

Request for Proposals for the Future Use of the Captain Davis House, 3 Water Street, Woods Hole

Issued by: Woods Hole Community Association (WHCA)

Date Issued: November 1, 2025

Proposal Deadline: December 15, 2025

1. Background

The Woods Hole Community Association (WHCA) acquired the Captain Davis House (3 Water Street, Woods Hole) in order to preserve this centrally located historic property as a community resource. After soliciting input through a public forum and questionnaire, WHCA now invites formal proposals for the use and occupancy of the Davis House.

The purpose of this RFP is to identify occupants who will advance a public purpose, benefit the Woods Hole community, and ensure sustainable stewardship of the property. Proposals for full or partial use of the building will be considered, including potential shared or complementary occupancies that align with the WHCA's community goals.

2. WHCA Goals

The WHCA seeks to:

- Ensure the Davis House provides meaningful benefit to Woods Hole residents, organizations, and visitors.
- Support programs that enhance the cultural, educational, and civic life of the village.
- Preserve and honor the history and character of Woods Hole.
- Maintain the property in a sustainable manner for future generations.

3. Building Snapshot

- **Location:** 3 Water Street, Woods Hole, MA (center of the commercial village)
- **Ownership:** Fully owned by WHCA
- **Zoning / Use Constraints:** Proposals must comply with zoning, building codes, and historic preservation requirements.
- **Condition & Facilities:** Captain Davis House, was built in 1840 and underwent its most recent renovations in 2011, partially funded by Town of Falmouth Community Preservation Funds. Across three and a half floors and approximately 2,000 square feet of finished area, it has 5 office spaces, 2 sound-proof rooms, a small conference room, 3 half baths, and a kitchenette. It has heat, air conditioning, power, a backup generator,

and internet over Open Cape fiber. The basement and first floor are ADA compliant. There are 6 on-site parking spaces. Rough floor plan attached.

- **Current Status:** The building will become available following WGBH's departure in Fall 2025. Please see the tentative timeline below.

4. Proposal Criteria

Proposals must clearly address the following seven criteria, which will serve as the backbone for review and evaluation:

1. Community Benefit

- Demonstrate a direct benefit or service to the Woods Hole community (residents, businesses, organizations, and visitors).
- Benefits may also include activities with regional, state, national, or global scope that are valued locally.

2. Public Purpose

- Describe how the work advances a public purpose.
- Note that for-profit or retail activities will not be considered unless they directly support the community.

3. Organizational Status

- Preference will be given to organizations that are not profit driven. While not required, please include the organizational status of the applicant (e.g., 501(c)(3), educational organization, informal community group, individual).

4. Connection to Woods Hole

- Explain how the proposed use connects with the character and history of Woods Hole, broadly defined.

5. Budget & Administrative Structure

- Provide detailed budget information (revenues, expenses, rent contributions, funding sources).
- Describe the administrative structure of your organization.
- Indicate whether occupancy will be full-time or part-time, and whether staff will be present on-site daily or regularly.
- Identify what portion(s) of the building you propose to occupy.
- Note: The ability to pay rent is not a prerequisite for submitting a proposal. However, we encourage applicants to include a clear plan for financial sustainability or for contributions toward building upkeep in their proposals.

6. Residential Use

- Confirm that the proposal does not involve residential or overnight occupancy, as this is disfavored.

7. Facility Management

- Provide a description of your parking needs, including the expected number of vehicles and frequency of use.
- Identify your needs for facility management (e.g., utilities, maintenance, security).
- Describe how your organization can contribute to the overall management of the Davis House property and, if applicable, shared uses.

5. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on these factors:

- **Direct benefit to Woods Hole community**
 - **Advancement of a public purpose**
 - **Organizational capacity & nonprofit status**
 - **Connection to Woods Hole's character & history**
 - **Financial and administrative viability**
 - **Compliance with use restrictions**
 - **Contribution to property management and sustainability**
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6. Submission Instructions

- **Deadline: December 15, 2025**
- **Submission:** Send proposals to CaptainDavisHouse@woodsholecommunityassociation.org or WHCA, PO Box 327, Woods Hole MA 02543.
- **Format:** Proposals should not exceed **seven (7) pages**, excluding attachments. Applicants are encouraged to be concise while addressing each required criteria of the RFP. Supporting materials (e.g., letters of support, budget tables, proof of nonprofit status) may be included as appendices.
- **Required Attachments:** Proof of nonprofit status (if applicable), budget documents.

- **Questions:** Contact CaptainDavisHouse@woodsholecommunityassociation.org
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7. Tentative Timeline

Milestone	Date
RFP Issued	November 1, 2025
Site Visits (if interested)	November 15, 9 am - 12 noon
Proposals Due	December 15, 2025
Selection Updates	February 1, 2026
Occupancy Begins	As soon as 30 days after selection announcement

8. Terms & Conditions

- WHCA reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal, in whole or in part.
- Submission of a proposal does not guarantee selection.
- Occupancy agreements will outline tenant responsibilities for rent, insurance, utilities, maintenance, compliance with laws and zoning, and shared use of the building.
- WHCA assumes no responsibility for tenant activities or programs.
- The Davis House remains under the ownership and oversight of WHCA.

The Past and Future of the Captain Davis House in Woods Hole

The Woods Hole Community Association (WHCA) is the new owner of the Captain Davis House at 3 Water Street in Woods Hole. The association's goal is to preserve the centrally located historic property as a public resource while providing a meaningful benefit to the community and enhancing the cultural, educational and civic life of the village. WHCA gathered input from the community and is now issuing a formal Request for Proposals (RFP) on the future use of the property.

The Past

The historic Captain Davis House, situated on a rise overlooking the entrance to Woods Hole village, was built about 1840 and was owned by the Davis family. Serving and informing the local community is a part of its legacy. The first floor was once a dry goods store, which likely provided a gathering place for discussing local news and current events. From the 1960s to the 1990s, the building housed a print shop that provided printing services to local businesses and published a Woods Hole newspaper.

Since its founding in 2000, the local public radio station CAI broadcast from the Captain Davis House. The station was launched as a collaboration between the Boston public media organization GBH and the local organization Atlantic Public Media (APM). From the beginning, community members have supported CAI by listening and offering financial contributions. Robust local support for the radio station and the Captain Davis House was evident when the town provided Community Preservation Act funds in 2011 to complete extensive renovations that restored the building's 19th century appearance. The updated facility allowed CAI and APM to continue to produce award-winning stories that have received national and international recognition.

In October 2024, the parent public media company GBH abruptly announced that it was selling the Captain Davis House to a private business owner. Within weeks, WHCA mobilized to purchase the property. The support of the Woods Hole Foundation was vital, in addition to hundreds of generous community members and donors from around the world dedicated to preserving the building for public use and hoping to keep CAI and APM broadcasting in Woods Hole. WHCA offered five years of free rent, but GBH preferred to create a new studio in Falmouth and plans to vacate the property in November of 2025.

The Future

WHCA now has a unique opportunity to facilitate one or more uses for the Captain Davis House that serve the needs and desires of the community. Comprising three floors, the interior holds two sound studios, five office spaces, a small conference room, and three bathrooms. In addition, the property includes a small parking lot, native plant garden and sloping green lawn.

In the spring of 2025, WHCA embarked upon a process to gather community input on future uses for the Captain Davis House. Initially, an online survey soliciting ideas for the future of the building garnered 23 responses. This was followed by a public meeting in Woods Hole Community Hall in August 2025 in which a facilitator gathered feedback from the community on the various ideas collected in the survey. The WHCA board then evaluated the suggestions based on community support, feasibility, and suitability to the physical space.

Some suggestions were rejected by the WHCA board as unsuitable. In particular, the board has multiple concerns about adding a residential space to the Davis House. In addition to the logistical challenges of creating and overseeing residences, such a use would limit the building's availability to the public. Secondly, the board determined that the interior spaces are not well suited to large gatherings, visual art galleries or public performances. Community Hall and The Old Fire Station, in contrast, are public spaces in the village that are ideally suited for larger groups, performances and art exhibits. Finally, input gathered at the community forum revealed that retail uses are not desired.

After evaluating the community input regarding the future use of the Captain Davis House, the WHCA board has identified three promising themes to guide and inspire applicants. Proposals that combine these themes are welcome, and proposals may be for complete or partial use of the building. Site visits are possible upon request. Proposals are not limited to these themes. The board will carefully consider all responses to the RFP and may invite applicants to present to the board to clarify their plan.

Themes

1. Media Studio

There is robust community interest in continuing to use the Captain Davis House as a media studio for storytelling, news, journalism, and related workshops. In particular, the village supports the services provided by CAI, Atlantic Public Media, and Transom, which have all provided a substantial benefit to the community from the Davis House for many years. The space is ideal for audio production because of the existing sound studios and could also accommodate print or video journalists and other forms of storytelling.

2. Coworking and Project Incubation

The Davis House provides ample office space with shared workspaces, private offices and a small conference room. There is community interest in a place where individuals or small groups could work on independent projects, such as nonprofit, advocacy, or professional work. The space could also serve as an incubator for new projects and organizations. Artist studios could potentially be accommodated if the projects are not too large or messy. Short-term residencies

for visiting journalists, scholars, and artists would fit into this use provided that housing is provided elsewhere. Coworking space and project incubation may be incorporated with other uses and could exist alongside a media studio. WHCA invites proposals that specifically describe how a coworking space could be organized, administered and overseen and whether it could be combined with another use.

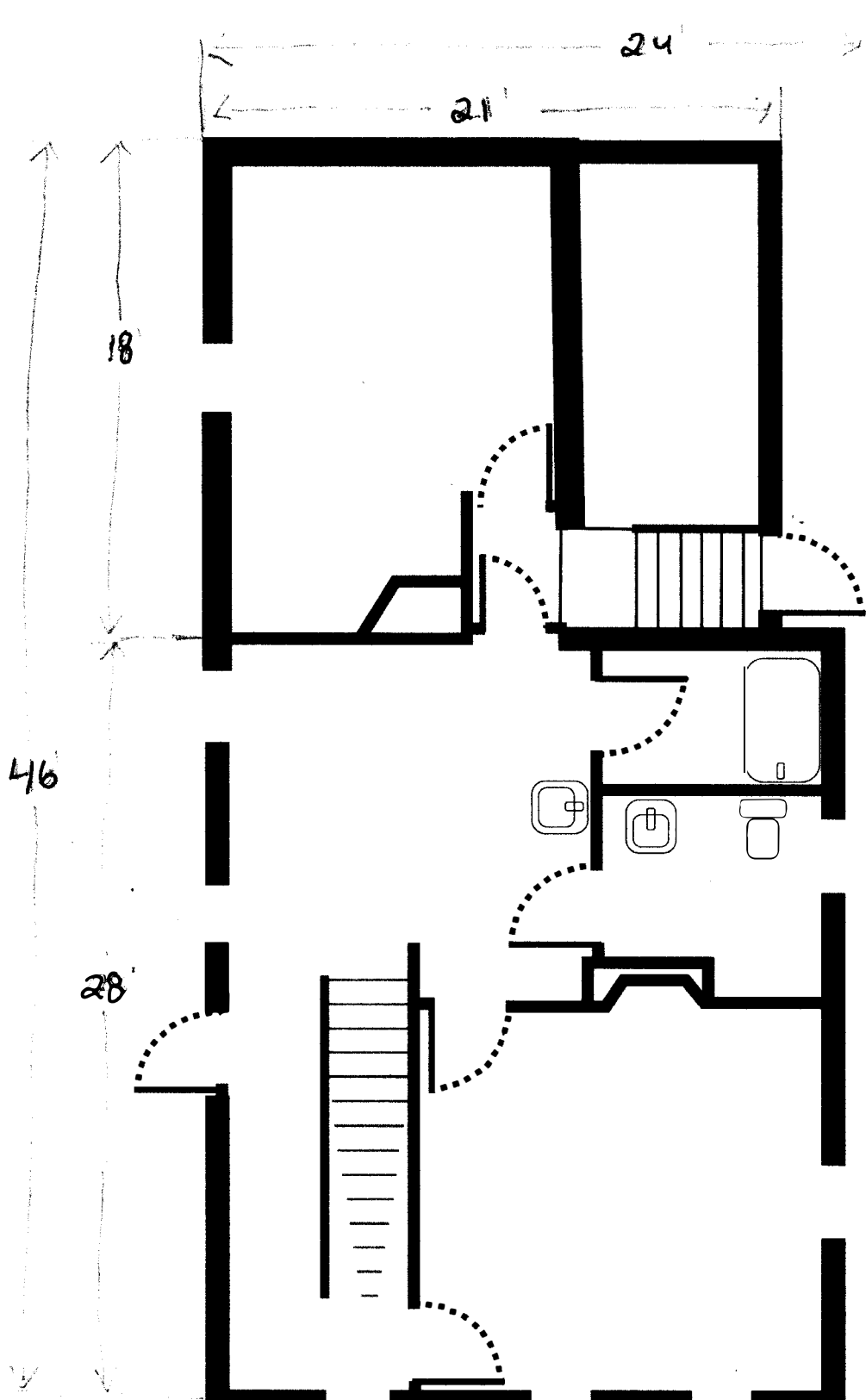
3. Extension of Local Nonprofit Organizations

There is some community interest in using the Captain Davis House as an expansion of the services provided by other local organizations. For example, the Woods Hole Library and the Historical Museum are institutions that are deeply valued by the community and may have a need for more space. Local organizations that focus on scientific, maritime, and environmental research are other examples. WHCA invites specific proposals for how all or part of the Davis House could be used to further the missions of local nonprofit organizations, while recognizing that the building is not ideally suited for exhibit space or large gatherings.

BASEMENT

NOT TO SCALE

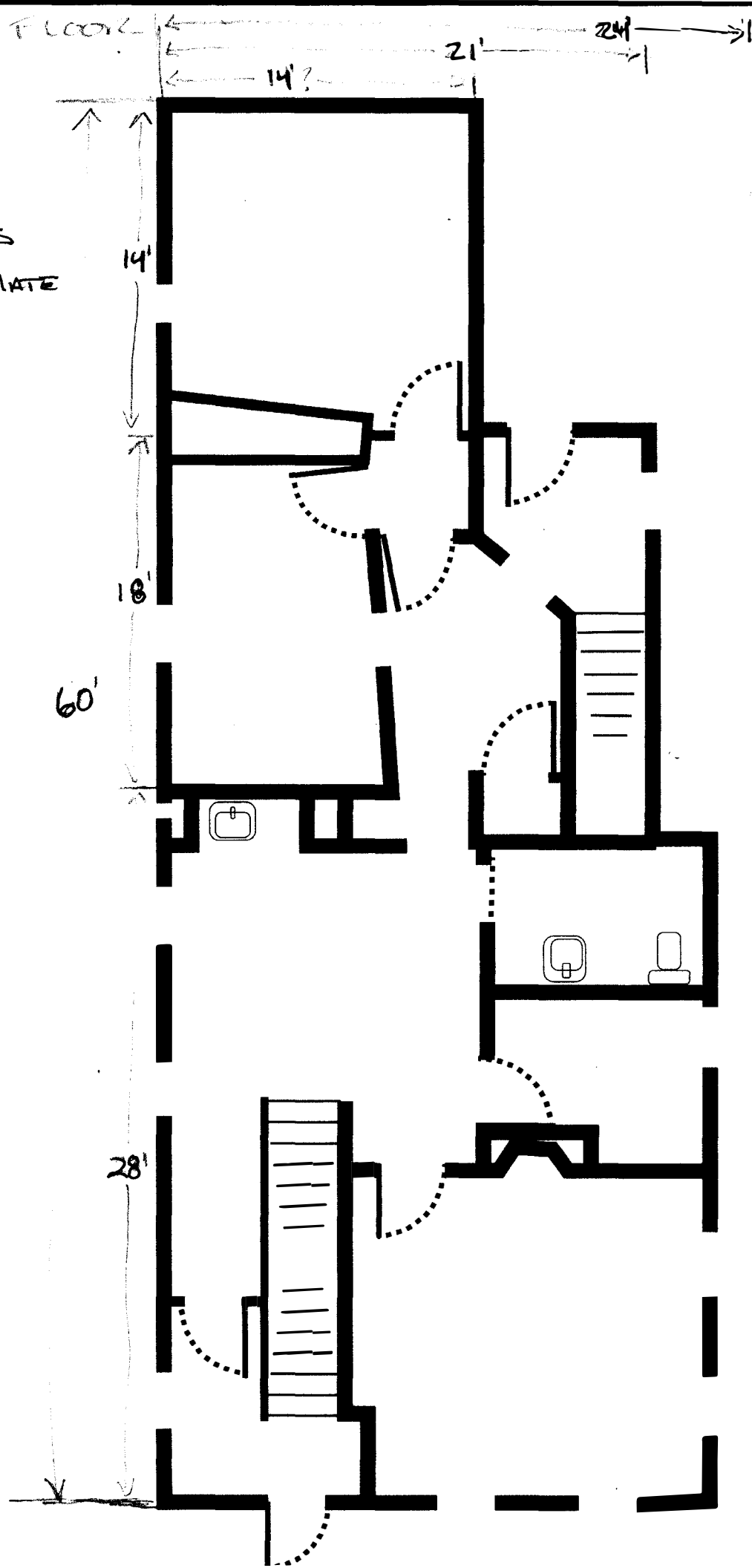
DIMENSIONS APPROXIMATE



MASTED FLOOR

NOT TO
SCALE

DIMENSIONS
APPROXIMATE



ME2 + SECOND FLOOR

ASSESSOR'S INFO

NOT TO SCALE

FINISHED AREA

DIMENSIONS APPROXIMATE

2,128 sq

