

# CITY OF FRAMINGHAM

## FRAMINGHAM HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

150 CONCORD STREET ▫ MEMORIAL BUILDING ▫ ROOM B-2

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### Minutes of the Framingham Historic District Commission

January 7, 2020

Memorial Building

7:30 pm, Conference Room 2

Members Present: Chair Steve Greeley, Sue Bernstein, Paul Charboneau, Henry Field, Amy Finstein, Ted Grenham, Ken Nowell, Paul Silva

Staff Present: Jennifer Doherty, Historic Preservation Planner

Guests: Bob Anspach, Ernest Edwards, Bill Merriam, Fred Wallace

#### Documents:

- Agenda
- Draft minutes of December 3, 2019
- Draft letter to MassDOT regarding Central/Edgell intersection improvements
- Photographs of Plymouth Church (87 Edgell Road) and the Jonathan Maynard House (113 Pleasant Street)
- Community Preservation Act handouts provided by Fred Wallace
- Framingham Master Plan sections provided by Sue Bernstein

Chair Greeley called the meeting to order at 7:33 pm.

1. Chair Greeley noted that two new members joined the Commission, Charboneau and Silva. They introduced themselves.
2. **Finstein made a motion to approve the minutes of December 3, 2019; Grenham second, 5-0-3 in favor (Charboneau, Field, and Silva not present at the subject meeting).**
3. Community Preservation Act – Fred Wallace, CPA Study Group

Wallace, a member of the City's Community Preservation Act (CPA) Study Group, presented information on CPA to the Commission. He provided a history of the program in Framingham, and noted that it has been very successful in other communities. He stated that the study group intends to present a report to the City Council in April, with an eye to putting the question of CPA on the November 2020 ballot. He stated that CPA was a legislative response to the difficulty of funding "quality of life" projects. Wallace explained the two funding sources, the state trust fund and a local real estate tax surcharge. He also explained the various exemptions that are available for communities to adopt. Wallace provided a matrix showing how the CPA surcharge is calculated; the City's assessor has estimated that with certain exemptions, the average cost to a propertyowner will be less than \$50 a year. Wallace requested that the Commission think of projects, past and future, that could be good uses of CPA funds.

There was some discussion of the split tax rate, between residential and commercial/industrial properties. Grenham asked what the value of commercial and industrial properties is in the city; Wallace did not know. Finstein asked what the incentive is to exempt commercial and industrial properties; Wallace stated that it might encourage businesses to support CPA. Grenham asked how many communities have exempted commercial and industrial

properties; Wallace did not know. Doherty noted that it is relatively unusual to have a split tax rate, so it is not likely that many communities have exempted commercial and industrial properties. Bernstein stated that she would be interested in seeing what the valuation of commercial and industrial properties are, and how it would affect the CPA amount. Chair Greeley asked if the City could set a CPA surcharge for commercial and industrial properties; Doherty stated that they could not, it needs to be the same surcharge amount for all properties.

There was discussion of the adoption process, exemptions, and the surcharge amount. Chair Greeley asked if communities have to spend all of their money each year; Wallace stated that they do not need to, they just need to set aside 10% each to the three main CPA categories.

Finsten noted that if the question is put on the ballot, public outreach will be very important. Chair Greeley asked if there is a role for the Commission; Wallace stated that as the ballot process plays out, there will be discussion about how to involve various groups in public support.

Field asked if the surcharge amount needs to be in the ballot question. Doherty stated that the surcharge amount and exemptions must be included in the question, but they can be changed afterwards through the same process that the City used for adoption. Field asked how the study group will decide on a surcharge amount; Wallace stated that the Community Preservation Coalition recommended setting a surcharge amount so that the average cost to property owners will be under \$50 a year. Field asked how other communities have spent their money; Wallace noted that the study group is gathering a list of projects. Grenham noted that it will be important to show that there is something for everyone in CPA's funding. Doherty noted that early discussions by the study group discussed finding projects in every district throughout the city.

4. Preliminary Meeting – Plymouth Church, 87 Edgell Road (Centre Common Historic District), Solar Panels

Edwards and Merriam presented preliminary plans to install solar panels on the south facing roof slope of the main sanctuary buildings at Plymouth Church. Merriam stated that a green group at the church has been working with Massachusetts Interfaith Power & Light to explore different options for panels. The church has been considering solar panels for some time, but has been hung up on discussions of financing structures. He stated that the church completed an energy audit four or five years ago; since then they have replaced all the lightbulbs in the church and nursery school. The next easiest recommendation to undertake is installing solar panels. He noted that a new roof was recently put on the sanctuary to provide a clean base for installing the solar panels.

The energy audit previously found that the south slope of the sanctuary roof is the best place for the panels. While there is a parish hall at the rear that is not visible from the street, it is a shorter building and is largely shaded by trees and the sanctuary. Doherty noted that while taking photographs, she had to stop in the exact right spot to see much of the roof. Charboneau noted that he lives next door and never notices the roof when driving by.

Merriam noted that there are three different types of panels they are looking at, and the decision will come down to cost and efficiency. He stated that they have not received any quotes but are looking at the high efficiency panels. He noted that these tend to be black, with no framing, as opposed to the lower efficiency panels that have a bluer color with a gray grid and gray framing. Bernstein encouraged them to go with the black color, noting recent examples she has seen that do not stand out as much as the blue panels. Chair Greeley asked if there was any reflection or glare from the panels; Merriam stated that there is some, but as the panels are black they will absorb most light.

Finstein stated that she thought solar panels on the church would be a great idea, as it is a way of prolonging the use of an historic building. Merriam stated that generally the church is looking to lessen their carbon footprint, and has some other projects in mind to increase the efficiency of their buildings. Members were generally supportive of the idea of solar panels on the south roof slope, and encouraged the church to go with the blacker panels. The church will submit a full application once they are ready.

5. Framingham Centre Master Plan

Bernstein stated that recently, the Planning Board has been updating the master plan. She provided sections of the plan that relate to the Centre Common area. She noted that she was concerned about some of the language in a few places, regarding mixed-use development at the Centre Common and having Framingham State University (FSU) cross Route 9 into the area. She also noted with concern language about air rights development over Route 9, but stated that she would like to see a master plan for the Route 9 corridor.

There was general discussion about concerns regarding FSU and any interest they may have in the Centre Common area. Commission members expressed an interest at being involved in any planning process early, such as knowing what is in the master plan rather than waiting for a project to come up that they must react to.

6. New Business

Chair Greeley presented a draft letter to MassDOT regarding the roadwork improvements at Central Street and Edgell Road. He noted that at a recent public meeting, MassDOT seemed open to working with the Commission and the Historical Commission to create a design that is sensitive to the historic nature of the intersection. Bernstein requested that the word “decorative” be added to the line about the traffic light posts. She stated that she asked DPW director Peter Sellers about not having mast arms for the lights; he stated that it was not possible. Commission members suggested Silva noted that MassDOT plans to move the Gordon’s Corner signpost out of the traffic island and to the side of the intersection.

**Field made a motion that the Commission send Chair Greeley’s draft letter, with the change made by Bernstein, to MassDOT regarding the Central Street and Edgell Road intersection improvements; Grenham second, all in favor.**

Chair Greeley raised the issue of new residents in the local historic districts, noting that it is hard to keep track of properties changing hands, and how to let new residents know of their obligations when living in the districts. Silva stated that if he knows a property is for sale, he can track the listing in MLS and see when it closes. Commission members were in agreement that a welcome letter that includes the Commission’s brochure would be good to send to new residents.

There was some discussion of a flagpole that was installed by new residents of the Jonathan Maynard House (*Jonathan Maynard Historic District*). While members were concerned that they installed the flagpole without approval from the Commission, they did not want to welcome new residents to the district with a violation letter. Doherty will draft a welcome letter to send to them explaining the local historic district regulations.

Doherty noted that the Massachusetts Cultural Council will be meeting at Village Hall on Tuesday, January 28, to vote on the Framingham Centre Common Cultural District. She encouraged Commission members to attend.

Doherty stated that the owner of 613 Pleasant Street recently reached out to her regarding replacement windows. Silva stated that he had dropped off a new house marker and spoken to the owner; he said the owner is planning to do a lot of work himself.

Doherty stated that she heard the Santander Bank on Edgell Road (*Centre Common Historic District*) may be closing in the coming months.

**Finstein made a motion to adjourn; Silva second, all in favor.** Meeting adjourned at 9:19 pm.

Minutes submitted by Jennifer Doherty, Historic Preservation Planner