

To: Town of South Hadley Planning Board
Massachusetts Historical Commission

cc: Lisa Wong, South Hadley Town Administrator

Date: May 15, 2024

**Re: Preliminary Study Report for the establishment of the Old Firehouse Museum
Local Historic District**

On behalf of the Town of South Hadley Historic District Study Committee, I hereby submit a Preliminary Study Report for the establishment of the Old Firehouse Museum Local Historic District.

The South Hadley Historic District Study Committee was established by the Selectboard at its April 2, 2013 meeting. The Committee was charged with exploring the possibility of establishing one or more historic districts in town. Extensive work has been done, specifically in the Falls, culminating in a proposal in 2019 for an historic district around North Main Street. The Committee held a public hearing and planned to continue work on the proposal to address concerns raised. Ultimately, Committee work was paused during Covid.

In 2023, the Trustees of the Old Firehouse Museum approached the Committee about the possibility of creating a local historic district to include the Museum and adjacent Fred M. Smith Memorial Green. As a result, the Committee is now proposing a "Single Property Historic District" as described under the Massachusetts General Law Historic Districts Act (Chapter 40C, Section 3). This District would consist of the town property that contains the Old Firehouse Museum, the Fred M. Smith Memorial Green, and the adjacent parcel.

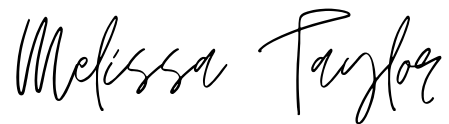
The Old Firehouse Museum is one of South Hadley's treasured historical resources, now housing important collections, while the Fred M. Smith Memorial Green is a valued green space, honoring a dedicated townsman. They are located just feet away from the remnants of the 1795 canal, which is on the National Register of Historic Places. Establishing a local historic district would highlight the importance of the Falls and would ensure the integrity of these historical resources for future generations.

As the next step in the process under 40C, the Committee will hold a public hearing no less than 60 days after submission of this report (preliminarily planned for August 5, 2024).

Following the public hearing, the Committee will prepare the final report, incorporating the recommendations from the Planning Board, the Massachusetts Historical Commission, and the community. The Committee will then submit the final report to Town Meeting for consideration. Under 40C, it must be adopted by a two-thirds affirmative vote.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal as we work to establish South Hadley's first local historic district.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melissa Taylor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Melissa Taylor
Chair
South Hadley Historic District Study Committee

Committee Members:

Pauline Casey
Gerald Judge
Robert Judge, Vice Chair
Leo Labonte
Diane LaRoche, Clerk
Eleanor Small