

Great Barrington Historical Commission

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April 27, 2015

Mr. William Francis Galvin
Secretary of the Commonwealth
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Blvd
Boston, Ma 02125-3314

Dear Secretary Galvin:

The Great Barrington Historical Commission gratefully acknowledges the state's awards of rehabilitation tax credits to St. James Place for its project to restore and adaptively use St. James Episcopal Church (1857-58). We also express our firm endorsement of their application for a subsequent tax credit of \$250,000, which brings this enterprise up to the allowable limit. The award not only continues to be consequential to the progress of this important project to repair serious structural problems that have rendered the church unfit for use since 2008, but the attendant endorsement of the Massachusetts Historical Commission lends significant weight to solicitations for additional support, especially a federal tax credit.

We're pleased to report that very substantial project components have been completed over the course of this rehabilitation.

1. Emergency repairs were made to the partially fallen west wall and the hazardous wall on the northeast corner of the church
2. The successful stabilization of these walls, and the safety risk it eliminated, resulted in the removal of the Building Inspector's Condemnation Notice.
3. Architectural drawings, including schematic design and design development, were completed.
4. The bid package has been prepared, contractors were hired and extensive work on the interior and exterior has been completed. I was able to view the work to date a few days ago and was very impressed with the progress of the project as well as the quality of craftsmanship and the maintenance of the identifying architectural features that give the building its distinction.

The project is saving this landmark building. Bringing it to successful completion is not only promised by the exceptional quality and experience of its participants but is crucial to maintaining St. James's prominence on Great Barrington's graceful South Main Streetscape, truly one of the most attractive and historic in our region.

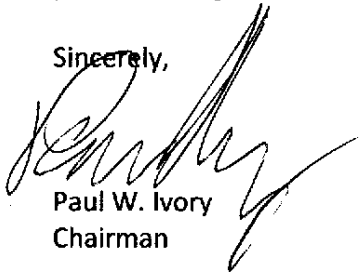
The architectural and cultural importance of St. James Church has been recognized by its inclusion in the Taconic and West Avenue National Register Historic District. The building's locally quarried blue dolomite walls and the architect's deployment of ornate wooden verge boards, an imposing tower with pinnacles, clocks and lancet belfry openings, and stained glass windows in the nave markedly evince the Gothic Revival style.

The project is very well organized and guided by a clear mission and vision. The phased plan and budget are based upon a structural analysis and feasibility study completed by two of the most outstanding professionals in the field. The project goals to recover the building, preserve its architectural character and assure the maintenance of its economic and structural stability secures both its long-term presence in our town and service to our south Berkshire community.

St. James Place has assembled a distinguished team to plan and execute the project. The firms of Jack Waite and Bob Silman are synonymous with exemplary preservation work nation-wide. Based upon my personal involvement in preservation projects with them, I can attest that their expert guidance, backed by decades of experience, is ensuring the project is being carried out to the highest professional standards. The inclusion of Fred and Sally Harris, Robert Jaeger and Keith Morgan on the Board of Directors continues to provide effectual financial, preservation and scholarly guidance for the project.

St. James Place is effectively employing two fundamental preservation strategies to reclaim this landmark building: the concept of adaptive use and state and federal tax credit programs. This sound and vital preservation undertaking is clearly worthy of a subsequent tax credit and we're very pleased to register our enthusiastic support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul W. Ivory', written over the typed name below.

Paul W. Ivory
Chairman

c.c.

Great Barrington Board of Selectmen (via e-mail)

Jennifer Tabakin, Great Barrington Town Manager (via e-mail)

Don Howe, Chairman, Chairman, Great Barrington Historic District Commission (via e-mail)

Chris Rembold, Great Barrington Town Planner (via e-mail)