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## Akin House: Dr. Hodges Letter of Support for CPA Funding

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August 28, 2008

Buddy Baker-Smith, Chair  
Community Preservation Committee  
Dartmouth Town Hall  
400 Slocum Road  
Dartmouth, MA 02747

Dear Mr. Baker-Smith,

I am pleased to write this letter in support of the Dartmouth Heritage Preservation Trust (DHPT) application for a Community Preservation funds for continuing work at the historic Elihu Akin House in South Dartmouth. I find the DHPT to have a clear vision for grass-roots preservation and education. The Akin House is a unique community resource with the potential to make significant contributions to many public service missions, as well as to our understanding of town history. Perhaps most significantly, the house provides a physical, immersive link to the past.

I have directed two successful archaeological excavation seasons at the Akin House. Project goals are to understand the nature and integrity of archaeological resources and to recommend management strategies for these resources.

The Akin House is historically significant, revealing specific glimpses of a communal past. For example, two prehistoric stone tools were excavated this summer, small but potent reminders of a long history. Thousands of artifacts teach us about other occupants' experiences during the late 18th through 20th centuries. The property reminds us of what we, collectively, may have forgotten: Dartmouth's millennia of history; traditional construction techniques; ravages of the Revolutionary War; entrepreneurial strategies; Colonial Revival fantasies; shifting notions of cleanliness; popular tastes in home décor; and the changing meanings of "home" over the past several centuries. These are powerful, sometimes unexpected stories with both local and national importance.

The Akin House is an active, living site. Scholarly audiences are learning about the property as case study in public archaeology. The Akin House Archaeology Project has attracted dozens of university students, local and regional volunteers, schoolchildren, parents, teachers, and interested community members. This past summer, visitors stopped by every day. It was especially gratifying to introduce children to the site. Time and again, we heard that people had long *wondered* about the house; were glad something was being done; wanted to know about its history; and looked forward to visiting the Akin House again in the future.

DHPT is a vigorous advocate for this property. Their Community Preservation Fund proposal will support crucial stabilization of the Akin House and allow DHPT to continue its mission of stewardship. I look forward to seeing the project grow and capitalize on its strengths through tourism development, outreach efforts, and interdisciplinary collaborations. The project's momentum should be maintained, because the Akin House can make a real, lasting contribution to community life. It is part of a gathering effort to promote, preserve, and protect the Dartmouth's non-renewable cultural resources. I applaud this project.

Sincerely,

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