



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

300 Westgate Center Drive

Hadley, MA 01035-9589

NOV 13 2019



In Reply Refer To:
FWS/R5/NWRS/071159

The Honorable Seth Moulton
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative Moulton:

Thank you for your letter of September 18, 2019, regarding the Pink House at the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge), asking for a review and comment on proposals from the Support the Pink House's leadership.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) purchased the Stott property in 2011, and in 2014 determined that the house was not suitable as housing for seasonal staff, and that no other use for the Refuge was feasible. The Refuge then planned to demolish the building and provide a wildlife viewing platform at the site. After receiving inquiries from your office, as well as from Senator Markey's and Senator Warren's offices, the Service agreed to put the demolition process on hold and to explore land exchange options. The Refuge began working with Support the Pink House group in the fall of 2015 to discuss a land exchange. Since then, we continue to meet with Support the Pink House leadership, Massachusetts State Senator Bruce E. Tarr, and the Essex County Greenbelt Association on a potential exchange.

Regarding the four options that the Support the Pink House have recently proposed, we provide the following comments:

1. The Service maintains the property through its own Historic Preservation Program.

The Massachusetts Historical Commission concurred with the Service in 2011 (MHC #RC.50722) that the Stott Tract and Pink House do not meet the criteria of evaluation (36CFR 60) for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and have been deemed ineligible. We do recognize that the building has local appeal, and we are working with the Support the Pink House group to find a viable option for all stakeholders.

2. The Service executes a long-term land lease to support restoration of the property.

As you may be aware, the Service, and other government agencies, are under a mandate to reduce the number of buildings owned by the government. We have been striving to meet that mandate and leasing this building would run counter to the mandate's goals, as the building would remain federally owned. Continuing to hold the property is also outside of our conservation mission.

3. The Service enters into an affordable land-trade agreement with Greenbelt.

This option is our preferred direction. An exchange with Support the Pink House would enable them to take ownership of the house with approximately 1 acre of upland surrounding the house. This option would enable the Service to retain the remaining approximately 9 acres of salt marsh acquired by the Service with the house in 2011, divest the Service's responsibility for the building, and facilitate the Support the Pink House group's goal to save the building in its current location.

In late May 2019, Refuge Manager Bill Peterson signed the enclosed Agreement to Initiate a Land Exchange and shared it with other key members of the working group through an email for their signatures. This non-binding document allows the Service to begin the land acquisition process, including dedicating Service Realty resources to work on this effort. We anticipated parties involved would sign the document during the summer so we could officially begin the land exchange process. We have not received the needed signatures from Support the Pink House to begin the process, but we are still open to working with all parties on this option.

The Service appreciates all the time and effort that Greenbelt has spent on this in identifying potential properties to exchange, getting an estimate on the current value of the Pink House and 1 acre of land, so that support the Pink House group could move forward in what they need to do to achieve their goal.

4. The Service declares the property as surplus with a preservation restriction.

The Service has not determined the property (land) to be excess but we have identified that we have no need for the building, and had planned to demolish it. If we were to consider this option, the building itself would be deemed as excess, sold through public auction, and would have to be moved off the property. There would be no land included as none of the land is excess to the needs of the Refuge. If we were to pursue this option, whoever is successful in the auction would have a limited time frame to remove the building from the Refuge, likely no more than 120 days.

In summary, we continue to offer to work with the Support the Pink House group on an exchange of land that would save the building and keep it in its current location, and we would include 1 acre of land to support leaving the building where it is currently located. If the location of the Pink House is not an issue for the group, then pursuing the sale of the building through the General Services Administration is an option. However, the Support the Pink House group, or any successful bidder, would be required to move the building from the property.

As we enter the fifth year of this undertaking, we remain committed to seeing a successful outcome for all parties, and would like to set a November 1, 2020, deadline for this effort. We appreciate your interest and support in this matter and will keep you updated on future discussions and meetings. If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact Acting Refuge Manager, Ms. Sharon Ware, at 978-465-5753.

Sincerely,



Acting Wendy Weber, Regional Director
North Atlantic-Appalachian Region

Enclosure