

The Friends of the 1836 Meeting House

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Dear Community Preservation Committee members,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to discuss the preservation project for the Friends of the 1836 Meeting House.

At our meeting, the committee indicated some concern about approving this project, given that the committee has rejected some applications by religious congregations in the past. We continue to believe there is an important distinction to be made between our application for CPA funds and those past applications by religious bodies, since the applicant for funds is a historical preservation and educational organization. The sole purpose of The Friends of the 1836 Meeting House, a 501C3, is to preserve the 1836 building, since it is such an iconic historical property in North Andover.

A huge photograph of the Meeting House is on the wall at Town Hall and it is pictured on the home page of the Town's website. The Meeting House has been used on the cover of the booklet for newcomers to town and is used by various Real Estate companies on their brochures. The Meeting House is used by the town to project and emphasize the image of North Andover as a bucolic New England town with a long history, and it is this Meeting House and its image that The Friends of the Meeting House hopes to sustain.

We appreciate that the North Parish congregation has generously stewarded the preservation of the Meeting House since 1836. Most recently, since 2004, they spent or found grant funding totaling well over \$1.5 million dollars explicitly for preservation work. (We'd be happy to share those projects and numbers with you, if desired.) Additional significant funds were raised to complete major state-mandated accessibility work for the Meeting House. Past grant sources have been the Community Preservation Act, the Essex National Heritage Commission, an anonymous foundation, and the Methuen Festival of Trees. The congregation simply can no longer raise the funds or successfully secure grant funding to do all that is required to keep the building standing, as it is now almost 200 years old and deteriorating.

The Friends of the 1836 Meeting House was formed to focus on historic preservation and education, and have worked diligently to protect the Meeting House in the past, present and future. The Friends created a video of the bell tower and Paul Revere bell, which you can see on our webpage. This connection to Paul Revere is shared with school and Community Programs groups who take field trips to the Meeting House to learn about local history; young people get to have an experience of connecting to that history by actually ringing the Paul Revere bell. The Friends plans the now annual Fourth of July observance on the Common in front of the Meeting House as another opportunity to teach our community about our history. You can read our Statement of Purpose below:

Statement of Purposes (from the FOMH bylaws)

The Corporation is organized and shall at all times be operated exclusively for charitable, educational, and scientific purposes including, but not limited to, preservation, renovation, restoration, operation, and maintenance of the historic 1836 Meeting House located at 190 Academy Road in North Andover, Massachusetts. The footprint of the 1836 Meeting House is shown in Figure 1 in grey and shall be the

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focus of the efforts of the Corporation. The Corporation may, as permitted by law, engage in any and all activities in furtherance of, related to, or incidental to these purposes which may lawfully be carried on by a Corporation formed under Chapter 180 of the General Laws of Massachusetts and which are not inconsistent with the Corporation's qualification as an organization described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code or corresponding section of any future tax code.

The FOMH ask the CPC and the Town to recognize our funding request this year as the charitable not-for-profit corporation as we applied, not as a religious organization. As a private corporation, the Friends meet the eligibility requirements of the CPA and should be judged on the merits of the application criteria including purpose, needs, readiness to proceed, continuance of providing great programming and access to the entire community, and to support of the town's most well-known National Historic landmark.

We invite you to visit soon so you can experience the town's iconic 200 year old landmark and see the exterior deterioration. The FOMH are dedicated to this structure and committed to ensuring its future in the context of our town's history. We hope that the town will support our efforts.

Very Best Wishes,

Keith Wentzel, President