



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1054

SMITTY PIGNATELLI  
REPRESENTATIVE  
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Committees on:  
Ways and Means  
Higher Education  
Tourism, Arts and Culture  

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November 25, 2014

Community Preservation Committee  
c/o Town Planner  
Great Barrington Town Hall  
334 Main Street  
Great Barrington, MA 01230

Dear Selection Committee:

I write today in strong support of the request from Saint James Place for funding from the Great Barrington Community Preservation Act.

Since the purchase of the building, there has been a thoughtful, diligent and well designed effort to repurpose the church and adjacent parish house as a cultural center and community asset dedicated to the community. A recently completed study using funds from a technical assistance grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council Cultural Facilities Fund affirmed a clear need for the kind of performance and rehearsal spaces that the 17,000 usable square feet SJP the buildings would provide once renovations are complete.

As you are aware, the church and adjacent buildings have significant cultural and historical importance to not only Great Barrington, but to all of Western Massachusetts. The architectural and cultural importance of the handsome stone church, built in 1857, has been recognized by its inclusion in the Taconic and West Avenue National Register Historic District. Its prominent location on Main Street next to Town Hall and one block from the Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center will be the perfect addition to what is already a thriving year round artistic community.

The project has been very thoughtfully conceived and is well organized and guided by a clear mission and vision. I have toured the buildings recently and have seen that much has been accomplished. The phased plan and budget are based upon structural analysis and a feasibility study completed by two of the most outstanding professionals in the field. Aston Magna Music Festival, Berkshire Bach and Close Encounters with Music all began in Saint James. Sally Harris, its president has said that its location, size and excellent acoustics make her believe it could be a "little Carnegie Hall on Main Street."

Thank you very much for your consideration, and please do not hesitate to contact me should you have questions or need more information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Smitty".

SMITTY PIGNATELLI  
State Representative  
Fourth Berkshire District