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Gary Christenson, Mayor

**Community Preservation Committee
Recommendation Letter**



April 29, 2026

To: The Honorable Mayor Gary Christenson and the Malden City Council

Applicant Name: Pamela Charpentier, on behalf of First Parish Church

Co-Applicant: David Zerega, Co-Chair Board of Trustees, First Parish in Malden

Applicant Address: 2 Elm Street, Malden, MA 02148

Project: First Parish Church Restoration Project

Overview

The City of Malden Community Preservation Committee ("CPC") is pleased to inform you that on February 18, 2026 the CPC voted 4-2-0 to recommend for approval to City Council a package of FY26 awards. The FY26 award package recommends that First Parish Church be granted a total of \$250,000.00 to restore the exterior masonry on the building at 2 Elm Street in Malden, MA. First Parish Church Restoration Project was discussed at a Public Hearing held on December 17, 2025.

Special Conditions

The Community Preservation Committee recommends this project with the following conditions:

- A 30-year Historic Preservation restriction shall be placed on the property covering the work that was completed with CPA Funds.
- A clawback clause be placed into the Grant Agreement to ensure that CPC may opt to recoup at least a portion of its investment if the building is sold within 30 years.
- The appropriation is not to be used to repair or restore any item whose sole purpose is religious.

Rationale

In reaching their decision, the CPC found that the project meets eligibility requirements and aligns with the priorities stated in Malden's Community Preservation Plan because of the following reasons:

1. **The structure that is recommended to be restored with CPA funds meets the CPA's definition of an historic resource** (MGL Part I, Title VII, Chapter 44B, Section 5.2). In 1976, the church building was added to the Massachusetts Historical Commission Inventory of Historical Assets with the note that "this landmark building has a prominent site and should be preserved for the foreseeable future." Preserving this historic structure on a "flatiron" parcel at the gateway to downtown will preserve the historic character of the community.
2. **The award does not conflict with the Massachusetts Anti-Aid Amendment** (Article XVIII, later Amend. Art. 46, § 2, as amended by Art. 103) CPA Funds are recommended to go towards preserving the physical historic structure at 2 Elm Street (not including any explicitly religious components), regardless of the organization inside. The First Amendment guarantees that religious organizations that operate historic structures cannot be denied funding because of their speech.
3. **CPC is comfortable with scope of the project and believes that the organization has the capacity to carry out the work in a timely manner.** This application is supported by a master plan and extensive building conditions assessment that was conducted by GRLA, a qualified architecture firm that specializes in historic rehabilitation. The Church has an active Building and Grounds Committee to manage the project. And the Church currently employs a Facilities Manager, Richard Smith, who has a long history of successfully managing large rehabilitation projects on behalf of FPM, who will serve as the on-site liaison for all architects, project managers, contractors and vendors for this project. FPM is actively applying for matching funds and is preparing to launch a capital campaign to increase their cost share of the project.
4. **The award will preserve help preserve the historic character of Malden in perpetuity.** In addition to the 30-year Preservation Restriction that is recommended for this project, First Parish already has in place an easement that restricts the building from being extended beyond its current footprint. Should the recommended conditions be put into place and the Church sells the building to a developer for another use in the future, CPC may deliberate on whether to exercise the clawback clause in its Grant Agreement to recoup at least a portion of its investment in the property.
5. **The project meets two additional elements of CPC's evaluation criteria:** 1) The project will not place an undue burden on the City (ie. CPC will not be the sole funder of future improvements); 2) The project creates Benefit(s) to the City, including an agreement (in keeping with its current practice) to make quality, affordable space available for civic and community group use. CPC finds this to be a meaningful contribution to the public, especially at this time when the city's budget cannot support the provision of similar space to civic groups.
6. **This building is in need of urgent repairs.** First Parish recently hired GRLA to conduct a Building Conditions Assessment. That 2025 report identifies a range of improvements that could be made to the building. The most urgent repairs are needed on the façade, where an improper restoration was attempted approximately 20 years ago which has accelerated the deterioration of the mortar. The Church has dipped into its endowment to cover the most urgent life-safety repairs that were needed adjacent to the entrance while it seeks additional funding from a range of sources, including CPA, to cover the rest of the urgent restoration that is needed to the building's façade.

7. **This award was made on a case-by-case basis.** Due to the particular circumstances of the project application, it is not considered to be precedent-setting. Other funding sources will be used to preserve the stained-glass windows that reside in the walls of the building.

Recommended Award Details

CPA Project Funding Recommendation: FY26 Application		
Category: Historic Preservation	Recommendation Funding Source	Amount
First Parish Church Restoration	Historic Reserve	\$125,000.00
First Parish Church Restoration	Fund Balance	\$125,000.00
TOTAL	Historic Reserve + Fund Balance	\$250,000.00

Project Description

The goal of this project is to restore and repoint the entire masonry envelope of First Parish Church to maintain visual continuity with the original historic building materials.

First Parish was the first religious congregation of European decent that gathered in Malden in 1649. The first and second meetinghouses were located on what is now Bell Rock Memorial Park, with the bell of the meetinghouse giving the site its historical name. In 1904 the “flat-iron” parcel at Elm and Pleasant Streets was purchased, the cornerstone was laid in 1908, and the structure completed in 1909. The building was designed by renowned local architect George F. Newton in his signature Neo-Gothic Revival style, with an exterior of Weymouth seam face granite and Indiana limestone trimming.

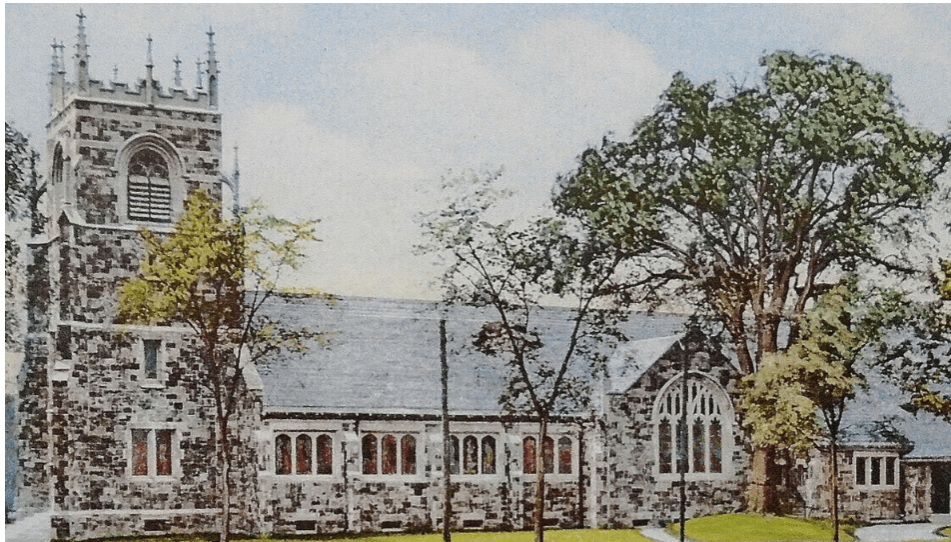
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In September 2025, First Parish Malden (FPM) contracted with Gorman Richardson Lewis Architects (GRLA) to conduct an extensive Building Envelope Evaluation Study and ascertain the improvements necessary to maintain the building as a usable parish and community space. In that study, GRLA recommended both Life Safety (immediate rebuilding) and High Priority masonry repointing and repairs in the next 2 years, as well as other Medium and Low Priority repairs and replacement, which will be addressed by FPM over a period of 5-10 years. (Please see attached GRLA Building Envelope Evaluation Study in Section 5, Additional Supporting Documentation in the Full Application.)

Using funds from their endowment, First Parish has begun the completion of the repairs which were needed immediately for Life Safety. The focus of this project is to begin the High Priority repair to the exterior envelope’s masonry which was recommended to be completed within two years.

The Phase 1 work that FPM proposes to complete with CPC funds includes reconstruction of cracking and disintegrating masonry, beginning with the exterior of the east facade of the building, which is necessary both to ensure the long term structural stability of the building and to prevent further degradation of the building envelope caused by water leaking in through the faulty masonry. This water

intrusion is likely a significant cause of the current issues with the building envelope, so replacing the masonry is both a fix to this ongoing concern and a significant step towards preventing it from reoccurring in the future. Work will begin on the east facade and bell tower and progress around the north side of the building, and will include the testing, removal and replacement of perimeter sealants on all affected windows.



First Parish is currently applying for additional sources of funding that could use CPA Funds as a match to complete the repairs to the remaining portions of the building envelope. Once the building becomes watertight, FPM can take on additional repairs to the interior to enhance the visitor experience.

Project Funding Sources

First Parish Restoration Project Funding Sources				
Total Project Cost	\$941,413.00	CPA Funds Requested	Cost Share Amount	Cost Share Percent
		\$250,000.00	\$691,413.00	73%
Cost Share Funding Sources		Secured Y/N	Amount	Type
Mass Historical Commission		N	\$132,500.00	Cash
National Fund for Sacred Places		N	\$458,913.00	Cash
Capital Campaign		N	\$100,000.00	Cash

Additional Information

The FY26 full Application as well as the supporting attachments may be found at:
https://www.cityofmalden.org/DocumentCenter/View/10791/FY26_0033_St-Pauls-Parish-Restoration_App-Attach_2