

Castine Citizens Action Group

Box 232
Castine, ME 04421
www.castinepartnership.com

Dear Ms. Larson:

The Castine Citizens Action Group was formed in response to your Board's decision to acquire the Abbott house. We represent over two hundred Castine residents many of whom have been active supporters of MMA and its core mission. With this as background, we wish to draw on your recent letter to the residents of Castine, to ask some specific questions and to provide our impression of the situation.

In your letter you stated "... that the Board's decision to purchase Abbott House was based solely on its desire to utilize the Abbott House as a residence for future presidents....". However, in a private meeting with one of our Committee members on September 4th, President Tyler stated that the main reason to buy the property was to gain "green space" to enable more building and expansion of dorm space on the current campus. He said that even if there were not a house involved, MMA would want the property. This seems at odds with your statement that there is no hidden agenda. Can you explain this discrepancy?

Since we all know that the Academy administration and the Board will be changing in a few years, how can you guarantee that in the future the house will be used and cared for solely as a President's residence and the land will be protected, undeveloped and maintained in its current natural state?

We appreciate the statement that you "place great value on the positive relationship the Town and Academy have worked to develop...". We all look forward to the time when there will be a positive, trusting relationship. Your challenge of our town laws, however, dealt as serious blow to an already strained relationship. We hope you can relate to the concern that our very right to self-governance has been threatened. This is a most serious matter.

As you drive into town, you undoubtedly notice that Castine is essentially an island with limited land and therefore, limited natural resources. For example not many years ago one of your neighbors granted water rights to Castine. The well that was drilled now supplies over half of the town's water. This year due to increasing demand the family was again asked to agree to an upgrade of the system, to improve filtration. The MMA expansion to the over 870 students currently on campus and the growing water requirement are related. They pose a direct and severe threat to Castine.

If Maine maritime Academy fails to recognize the fragility of this small "island" and the Trustees place a greater importance on Academy growth than respect for the town laws and their intent, the unique character of Castine will be lost forever.

Finally as voters and taxpayers we have many questions regarding the financial management of MMA. In July President Tyler wrote in a letter to various abutters that the general operating budget would not allow current repairs to one of your most distinguished examples of the Queen Ann Victorian period. Later on November 4th Mr. Erickson contradicted President Tyler stating in the Patriot the deferred work on campus was a result of a shortage of manpower, not finances". Whether it is money or manpower, it is clear that your ability to maintain your current historic properties is strained. Many of them are in serious disrepair and at risk of "demolition by neglect". How can you justify to the taxpayers of Maine paying \$1.45 million for a president's house and incurring an additional, ongoing maintenance liability in excess of \$70,000. as we struggle to convince them to vote yes on the upcoming bond issue for secondary education.

In keeping with the statement in your letter "The Academy's plans for the Abbott House are fully transparent with no hidden agenda", we will appreciate a response to our questions and hope you will address directly future questions as they arise from Castines citizens.

We are respectful of the complexity of your task in guiding MMA during these challenging times and look forward to improving the cooperation and balance between MMA and its neighbors.

Sincerely

The Castine Citizens Action Group
P. O. Box 232 Castine, ME 04421