

To: Town of South Hadley  
c/o Lisa Wong, South Hadley Town Administrator

Date: March 3, 2025

**Re: Final Report for the establishment of the Old Firehouse Museum Local Historic District and Ordinance ByLaw**

On behalf of the Town of South Hadley Historic District Study Committee, I hereby submit the Final 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.

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

The Study Committee submitted a preliminary report to the South Hadley Planning Board and Massachusetts Historical Commission on May 15, 2024. The proposal was subsequently endorsed by the Planning Board (June 10) and the Massachusetts Historical Commission (June 12). The proposal has since been endorsed by the South Hadley Selectboard, Redevelopment Authority, Trustees of the Old Firehouse Museum, Historical Commission and Falls Neighborhood Association. The required public hearing took place on September 21, 2025; comments from the public were supportive.

**In accordance with 40C, the Study Committee has incorporated all comments from the Planning Board, the Massachusetts Historical Commission and the public and is now submitting a final report and bylaw for consideration by South Hadley Town Meeting in May 2025. Under 40C, it must be adopted by a two-thirds affirmative vote.**

The outline of the bylaw was provided by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, It is written to conform to the enabling legislation (40C). We have done minimal edits and modifications in order to have a legal Local Historic District.

Some of our notable modifications to the bylaw:

- We included all optional exemptions so that the District will be as flexible as possible (these include temporary structures or signs; terraces and walks; walls and fences; paint color; color of roof materials; and miscellaneous small signs)
- We added a phrase to the exemptions noting that consideration would be given to educational displays and resources that help the mission of the Museum and District.
- We opted for an oversight commission at seven members (40C allows three to seven)
- We specified one member of the Old Firehouse Trustees to be a member of the oversight commission (this substitutes for a resident of the District since ours has no residents)
- We opted for a fine of \$20 to \$200 per incident, payable to a trust for the preservation of the District (the legislation specifies a fine at ten to five hundred; we added the language of a trust due to the nature of these town-owned buildings. Note that we have been advised that we are required to include the enforcement clause in order to have a legal Local Historic District.).

I am sending the full report as PDF (bylaw is pages 32-29) but I am also including the bylaw as a 9 page Word document.

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

Sincerely,



Melissa Taylor  
Chair  
South Hadley Historic District Study Committee

**Committee Members:**

Madison Dresler  
Gerald Judge  
Robert Judge, Vice Chair  
Leo Labonte  
Diane LaRoche, Clerk  
Eleanor Small

**Attachments:**

- Final Report Proposal for Old Firehouse Museum Local Historic District (Bylaw is pages 32-29)
- Ordinance Bylaw (as Word Document)