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. **WHALE takes steps to preserve Akin House**

By CURT BROWN, Standard-Times staff writer

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DARTMOUTH -- Plans are in the works to fully restore the Elihu Akin House -- built in 1762 and considered one of the oldest homes in Dartmouth -- and return it to the town to be used for educational purposes.

The Waterfront Historic Area League placed a blue protective tarp over the roof of the Dartmouth Street home last week to stop further damage to the house which restoration officials report is in poor condition.

WHALE has teamed up with the Dartmouth Community Preservation Committee to restore the five-room 18th century home at the corner of Dartmouth and Rockland streets in South Dartmouth.

Dartmouth Town Meeting members in May approved spending \$185000 from the town's Community Preservation funds to purchase the house. WHALE acquired the house last year.

Executive Director Antone G. Souza Jr. said yesterday WHALE is now turning its attention to investigating the house for 18th century authenticity and fund raising which will include seeking grant money.

He feels it will take \$300000 to \$400000 and two to three years before the house is fully restored.

The restoration work won't be visible for quite a while according to Mr. Souza as architects inspect the house and WHALE tackles the task of fund-raising. A fund-raiser at the house this summer is being planned.

The blue protective tarp which was put in place Friday was made by a sign-maker and bears the WHALE emblem and name across the front of the roof. He said there was an immediate need for the protective tarp.

"The roof is sagging. There are holes in it."

He said architects will prepare drawings and construction specialists will determine how safe parts of the house are and what can be saved.

Officials from the National Trust for Historic Preservation a privately funded nonprofit organization will inspect the five-room house to determine what is original 18th century and what is not. Mr. Souza said the chimney stone fireplace and most of the beams are original.

He said WHALE envisions the house's future for education purposes because preservation officials feel it is too small to be used as a private residence. He said that perhaps a nonprofit group could be formed to operate and maintain the house.

Roger Williams University and Boston University for example are two schools that offer historic preservation courses. "It's very rare you get to see a house of this age. There are so few of these houses left" he said.

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