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Subject: South Union School RFP
Date: March 12, 2021 at 11:32:08 AM EST
To: bos@southboroughma.com
Cc: Mark Purple <mpurple@southboroughma.com>, Lori Esposito <lesposito@southboroughma.com>

Ladies and Gentlemen

Given recent reports in MySouthborough regarding BOS discussions on South Union School, the Historical Commission wishes to respectfully remind the Board of Selectmen that our approval of the sale of the parcel was entirely contingent upon a preservation restriction being placed in the RFP. Without that, the Commission would object to any such article at Town Meeting. To that end, the Commission voted last night 6-0 to reaffirm our commitment to include a preservation restriction *as part of the bidding process*. Despite commentary that facade restrictions on such buildings are deleterious to sales value, the opposite is actually true. Historical associations, especially ones such as the National Register, actually *increase* the value of the structure as buyers are looking for buildings of character to develop. What does however rapidly *decrease* value is insisting on a whole other series of public access restrictions, as was the case with Fayville Hall.

It is also correct that if the building were sold without a preservation restriction and the new owner wished to demolish it, it would in fact default to the demolition delay by-law. However as one of the tenets of the bylaw is that the owner must prove no one is interested in the property before demolishing it, an active RFP process would prove that assertion demonstrably false, potentially forcing the parcel back onto the open market and causing many, many months delay. This certainly would be an outcome to avoid, and could easily be avoided, by ensuring that the proper preservation restrictions are placed in the RFP now. We are certain that you will find that there is majority sentiment at Town Meeting for preserving this structure.

Cordially,

Michael Weishan, Chair
Southborough Historical Commission
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