

Mr. Moderator, Trustees, Members of Town Meeting,

Sarah McKee, Precinct 6. I am in the uncomfortable position of differing with former colleagues and others whom I respect deeply, and like a lot.

I ask you to vote against Article 31.

The purpose of rezoning is for the Library Trustees to buy a piece of the Strong House land, in order to build an addition to the Jones Library. This would involve first demolishing more than half of the Library building that Amherst built just over 20 years ago – but that’s beside the point tonight.

Here is the issue. Can the Trustees buy this land for an addition?

What’s critical is the will of Laura E. Emerson. In 1904, she left the Strong House property to her sister for life, and then to the Historical Society.

The Trustees can build an addition on that property **only** if the Historical Society breaks Laura Emerson’s will. Today I got a copy of her will from the Hampshire Probate Court. Here is what it provides:

**“... I give my interest in house and lot in Amherst to the Amherst Historical Society with the provision that there shall be no additions to nor alterations in structure of said house and that no buildings shall ever be erected on any part of the land not now occupied by buildings. If these conditions are not complied with, the property shall be forfeited to the Mass. Historical Society.”**

[Underlining supplied.]

Given this, how can the Trustees possibly sign a contract to buy that piece of the property and build on it? And they must have a signed purchase and sale agreement by January 26, 2017, in order to apply for a grant to build on that land.

So, here is my request: Defeat Article 31 tonight.

Let the Historical Society obtain the support of the Massachusetts Attorney General’s Office, which would represent Laura Emerson, for everything that it wants to do with the Strong House property. If it breaks the will, it can, at that time, ask for rezoning again.

Town Meeting already rezoned one piece of downtown land to enable a deal that fell through.

So I urge: Take rezoning off the table tonight by defeating Article 31.

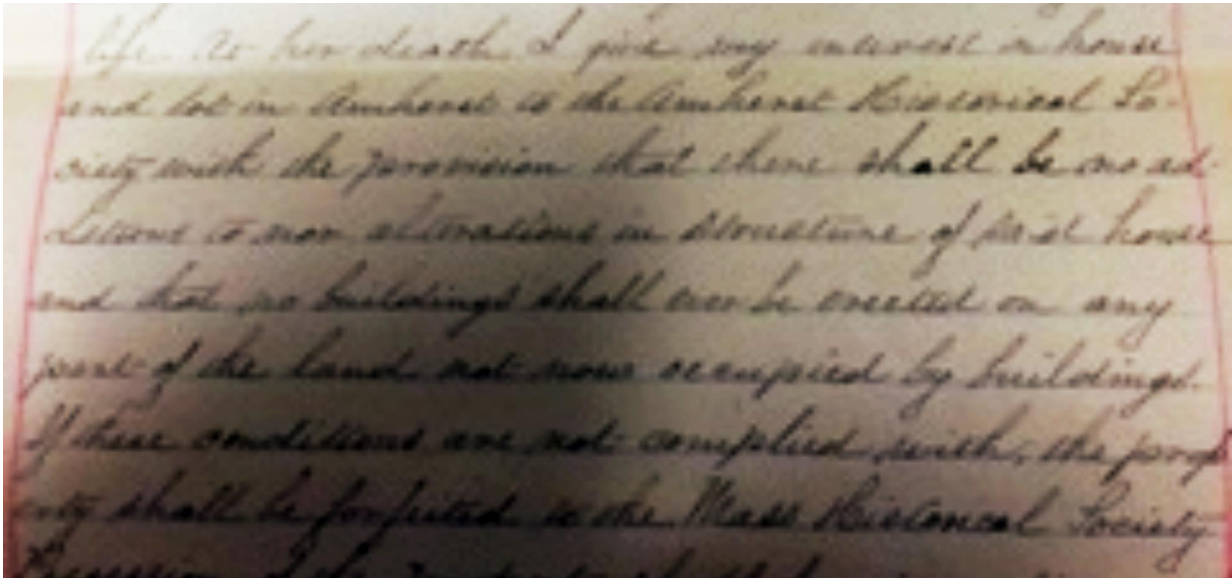
The time to consider rezoning is after it is rock-solid certain that any proposed deal can legally go through.

Thank you.

## Spring Town Meeting, 2016 -- Article 31

Whether to rezone the Amherst Historical Society's Strong House land  
from Residential G to Business G

Extract concerning the Strong House property from the will of Laura E.  
Emerson, 1904, Hampshire Probate Court, Box 354, Folder #17:



Transcription of this extract for the Amherst Historical Society by  
Marianne J. Curling, a curator:

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