

Whitemarsh Township Preserves Home Of Historic Abolition Hall

(November 17, 2022) – Whitemarsh Township and the Whitemarsh Art Center today completed the acquisition of the property that is home to historic Abolition Hall, paving the way for its preservation.

The acquisition protects the 10.45-acre Corson Tract property off Butler Pike from development and preserves Abolition Hall, Hovenden House and the Corson Homestead, which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, and the Marple Lane House. The Whitemarsh Art Center will move to the property with other uses to be determined.

The Township and Art Center paid \$3.95 million for the property with \$2 million coming from a grant from The Karabots Foundation to the Art Center. The balance was paid by the Township with funds from its Open Space Earned Income Tax.

“This is a landmark moment for our community and the entire region,” said Whitemarsh Supervisor Chair Laura Boyle-Nester. “Abolition Hall, the Hovenden House and the Corson Homestead are significant pieces of our history and we are ecstatic that we have protected them for future generations.”

A former Underground Railroad station, Abolition Hall was built in 1856 by George Corson. Abolitionists, including Frederick Douglass, Harriet Beecher Stowe and William Lloyd Garrison, spoke there.

The Karabots Foundation, under the leadership of Nicholas and Athena Karabots, has long been a supporter of Whitemarsh Township. In 2010, the Foundation contributed \$4.4 million for the expansion and renovation of the William Jeanes Memorial Library in the Township.

“On behalf of the Whitemarsh community, we thank the Karabots Foundation for its incredible generosity, Chair Boyle-Nester said. “Without the support of Mr. and Mrs. Karabots, the preservation of this important property would not have been possible.”

Located on Cedar Grove Road, the Whitemarsh Art Center was founded in 1964. It offers day and evening programming for children and adults with a goal of enriching the community by fostering inspiration, appreciation and engagement in the arts. This concludes the Art Center’s search for a new home.

“The Karabots Foundation and the Township have created a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to preserve history and extend educational opportunities for the community,” said Whitemarsh Art Center Board of Directors President Dan Zuenka.

The owners of the property had sought proposals after a developer dropped plans to build 67 townhouses on the property. The Township had expressed interest in the property but was limited in what it could pay because of the appraisal price. The Karabots Foundation approached the Township and Art Center with the offer to provide financial assistance.