifacts storage, and legal expenses.

2022 – 2023 (Marketing the Property for Potential Reuse and Most Endangered Historic Property Designation)

As mentioned above, the White Cliffs Committee and Town staff came to the conclusion that a public/private partnership may be the best path forward to ensure preservation of the mansion and successful reuse of the property. To that end, the Town hired Kirk & Company, a firm specializing in real estate counseling, market analysis and valuation services, to conduct a procurement process aimed at recruiting a public or private partner to assist the Town with redeveloping and reusing the site. This effort entailed a considerable amount of “shaking the bushes” to cultivate interest in the property, working with the White Cliffs Committee and Town staff to develop the RFP, and then assisting the White Cliffs Committee with evaluating submissions.

At the same time, the Town successfully submitted an application to include the White Cliffs Mansion on Preservation Massachusetts’ 2022 Massachusetts Most Endangered Historic Resources List. The award letter was received in November 2022. Since 1993, the Most Endangered Historic Resource List has focused statewide attention on endangered historic resources, their challenges and their community importance. It often serves as a catalyst for preservation opportunities. In addition to the White Cliffs Mansion, the 2022 List features three additional properties: the Weston Railroad Station (Weston),

Isolation Hospital (Springfield) and Orange Armory (Orange). This Listing brought additional exposure to the plight of the White Cliffs Mansion during the crucial time when the RFP was on the street.

One major challenge that became apparent while working with Kirk & Company was inclusion of approximately half of the White Cliffs property, most notably the historic mansion itself, within the Residential C District. Besides single-family homes, the District allows very few residential options and no mixed-use or business options. Fearing that this would be a significant impediment to the reuse of the property, effectively deterring most from responding to the RFP, the Planning Director committed to preparing a warrant article for inclusion on the 2023 Annual Town Meeting Warrant that would rezone the mansion so that the entire property was located within the Business East District. This zoning change would enable the property to return to its long-term former uses as a restaurant and/or event venue.

The RFP was released on October 12, 2022 with responses due by December 8, 2022. [Appendix-A](#) lists the firms requesting a copy of the RFP. The Town gave a tour of the building and the property to interested parties on November 1, 2022. Seventeen attendees participated representing 14 different companies. Ultimately three proposals were received by the submission deadline from the following parties:

Metro West Collaborative Development: Proposed 52 units of intergenerational affordable rental housing for families and seniors. Most of the units would be housed in a new 15,000 square foot building situated behind the mansion that would contain 3 stories. The first floor of the historic mansion would be preserved and revitalized as a space for community gatherings and events. The second and third floors would be re-purposed into 3 or 4 residential units. The 1960's and 1970's additions would be demolished and the exterior of the building restored to its original state. This proposal requested \$800,000 in CPA funds to serve as match for grant programs that would help fund the project, which was expected to cost \$24,130,193.

Historic Artifact Preservation Organization: Proposed to restore the historic mansion for public use while installing up to 15 Sustainable Accessory Units to be used as collaborative workspaces on the area currently occupied by the parking lot behind the mansion, constructing a greenhouse replica for use as a venue and event center, and installing a grand country garden and grounds to enhance the natural beauty and landscaping. This proposal also involved demolishing the 1960's and 1970's additions and restoring the exterior of the building to its original state. This proposal did not specifically request CPA funds, although it did rely on \$620,000 in donations and reclaimed material to finance an estimated \$6,365,600 in development costs.

Downeast Residential LLC: Proposed 110 to 160 units of new multi-family dwellings of which 10% would be affordable. The exact number of new buildings and their layout were not defined. The exterior of the mansion would be preserved and restored using an undetermined amount of CPA funds. The interior of the mansion would be retrofitted to accommodate a variety of commercial uses, possibly a restaurant and/or brewery. Development costs were not included within this proposal.

Kirk & Company helped the White Cliffs Reuse Committee evaluate the proposals using the minimum and comparative evaluation criteria listed in the RFP. Criteria included:

Minimum Evaluation Criteria:

1. Project summary
2. Basic feasibility/financial projections (pro formas) including sources and uses of funds demonstrating financial feasibility of the proposal
3. General discussion of community benefit

Comparative Evaluation Criteria:

1. Restoration and preservation of the structure
2. Reduction of the White Cliffs burden on municipal finances
3. Landscaping and natural beautification and improvements
4. Consideration of public access or an enhanced relationship to the community
5. Consideration of 2020 Master Plan

At their December 21, 2022 meeting, the White Cliffs Committee discarded the proposal submitted by Downeast Residential LLC because it was an incomplete submission lacking the pro-forma required under the Minimum Evaluation Criteria. The Committee deemed the other two proposals responsive, electing to interview the remaining applicants on January 12, 2023 and proceed with reference checks. The Committee deliberated and voted on a formal recommendation at the January 26, 2023 meeting (Link to meeting video: [White Cliffs Committee / Jan 26, 2023 - YouTube](#)).

Impressed by their breadth of experience sensitively revitalizing historic buildings and their solid financial plan, the White Cliffs Reuse Committee ranked the Metrowest Collaborative Development proposal as most advantageous to the town and forwarded this recommendation to the Board of Selectmen. Their motion, approved 4 in favor with 1 opposed was as follows:

“MOTION that the Committee recommends to the Board of Selectmen that a contract for the redevelopment and reuse of the White Cliffs Mansion be awarded to Metro West Development Corporation, based on the Committee’s review and evaluation of the proposals received and a determination that the proposal of Metro West Development Corporation is most advantageous to the Town.”

The proposal and the White Cliffs Reuse Committee’s recommendation now lies in the hands of the Board of Selectmen.

TABLE 1: White Cliffs Highlights from January 2014 to January 2023
(Critical events are in bold)

DATE	TOPIC	NOTE
January 2014	Placed on Market	
May 2014	Facebook Page Started	Now with 2444 “likes”
June 13, 2014	TV5 Chronicle Program	
June 2014	Northborough Historic Commission	Start sending letters to potential buyers
Sept. 5, 2014	Mass. Hist. Comm. Rejection	As is, not possible for Preservation Restriction
Dec. 31 2014	Doors Locked, Business Closed	
Jan. 21, 2015	Demolition Request by Owners	
Feb. 12, 2015	180 Day Demolition Delay Imposed	Until July 2015, at Historic Commission Mtg.
Feb. 12, 2015	Voted as a “Significant” Historical Asset	Allows use of CPA funds
Feb. 17, 2015	“Local Historic District” OK’ed by Mass. Hist. Comm.	Allows a Town Vote for a Historic District
April 2015	Town Meeting Warrant Article for “Historic District”	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Passed Over Historic District Article 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extended Demolition Delay 	Until Dec 31, 2015
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town uses CPA funds to pay for Pres. Rest. resubmission 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town uses CPA funds to pay for “Best Use” Study 	
May–July 2015	Brought in Historic Renovation Specialist for Ideas	
Oct. 7, 2015	“Best Use” Study Completed	Kirk & Company
Oct 19, 2015	Board of Selectmen update	
Oct. 2015	CPA Application submitted by Ms. Pride-Fahs	Ms. Pride-Fahs requested \$1 million
Nov. 6, 2015	Owners accepted Ms. Pride-Fahs offer	
Nov. 18, 2015	Historic District Comm. Voted to support CPA Request	Ms. Pride-Fahs requested \$1 million
Nov. 19, 2015	Article in Community Advocate about Ms. Pride-Fahs	
Nov. 27, 2015	Walk through with Mass. Historic Commission Director and Congressman McGovern	
Dec. 3, 2015	Letter from Mass. Hist. Comm. Stating a Preservation Restriction Could be Applied to White Cliffs	This allows for the use of CPA funds
Dec. 3, 2015	CPC Review of \$1m Funding Request	
February, 2016	Ms. Pride-Fahs Withdraws Offer for White Cliffs	
February, 2016	Removal of Stain Glass and Other Antique Furnishings	Sent to Skinner Auctioneers
March, 2016	Town of Northborough Offer to Purchase	
April 7, 2016	Property Appraisal Report	Appraisal was above the offered price
April 25, 2016	Authorization to Purchase at Town Meeting	218 YES 67 NO
May 20, 2016	Town of Northborough Signs Purchase & Sale Agreement	
July 18, 2016	Phase I Environmental Site Assessment	
Oct. 4, 2016	Proposal for Underground Tank Removal	Paid for by LaCava Family
Sept. 2017	Town Purchases White Cliffs	Environmental Evaluation Completed
January 2019	Town hires DBVW Architects	
December 2020	DBVW Final Report	
June 2022	Town hires Kirk & Company	
October 12, 2022	RFP Distributed	
December 8, 2022	Deadline for Receiving Proposals	Three were received
January 12, 2023	RFP Interviews	
January 26, 2023	RFP Deliberations and Recommendations	Metrowest Collaborative Development Recommended

APPENDIX-A

Northborough Committee/Commission Outreach (2014-2023)

RFP Contacts for White Cliffs Reuse (Fall 2022)

(per Kirk & Company database)

Creedon & Company,
Patriquin Architects
Preservation Strategies
Preservation RI
MAC-HA
AHF Boston
Barrett Planning LLC
Preservation Massachusetts
Heritage Consulting Group
Epsilon Associates
VHB - Tax Credits
Boston Preservation Alliance
Heritage Consulting Group
Heritage Planning & Design
Overlook Associates
Saltaire Hotels
Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc
Preservation Worcester
Charing Cross Realty
Historic New England
MHIC
Wessling Architects
Rees Larkin Development
McGinley Kalso & Associates
Sweeney Real Estate & Appraisal
Pure Hockey
Landmark Services
Hannaco General Contracting
Newmark
LandVest
Webber Restaurant Group
Hoboken Brownstone Co.
Fort Toconderoga
Sheperds Run
CRE

Recipients of the Request for Proposals for White Cliffs Reuse (Fall 2022)

(Per Kirk & Company database)

Per Brett Pelletier of Kirk & Company, in addition to the list below, the RFP was sent to a number of public and private platforms, like Preservation Massachusetts, Massachusetts Historical Commission, etc. along with some emails through professional associations (CRE, LinkedIn, etc.)

Bohler Engineering	Sweeney Real Estate & Appraisal
Kripper Studio	Pure Hockey
Colantonio Inc.	Landmark Services
LAER Realty Partners	Hannaco General Contracting
Blue Dog Designs	Newmark
Leak Realty Partners	LandVest
Creedon & Co.	Historic New England
Patriquin Architects	Webber Restaurant Group
Preservation Strategies	Hoboken Brownstone Co.
Preservation RI	Fort Toconderoga
MAC-HA	Sheperds Run
AHF Boston	CRE
Barrett Planning LLC	Groundswell Design Group
James Lima Dev.	Armory Revival
Preservation Massachusetts	Peregrine
Heritage Consulting Group	Kirk & Company
Epsilon Associates	Preservation Worcester
VHB - Tax Credits	Charing Cross Realty
Boston Preservation Alliance	Elizabeth Randall
Saltaire Hotels	Historic New England
Heritage Consulting Group	MHIC
Heritage Planning & Design	Wessling Architects
Overlook Associates	Rees Larkin Development
Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc	MetroWest Collaborative (Firm Selected)
McGinley Kalso & Associates	Massachusetts Central Register

Politicians Contacted for Updates and Guidance:

- State Representatives: Harold Naughton & Danielle Gregoire
- State Senators: Harriette Chandler & James Eldridge
- U.S. Representative: James McGovern's

Training for Historic Preservation:

- Massachusetts Historical Commission
- Preservation Massachusetts
- Community Preservation Coalition
- Massachusetts History Alliance
- Massachusetts Historic Conference, June 2019
- Massachusetts Preservation Conference, September 2019 and 2021
- Grant Seeking Workshop, March 2020
- Historic Preservation Grants database

Owners/developers/realtors/preservationist contacted for guidance and their experiences:

- AHF, Winn Co, Trinity Financial (Worcester County Courthouse conversion to housing)
- Harding-Allen Estate (Privately Owned, Barre MA)
- Asa Water Mansion (Town Owned, Millbury MA)
- Josiah Smith Tavern (Town of Weston MA & Friends of the Josiah Smith Tavern)
- 19-XIX Carter (New Community Center in Berlin MA, was a small Methodist Church)
- Jim Donahue (Curator of Historic Landscapes & Horticulture at The Preservation Society of Newport County)
- Burnett-Garfield House (Southborough MA)
- Lyman Estate (Owned by the nonprofit Historic New England, Waltham MA)
- J.M. Goldson
- Anser Advisory
- Peppers Catering (Northborough MA)
- Michelle Gillispie (Realtor, Northborough MA)
- Michael Durkin (Realtor, Northborough MA)
- Timothy Shea (Developer, Northborough MA)
- Robert Gleason (Developer, Northborough MA)
- Bridgewater MA (reuse of an old school for mixed income housing)
- Ames Shovel Factory Reuse (Easton MA, converted to mixed income housing)
- Gail Roberts & Team (Realtor, Cambridge MA)
- Grafton Town House Restoration (Grafton MA)
- TMS Architects (Preservationist in Portsmouth NH)
- Johnson & Wales University (Culinary School, Providence RI)

During the time that the property was for sale and after the town owned the property there was a continued effort to investigate potential buyers/partners for the property. Some of these efforts are outline below:

Marketing Support:

- TV-5 Chronicle: <http://www.wcvb.com/chronicle/for-sale-junkyard-and-function-hall/26470640> .
- New England Home Magazine
- Boston Magazine (sent email)
- This Old House contacted
- Architectural Digest Magazine (sent email)
- Placed on Preservation Massachusetts' "Most Endangered Historic Resource List" November 2022
- New England Home Magazine (sent email)
- Design New England (sent email)
- A&E Networks (A+E Networks® includes A&E®, The HISTORY® Channel, Lifetime, etc.) (sent email)
- Yankee Magazine (sent email)
- This Old House (sent email)
- Rehab Addict (TV Program, sent e-mail)

Non-Profits Contacted for Financial Support and/or Potential Purchase:

- Worcester Polytechnic Institute (for an off-site Conference Center) (sent letter)
- Clark University (for an off-site Conference Center) (sent letter)
- Historic New England
- Preservation Worcester
- Shalin Liu (A philanthropist who rebuilt the performance center in Rockport MA and owns the "Summer Wildlife Sanctuary & Music Center" in Boylston MA)
- Chi Universe

For-profits Contacted for Financial Support and/or Purchase:

- Hunt Slonem, (artist and restorer of antique mansions)
- McMenamins Restaurants & Pubs (Specialist in historic property restorations for their businesses)
- Smith & Wesson, Vice President of Investor Relations and their Foundation
- Smith & Wesson on-line Forum
- New Owner of the Higgins Armory Building
- EMC Corp (for an off-site Conference Center)
- Anser Advisory
- Worcester Restaurant Group (owners of Via's, 111 Chop House, Sole Proprietor)
- Niche Hospitality Group Worcester (owners of Bocado, The Fix Burger Bar, Mezcal Tequila Cantina)
- Ruth Chris Steakhouse (A North American high end restaurant chain)
- Lark Hotels (A New England boutique hotel chain)

Published Historic Information on White Cliffs:

- White Cliffs Architecture and History
Written by the chair of the Northborough Historic District Commission
(Link: <https://www.town.northborough.ma.us/white-cliffs-committee/files/white-cliffs-architecture-and-history-2015>)
- Articles published in the Community Advocate News
Written by the chair of the Northborough Historic District Commission
 - White Cliffs History – Part 1, Why Northborough?
 - White Cliffs History – Part 2, Entrepreneur and Innovator
 - White Cliffs History – Part 3, Where Did the Money Come From?
 - White Cliffs History – Part 4, Architecture as a Wesson Family Hobby
 - White Cliffs History – Part 5, Exterior Architecture
 - White Cliffs History – Part 6, Landscape
 - White Cliffs History – Part 7, Interior Architecture
 - White Cliffs History – Part 8, Other Buildings
 - White Cliffs History – Part 9, Water System
 - White Cliffs History – Part 10, Daniel Wesson – Philanthropy
 - White Cliffs History – Part 11, After the Wessons

APPENDIX-B

WHITE CLIFFS MANSION ASSESSMENT AND REUSE STUDY

Executive Summary

The historic White Cliffs Mansion began life as a summer retreat for the Wesson family, of Smith & Wesson fame, in the mid-1880s. After experiencing multiple uses in the early 20th century, White Cliffs became an event facility in 1953, serving the Northborough community and surrounding area until its closure in late 2014. The building sat vacant in the years following, and was purchased by the Town of Northborough in 2017.

White Cliffs is a remarkable example of Queen Anne / Shingle Style architecture, and despite several additions and renovation campaigns, retains much of its original historic fabric. Deferred maintenance and vacancy have recently posed challenges to the longevity of the structure and ultimate reuse potential.

In early 2019, the Town of Northborough hired DBVW Architects to complete an Assessment and Feasibility Study of White Cliffs. The project team, which includes Peregrine Group (market consulting), Wozny/Barbar & Associates (MEP/FP engineering), Yoder + Tidwell (structural engineering), and VHB (civil engineering), together created a collection of resources organized as follows:

- Phase I: Securing the Facility A plan focused on immediate repair of the vital components of the building envelope to prevent future damage
- Phase II: Condition Assessment and Preservation Plan A detailed account of White Cliffs' history, physical characteristics, conditions, and recommendations for preservation
- Phase III: Feasibility and Reuse An analysis concentrated on identification and evaluation of potential reuse options

Under Phase I, DBVW Architects identified and developed construction documents for the highest priority work that would prevent White Cliffs from deteriorating further in the short term. This work included replacing roofs (sloped roofs and flat turret roofs), enlarging a deficient cricket between the east chimney and the skylight over the main staircase, and repairing the skylight to make it water tight. While the flat-roofed additions were also experiencing significant water infiltration, spending the limited amount of funding that was available on additions that will ultimately be removed was not recommended.

In early 2020, based on construction documents issued by DBVW, the sloped asphalt roofs on the historic portions of White Cliffs were replaced with new fiberglass shingles and the flat roofs on the turrets were replaced with new rubber membranes. The cricket at the east chimney was enlarged and the skylight over the main stair was repaired. Minor repairs were also conducted at some of the lower flat roofs to reduce infiltration as much as possible.

Additional high-priority work, including rebuilding and repointing chimneys, and creating a separation between the main house and the additions was not completed, due to a lack of available funds.

Recommendations for crating the stained glass windows and other artifacts that are in storage in a safe and secure manner were also developed, however, this work was also postponed due to limited funding.

A complete list of DBVW's Phase I recommendations can be found in Section III. Throughout 2020, Town has addressed several of these recommendations.

DBVW's Phase II findings are included in this report. Portions of the exterior of White Cliffs are intact and display a significant amount of historic fabric. All of the original features, including decorative wood shingle siding, decorative trim, multiple window configurations, ornamental chimneys and wrap-around porches should be restored or replaced in-kind where they are too deteriorated to save. Unfortunately, a large section of the west elevation was removed when the additions were added and some of the porches were subsumed by the additions.

In general, our assessment determined that two of the four additions are in very poor condition and should be removed as soon as possible, since they are contributing to the deterioration of White Cliffs. The addition that is attached to the east elevation, which housed the commercial kitchen, is also in poor condition, but could be salvaged if re-activating the commercial kitchen was needed. This addition does not detract from the historic portions of the house to the extent that the other additions do. When the additions are removed, the original facades and porches should be reconstructed based on historic documentation.

The work that is done inside White Cliffs will be largely dependent on the building's ultimate use. Any use should be designed to preserve the spectacular and largely intact decorative features and finishes that adorn the interior of White Cliffs. The interior is in relatively good condition, given that it was used as event space and has been unoccupied for several years. It will, however, continue to deteriorate if more funds cannot be made available to preserve the building in its entirety. All of the systems – mechanical, electrical and plumbing – will require replacement. Fire protection will also be required to accommodate any commercial use.

Under Phase III, DBVW worked with the Peregrine Group to evaluate potential reuse options for White Cliffs. Many different re-use scenarios were discussed with Northborough's White Cliffs' Committee and the options were narrowed down to the following three: event space, municipal offices for the Town, and residential use. Each of these options was then tested with financial models. Each of the reuse scenarios will require financial subsidy, as none of the proposed reuse options can generate enough income to pay for the preservation of White Cliffs and, as with some of the reuse opportunities, some new construction on the site. Each option is described in greater detail in the section titled "Feasibility and Reuse."

The Appendix includes existing conditions drawings of the building and site. These documents, and the data used to create this information, has been provided to the Town of Northborough for their future use. In general, White Cliffs is a highly significant historic property that maintains a large amount of historic fabric, especially with respect to decorative finishes and features. Preservation of the building is desirable for many reasons, however, substantial financial subsidy will be required regardless of the use to which the building is converted.

Appendix-C

The 2016 Warrant Article to Purchase the White Cliffs Property

ARTICLE 42: Community Preservation Fund – White Cliffs Mansion

MOTION PASSED (by the required 2/3rd vote; Yes 218, No 67)

To see if the Town will vote to appropriate from Community Preservation Fund revenues and borrow, pursuant to the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 44B, Section 11, or any other enabling authority, the total sum of \$2,400,000 for the purpose of acquiring and preserving the 6.5± acres of land and buildings thereon located at 167 Main Street and shown on Northborough Assessors' Map 53 as Parcel 73, and the .58± acres of land located at 0 Rear East Main Street and shown on Northborough Assessors' Map 53 as Parcel 155, for historic preservation purposes, and costs relating thereto, including property maintenance, protection and insurance and professional service costs for environmental and site assessments to determine appropriate preservation measures; and to authorize the Treasurer, with the approval of the Board of Selectmen, to issue bonds or notes of the Town in connection with any such borrowing, or take any other action relative thereto. – This Article provides funds to purchase the White Cliffs Mansion and preserve it while the Community Preservation Committee investigates viable long term preservation options.

Appendix – D

Breakdown of Anticipated CPA Funding Costs (April 2016)

\$1,750,000	Purchase Price: Subject to appraisal of equal or higher value and Town Meeting approval. Appraisal is underway.
\$30,000	Earnest Money: Required by Seller in Purchase and Sale Agreement. To be paid until closing at \$5000/month for a maximum of 6 months. Will attempt to close sooner to avoid payments.
\$20,000	Return of Fixtures: Return of all removed fixtures including windows, fire box, chandeliers etc. All are currently secured off site. Fixtures were removed from the home by the Seller to be sold at auction.
\$108,000	Utility Costs: 3 years of utility costs (heat, water, power) at \$36,000/year.
\$45,000	Liability Insurance: 3 years of liability insurance at \$15,000/year.
\$10,000	Draft, Record and Hold Historic Preservation Restriction: Because White Cliffs will be purchased entirely with Community Preservation Funds, State law requires that a Preservation Restriction be placed on the property. This is a document that is recorded at the Registry of Deeds and protects the historic integrity of the building in perpetuity. This assures that the Town's investment in White Cliffs is protected into the future. Generally a not-for-profit entity holds the restriction and assures that any proposed changes to the building do not violate the Restriction.
\$20,000	"Mothballing" of Building: Mothballing includes, but is not limited to, securing all access points into the building; doing any immediate repairs necessary to prevent damage to the building, including but not limited to moisture damage; clearing gutters and down spouts; assuring that the heating system functions and that pipes are sufficiently drained and insulated to prevent freezing. Figure includes supplies and labor.
\$25,000	Existing Conditions Review: Retain firm to provide the most accurate "as-build" documentation of the building as possible. This information will be utilized by architects, engineers, builders, and the Town to plan next steps for the building. Because of the complexity of the White Cliffs architecture and lack of original floor plans, these "as built" drawings are obtained through the use of laser measurement, digital recording and data capture tools.
\$250,000	<p>MA and Federal Code Compliance Evaluation: Retain firm to determine ADA compliance requirements, seismic requirements and life safety requirements (eg fire suppression installation). While the Town's Building Inspector is very knowledgeable, and has been very helpful in this process, he has advised that this type of work is beyond his expertise.</p> <p>Architectural Assessment of Code Compliance Requirements: Retain architect skilled in historic preservation to provide analysis of code compliance recommendations described above and to advise on how best to proceed to bring the building up to code. This is particularly important for an historic building, as not only does the building have to be code compliant before it opens to the public, but the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) will need to review those plans as well.</p> <p>Develop Schematic and Architectural Plans: The architect will develop schematic and architectural plans to implement code compliance requirements. The firm may also be tasked with providing construction drawings for the building should the Town determine to undertake that effort.</p>
\$10,000	National Register Nomination: Should the Town determine to proceed with that process, this will cover application fees and consultant services.

\$25,000	<u>Management Fee:</u> MacRostie Historic Advisors have been providing consultation on this project for some time, and have been working pro bono for the Town for the last year. MacRostie will provide day-to-day oversight of the project, including the management of vendors and trades, and the communication of information to all involved parties throughout the first year of this project. This work will be done in collaboration with Town staff.
\$95,000	<u>Contingency:</u> A reserve of money set aside to cover possible unforeseen future expense will be controlled by the Town Administrator, as will all other Community Preservation Funding allocated to this project.
\$2,388,000	

Breakdown of Actual CPA Funding Costs (2017 – January 2023)

\$1,771,236	Purchase Price
\$30,000	Earnest Money
\$11,619	Legal Expenses
\$317	Advertising Expenses
\$13,000	Storage of Fixtures: Windows, fire box, chandeliers etc. All are currently secured off site. Fixtures were removed from the home by the Seller to be sold at auction.
\$36,664	Utility Costs: electricity, fire alarm, security cameras
\$110,088	Liability and Property Insurance
\$119,837	New Roof and Carpentry Services
\$55,400	Chimney Demolition
\$15,815	Electrical Upgrades
\$5,811	Air Quality Testing and Dehumidifier Installation
\$28,575	Tree Removal and Fence Repairs
\$52,500	Existing Conditions Review: Includes Phase I Environmental Assessment
\$126,120	Northborough, MA White Cliffs Mansion Assessment and Reuse Study, prepared by DBVW Architects and subconsultants Peregrine Group LLC, Yoder + Tidwell Ltd. And Wozny/Barber & Associates
\$2,376,982	TOTAL EXPENSES AS OF 1/23/23
\$23,018	BALANCE AS OF 1/24/23

Note that Kirk & Company's marketing/real estate services costing \$32,000 that were provided during FY23 were paid for using FY 22/23 CPA Administration funds instead of the original \$2.4 million allocation from the April 2016 Annual Town Meeting.