



## *Lower Providence Township*

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LOWER PROVIDENCE - The fate of the Audubon Inn rests in the hands of eight township residents whose lawsuits threaten to block the township's last chance to preserve the historic building.

The residents, identified by their attorney as the Friends of Lower Providence, have filed suits seeking to stop the development plan – a plan that would ensure the preservation of the Inn. Unless the suits are withdrawn, the township's ability to save the Inn will be negated.

Since 2002, the township has spent countless hours, exploring every possible option in its effort to save the Audubon Inn. It has worked closely with the Nase family, the Inn's owners, and the Redwood Holdings development company. In addition, township officials sought input from residents, and specifically from the citizens' advocacy group opposing the development plan.

As a result, the developer's initial plan was significantly changed to incorporate recommendations made by the Friends of Lower Providence, including facade and buffer requests and, most importantly, the preservation and re-use of the Audubon Inn.

The township's long struggle to put forward a solid plan to preserve the Audubon Inn and complete much-needed roadway safety improvements culminated on November 17, 2005 with the board of supervisor's approval of the land development plan for the Nase property. The citizens advocacy group then filed its appeals.

The pending land use appeals have further delayed settlement on the sale of the Inn and the Nase family has informed the township that this delay is not conducive to their needs. Because of this, the family sought, and received, a demolition permit for the building.

While the goal of the township has always been to preserve the Inn, the Nase family has remained the lawful owners. They have the right to do with the Inn what they wish. The family met all the necessary requirements for the demolition permit, thus the township was legally bound to issue the permit.

Under federal and state court rulings, the township is prevented from impeding the Inn's owners from developing their property. The family has not placed the Inn on the National Historic Registry; therefore it is not protected under its guidelines.



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The litigation filed by the township residents addresses four items, three of which could easily be waived by the Board of Supervisors. The fourth concerns the on-going use of the Audubon Inn, with the litigants opposing the inn's future use as professional offices. The township had assisted in securing a buyer for the building who intends to use the Inn for its law offices, a permitted use under the Village Commercial Ordinance.

The township acknowledges the family's continued cooperation and patience during the long struggle to save the Audubon Inn, which began when the township sought to make safety improvements to the intersection near the building.

The township's initial intent was to acquire a portion of the Nase's property frontage in order to make improvements to the intersection of Pawlings Road, South Park Avenue and Egypt Road. At that time, the owners informed the township that the Inn was up for sale, placing the future of the historic structure in jeopardy. The township began taking steps to preserve the Inn that included working with engineering and planning consultants to adopt a zoning amendment to aid in the preservation of the Inn, as well as other historic structures within the township.

All those involved in the development of the property and the current board of supervisors has indicated its willingness to continue to work to save the Inn, but the township's legal options have been exhausted. At this juncture, the only guaranteed solution to make certain that the Audubon Inn is saved, is the immediate withdraw by the residents' group of its land-use appeals.

Residents are encouraged to attend the Board of Supervisors meeting on Thursday at 7:30 p.m. The board will be available to discuss residents' concerns.