

**Fall River
Historical
Commission
2019 Annual
Report**

MISSION

The mission of the Fall River Historical Commission (a.k.a. Commission) is to identify, document, and protect Fall River's historic resources, to increase public awareness of Fall River's heritage and the value of historic preservation, and to do so with not only the guidance and council of the Massachusetts Historical Commission but also by interacting with other city boards and committees. The Commission's mission is to provide a regulatory overview of five designated Historic Districts. The Commission also provides community-wide historic preservation planning assistance by promoting historic preservation awareness and by commenting on projects that may impact historic resources. The Commission's other responsibilities include preserving and protecting its historical assets through education, legislation, policy recommendations, and physical conservation.

The Commission endeavors to be a preservation information resource to all citizens of Fall River and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts by means of research, public meetings, the press, and publications, and to educate the citizenry of Fall River and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts regarding the breadth and importance of Fall River's cultural heritage.

The Commission works in collaboration with the Massachusetts Historical Commission, operating under the provisions of Section 8D, Chapter 40 of the Massachusetts General Laws. This law was adopted on September 16, 1977 as a City of Fall River Ordinance - Chapter 38, Historical Preservation. The Commission administers the mandates of Fall River's Chapter 38: Historical Preservation and in particular Article III, Division 3. – Notice of Intent to demolish Structure, more commonly known as the "Demolition Bylaw".

COMMISSION MEMBERS

The Fall River Historical Commission is a volunteer board of Fall River residents appointed by the Mayor. The Commission has been in existence since September 16, 1977.

The Commission is regularly comprised of seven (7) regular members appointed by the Mayor.

Board Member are as follows:

Kristen Cantara Oliveira, Chair
898 Robeson Street

Connie Maria Soule, Vice-Chair
577 Rock Street

Laurence Dykes, Jr., Secretary
28 Chaloner Street

Richard Mancini
243 French Street

Ruben Amaral
24 Katie Court

Joyce Rodrigues
Chavenson Street

Patti Rego
Ward Street

The Commission has the following powers and duties:

1. to cooperate with, consult, and serve as an advisory body on matters affecting the historical assets of the city to officers, departments, boards, commissions, committees and other agencies of the city, and to assure that the comprehensive plan embodies the appropriate preservation of those assets;
2. to conduct a survey of Fall River's buildings and sites for the purpose of determining those of historic significance architecturally or otherwise;
3. to propose as it deems appropriate the establishment of additional historic districts and changes in existing historic districts;
4. upon recommendations of the Fall River Historic District Commission established under City Ordinance 2014-24, and in accordance with the Historic Districts Act, to act as the historic district study committee for the establishment of additional historic districts;
5. to offer assistance to and advise owners and occupants of historic buildings and structures on problems of preservation;
6. acquire in name of the city by gift, purchase, grant, bequest, devise, lease or otherwise the fee or lesser interest in real or personal property of significant historical value and may manage the same; and may administer on behalf of the city any properties or easements, restrictions or other interests in real property which the city may have or accept as gifts or otherwise and which the city may designate the commission as the administrator thereof.

The Fall River Historical Commission met eleven (11) times during which a quorum was present for all 11 of these meetings. These meetings are scheduled on the third Tuesday of every month.

SIMILAR NAMES/DIFFERENT RESPONSIBILITIES

The **Fall River Historical Commission** is often confused with a Fall River Historic District Commission and a Historical Society. It is important that you understand the difference between these three organizations.

The **Fall River Historical Commission** is the official agent of the City of Fall River responsible for community-wide historic preservation planning.

The **Fall River Historic District Commission** is the review authority responsible for regulatory design review within the designated local historic districts, also known as a 40C District, created through city council vote. The Fall River Historic District Commission will be the regulator agent overseeing all local historic districts in the city. The city currently has only one (1) local historic district, the Highlands Local Historic District, comprising of 47 residences.

The **Fall River Historical Society** is a private, non-profit organization. Historical Societies often preserve local history through house museums, maintaining collections and records and public programs.

The **Preservation Society of Fall River** is a non-profit organization whose mission is to encourage and foster the preservation historically and architecturally significant properties, and to assist the city in the establishment of a 40C local historic district.

BUDGET

The Commission has not received any funding assistance this year. A non-existent budget for the commission's work, prevents staff members from attending training workshops, national or regional or statewide preservation conferences, and makes subscribing to basic materials which might help the commission in its work difficult or impossible. A review of Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40, Section 8D accepted by the City shows that funding is required in order to provide any services.

Lack of administrative support for the commission makes it difficult for the commission to issue draft certificates of appropriateness and to monitor work on approved projects. Adequate staff is essential in order for a commission to produce the routine administrative paperwork that any responsible local governmental agency needs to prepare as evidence that it has followed required procedures and reached a clear decision. The Commission is grateful to have the help of administrative assistant Kerri Ayash, who is located on the 5th floor of City Hall. Kerri provides administrative assistance for both the Historical & Historic District Commissions.

The Commission is working to establish a revolving fund account. This will allow the Commission to receive funds/donations where the Commissions funds and expenditures will be tracked and quarterly reports can be generated.

The Commission per Chapter 40: Section 8D, may accept gifts, contributions and bequests of funds from individuals, foundations and from federal, state or other governmental bodies for the purpose of furthering the commission's program; may make and sign any agreements and may do and perform any and all acts which may be necessary or desirable to carry out the purposes of this section. Said Commission may acquire in the name of the city or town by gift, purchase, grant, bequest, devise, lease or otherwise the fee or lesser interest in real or personal property of significant historical value and may manage the same.

DONATIONS

The Commission is dependent on any and all donations. Currently there is no means by which donations of property, items or funds may be received.

FUNDRAISING EFFORTS

The Commission will be looking into fundraising opportunities that may allow it to continue its preservation activities.

CPA FUNDING

The Commission will continue to actively seek CPA funds in its efforts to preserve and restore the city's architectural resources.

OUTREACH

The Commission is limited on how it can coordinate the activities of unofficial bodies organized for similar purposes, and lacks any funding for advertising, printing and distribute books, maps, charts, plans and pamphlets which it deems necessary for its work.

The Commission's outreach is limited to social Media. There are currently four (4) means by which the Commission provides information. 1. The Commission has a page on the City of Fall River website; 2. The Fall River Historical Commission Facebook page; 3. Fall River Government Television | FRGTV Channel 18, where all of the Historical Commission meetings are televised and available on demand; 4. Presentations to the community via neighborhood groups.

We have created a PowerPoint Presentation that we are presenting to the various neighborhood groups, so that the public has a better understanding of not only who we are and what we do, but also what we can do to assist them as well. So far we have met with three (3) neighborhood groups – the Lower Highlands Neighborhood Association, the Flint Neighborhood Association, and the Niagara Neighborhood Association, with more scheduled for future dates. Feedback from the groups has been positive.

On the City of Fall River website, there are a number of documents that the public can download. Those interested in our PowerPoint Presentation should contact the Commission directly.

As part of the Commission's educational component, the Commission has created a brochure that informs residents of what it means to be listed on the Fall River Register of Significant Structures (known as the Register).

Minutes of the Historical Commission meetings will be posted on the Commission page on the City of Fall River website.

FALL RIVER REGISTER OF SIGNIFICANT STRUCTURES

The Commission is continuing its work developing the listing of structures in the city determined by it, after nomination and hearing, to be significant structures. This listing known as the “Register” is called the Fall River Register of Significant Structures.

The listing in the Fall River Register of Significant Structures is significant in that the individual or entity intending to file a demolition application shall give written notice of such intent to the chairperson of the Historical Commission at least six months, but not more than one year, prior to the filing of an application for a permit to demolish, in whole or in part.

The Demolition Delay Ordinance was adopted to encourage preservation, restoration, and/or adaptive re-use of historic structures, and the six month delay provides the Historic Commission with time to work with property owners to pursue avenues other than demolition.

The Commission can waive the 6-month Demolition Delay Ordinance anytime during this delay once the Commission and property owners come to an agreement.

The City has 1,266 structures on the National Register of Historic Places of which 73 structures have been destroyed. One historic property was demolished this past year.

The City has 1,914 structures/objects/sites on the Fall River Register of Significant Structures. 2 new buildings were added to the Significant Structures list this past year.

Since listing of the city’s historical properties started in 1983, the 72 structures on the National Register that have been destroyed by either an act of God or selective demolition accounts for approximately 6% of historical structures destroyed in our City.

The following properties were added to the Register this past year:

- 279 New Boston Road
- 251 Cherry Street

LETTERS OF SUPPORT

The Commission provided letters of support to the Massachusetts Historical Commission for Tax Credits to the following six (6) applicants of historical properties:

Bradford Durfee Textile School, 64 Durfee Street

Wampanoag Mill No. 2, 69 Alden Street

Allen, Slade & Co. Bldg, 10-30 Third Street

S. Gourse & Sons Block, 162-167 Pleasant Street

Leontine Lincoln School, 493 Pine Street

492-498 June Street

The Fall River Historical Commission is required to provide these applicants a letter of support in a quarterly basis in order for the applicants to receive these Tax Credits. It is recommended that property owners meet with the Historical Commission prior to doing construction.

The Commission provided (14) fourteen letters of support to the following to accompany their applications for Community Preservation Committee funding:

Little Theater of Fall River, 330 Prospect Street

North End Neighborhood Association, for two (2) separate projects in North Park

Bowen Cemetery, Purchase Street

Alan Macomber, Durfee Tech Building at 64 Durfee Street

Anthony Cordeiro, Allen, Slade & Co. Bldg. at 10-30 Third Street

Anthony Cordeiro, S. Gourse & Sons Block at 162-167 Pleasant Street

Charles Jacobson, 77 Freedom Street

Maritime Museum at Battleship Cove

Fall River Fire Museum, 1181 North Main Street

Lafayette Durfee House, 94 Cherry Street

People Inc., 636 Rock Street

Preservation Society of Fall River, 263 Pine Street, for two (2) separate projects

CERTIFICATES ISSUED

The Historical Commission granted:

- (9) Certificates of Non-Applicability;

11 Atlantic Boulevard
117 Ash Street
206 Chicago Street – garage
297 Driftwood Street
81 Ferry Street
391 Gibbs Street
447 Milton Street
1545 Rodman Street
287 Welcome Street - garage

- (1) Waivers of the Demolition Delay Ordinance; (*Demolition Approved*)

26 Barrett Street - garage

- (1) Demolition Approved after Demolition Delay Ordinance expired (*6-month Demolition Delay*)

15 Thomas Street – Immaculate Conception Church and Rectory

- (1) Denial for a Waiver of the Demolition Delay Ordinance; and (*6-month Demolition Delay*)

45 Morgan Street – Nathaniel B. Borden School; 6 month delay will expire on Oct. 18, 2019

- (0) No Notification Received resulting in Demolition (*Structures Demolished*)

- (0) Denial for Certificate of Appropriateness

- (0) Certificates of Appropriateness;

- (0) Certificates of Hardship;

-(20) Letters of Support;

(See above section for list of names/locations)

- (1) Letters of Inquiry (no demolition)

510 Herman Street

Certificates issued are provided to the owner of the property and/or the Building Inspector and are kept on file according to address.

WORKSHOPS/SEMINARS

None of our members have attended any workshops and/or seminars due to lack of funding and resources.

HISTORIC CEMETERIES AND PARKS

Since the events in 2016 at the Oak Grove Cemetery that lead to the Park Board's decision to remove historical planters at numerous graves, the city Administration appointed a member of the Historical Commission to the Park Board, in order to avoid future detrimental occurrences. This was brought about by an outcry of public disapproval and anger over what had occurred in the cemetery. In February of 2018, the Historical Commission representative was removed from the Park Board by the mayor and was not replaced. As of now, there is still no historical representative for either of our cemeteries that are listed on the National Historic Register, or for our three Olmsted Parks in the city. This issue and our concerns have been discussed twice with the mayor, but as of yet, there has been no resolution. This leaves the Historical Commission once again feeling that our very valuable historic resources are again in jeopardy of being lost to alterations that would take away the historic spirit of these locations.

CONCLUSION

Today's historic preservation is a complex matrix of laws, incentives, policies and advocacy groups at the national, state, and local level. More importantly, historic preservation has become a fundamental tool for strengthening communities. It has proven to be an effective tool for a wide range of public goals including small business incubation, affordable housing, sustainable development, neighborhood stabilization, downtown revitalization, job creation, promotion of the arts and culture, heritage tourism, economic development and many others.

In any Economic Development strategy, historic preservation needs to be among the factors our city considers when pondering its future. Unfortunately, this has not always been the case. Many in our city do not support or understand the direct connection between historic preservation and our local economy. This, along with our city's inability to follow through on the recommendations of its Master Plan, has hampered not only the commission's efforts, but the overall success and goals set forth by that plan. Our city's ability to follow through on these recommendations are crucial in providing a direction - one that includes Historic Preservation as a major component. These historic resources are the foundation by which we can build upon the investment of our grandparents and at the same time help create a healthy economy for the next generation.

The Commission believes very strongly that economic development and historical preservation can very successfully go hand-in-hand. It is our sincere hope that in topics regarding our city's historical resources that the council, city administrators and our citizens consider the Historical Commission as a valuable resource in these matters.

Respectfully submitted,



Kristen Cantara Oliveira, Chair
Fall River Historical Commission