

Why the Town Should Acquire the Gov. Prence Property

On May 22nd, voters will be asked to support the purchase of the Governor Prence Motel property for general municipal purposes, including housing. This opportunity is a critical first step and an important decision. If approved, the Town will control the property and be in a position to decide its future.

There are many possibilities for something new and exciting on the 5.5 acre commercial property. The land is on 6A and borders the Cape Cod Rail Trail in the rear. It is all usable upland. Commercial developers are interested in the property, but the Town has the opportunity to purchase before it is put on the market.

The Select Board, Planning Board, Affordable Housing Committee and Affordable Housing Trust Board have carefully considered the purchase and all recommend the acquisition of this prime piece of real estate. These groups recognize the importance of reserving this property as a valuable asset to allow time for a full evaluation of its future use.

Purchasing the property is the first step. Following a yes vote, the Select Board will conduct a thorough analysis of how the needs and goals of the citizens of Orleans match with the property. Town leaders recognize the importance of collaborating with the people who live and work in the town to reach consensus and will develop a process for a robust and engaging comprehensive dialogue leading to a plan for development. Input from the public is critical to success and will be actively sought and incorporated.

An opinion survey last December received over 700 responses in nine days, so public interest in the property is clear. A range of options will be analyzed in an open process, possibly asking questions such as: Should the site serve year-round residents, provide jobs, be a magnet tourist attraction, provide housing or a blend of uses, incorporate recreation or a community center? The question for the May Town Meeting is whether we think enough of the property's future potential to make the initial purchase, without knowing its final use.

Purchase the property and preserve the town's options.

Envision the possibilities and be ready to participate in its future planning.

Enhance the vibrancy and economic vitality of Orleans.