



June 5, 2019

Nathan Poore, Town Manager
Town of Falmouth
271 Falmouth Road
Falmouth, ME 04105

Dear Nathan, Members of the Falmouth Town Council, Falmouth Land Trust, and Falmouth Historical Society,

I am writing to you today, in response to the RFQ put forth by the town regarding the Tidewater Farmhouse Property. First let me introduce myself. My name is Matthew O'Brien and I am the owner of the design, build, remodeling and general contracting firm, O'Brien Wood & Iron. My company has been in business for the last eleven years, repairing and restoring antique homes and repurposing existing buildings with structural and performance upgrades. We work on new builds and full home remodeling. We also provide custom woodworking projects from cabinets and furniture to architectural details from our woodshop in downtown Portland. I have been a Falmouth resident for the past eight years.

I toured the Tidewater property in partnership with James G Merry Building Movers, Inc. on May 16, 2019. We have worked together on a couple projects around Portland and would work in conjunction on any moving and stabilization at Tidewater. Upon review of the property, there are a couple paths to take but I will lay out what I think would be the best way forward. First off, I will say that as a town, we have a duty to those that came before us to preserve important properties that can be saved. Tidewater Farm has significant historic value and I believe that we should save as much of that as we can. I also believe that while saving and protecting properties, that significant care and planning should be involved in order to bring them up to modern efficient standards if possible, for energy savings and less impact on the environment.

The Main House

- Some points that I noticed were serious structural degradation in all of the first floor directly exposed to the basement. Prolonged exposure to moisture and standing water has caused dry rot and there was also evidence of powder post beetle infiltration.
- Frame structure appears to be in better shape as you move higher in the building, with the roof system remaining in almost pristine shape.
- The southern oldest part of the house contains historic value and would be worth saving.
- The newer back ell doesn't seem to contain much worth saving.
- The foundation throughout has failed in some areas and has also been seriously compromised from ground water flow with silt intrusion

The Barn

- The oldest central part of the barn has some serious structural issues but is stabilized for now. This would be the structure in the barn complex to save.



- The northern ell of the barn is compromised and not worthy to be saved.
- The southern ells of the barn while sagging, looks to be in decent condition. This ell is a candidate for saving. The most southern shed roof ell actually looks like a fairly new frame and should be repurposed.

Plan Forward

- After reviewing the property and considering the fore mentioned concerns, we propose a mixture of demolition, building moving and restoration. We would strip the more modern ell of the main house of any historical hardware, mouldings and features. These could be sold or repurposed. We would then demolish this back structure and sell for salvage anything that we could.
- We propose to then catalog the oldest part of the house and map its hardware, mouldings and features to be disassembled and put into storage for the rebuild. Each story would be cleared of the plaster down to the timbers for proper inspection.
- After the house was secured, we would propose to lift it off of its foundation and rotten first floor in conjunction with the Merry Brothers.
- The northern ell of the barn would be torn down.
- We propose the southern ells of the barn to be lifted and moved up the dirt road to be placed for use by the UMaine Tidewater Farm. When setting the building it would be re braced and secured under the supervision of our engineer.
- The central barn will be rebuilt with timbers under supervision of our engineer.
- At this point we propose the breaking ground of a new structure, yet to be designed, to bridge from the old house to the old barn. The new structure would be designed for the Falmouth Land Trust's needs and can be used in conjunction with the barn for the larger spaces that they require. Because of the smaller rooms the old house can be used for offices.
- To achieve this, a new efficient foundation would be poured for under the old house and the new structure to be built on.
- A new floor for the old house would be constructed on the foundation and the house would be set back down on the foundation and new floor system. Once secured, construction on the new structure can commence and, in the process, the old building can be brought to the same efficiency as the new structure. We work with a weatherization expert that can design this system.
- The old house would be rebuilt according to its original layout with its original features to be repurposed as offices.

We believe that this is the best way forward. It saves the most historic aspects of the property, provides a utility barn for the UMaine Farm and gives the Land Trust the ability to design and build a space that meets their needs. This is a special historic piece of Falmouth. It is a beautiful piece of land and contains one of the oldest buildings in the town. I think there can be some real opportunity to preserve and create a new space for the good of the town.



In conclusion, I realize that the town is looking for some kind of financial perspective and drawn plans on this project. We cannot provide those things because it is a waste of our time as a business. At this time there needs to be more specific discussion on the needs of the Land Trust and the Town. I would be happy to discuss this further and would be thrilled if my business was considered to work on this project. If that is the case, we can discuss the planning phase and financials.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. O'Brien", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Matthew O'Brien

Owner
O'Brien Wood & Iron
www.obrienwoodandiron.com



REFERENCES:

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Client – Lifted barn onto new foundation, structural repair and complete renovation

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Client – Extensive structural work to compromised 1850's farmhouse



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Client – Renovation to home