

# FRIENDS OF SAXONVILLE

NEWSLETTER • SPRING 2017

## Town Moves Forward with McGrath Square Re-Design

by Steven Weisman

At the urging and with the support of the Friends of Saxonville, Framingham is proceeding with the redesign and upgrading of public infrastructure in and around McGrath Square in Saxonville's historic village center.

This upcoming project is a once-in-a-generation effort. It has been 50 years since McGrath Square received any meaningful attention from the Town. FOS is pressing the Town to design a plan for the Square based on a unified future vision for the Village Center. It has urged the Town to step back from current use patterns for public spaces and to consider alternatives for

how these spaces and public rights-of-way can be allocated to serve Saxonville residents for the next 30 to 50 years.

The Department of Public Works has engaged Green International to gather data and develop baseline drawings that will serve as the frame for creation of design alternatives for the Square. They will look at traffic flow, roadway and sidewalk conditions, signaling for pedestrians and vehicles, and the potential for returning Danforth Street to two-way traffic.

The Town has guaranteed the Friends of Saxonville a seat at the table as specific design alternatives are developed and evaluated, through the FOS Village Center Improvement (Continued on page 2)



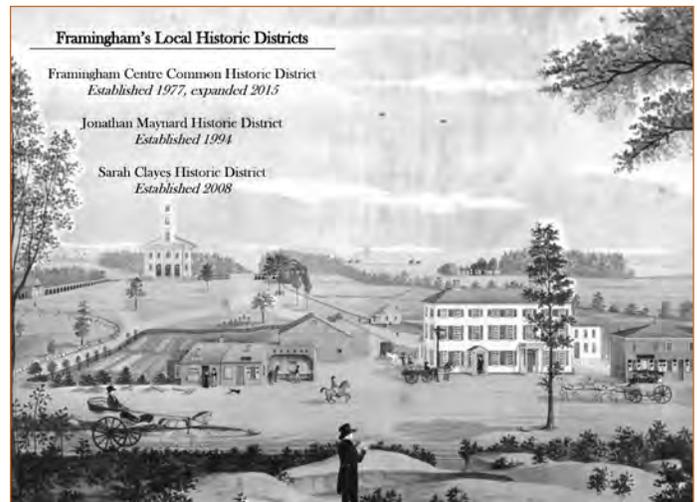
FOS has proposed this Saxonville graphic to the Town for local wayfinding. It was designed by Herb Everett of Ever Designworks.

## Saxonville's Proposed Historic District

by Jennifer B. Doherty and Gerald Couto

The Framingham Historic District Commission applied for a Federal Fiscal Year 2017 Survey & Planning Grant of \$20,000 from the Massachusetts Historical Commission. This 50/50 matching grant would be used to document approximately 80-90 properties (buildings, building lots, statues or markers) in the immediate area around McGrath Square to authentic age, architect, original owner, current building condition, and any historical significance on what is called a Form B. Typically it costs approximately \$200 to \$250 to complete each Form.

To date, 26 Saxonville properties have been documented out of the proposed district of 100-150 properties. This work has been funded by the Historic District Commission's operating budget, which Town Meeting has recently started funding more significantly, allowing the Historic District Commission to take on more ambitious initiatives. The Village is large and (Continued on page 4)



Courtesy of the Framingham History Center

# FOS Suggests Village Center Design Objectives to the Town

by Steven Weisman

The Friends of Saxonville believes that achieving the following objectives will result in a Village Center that is ready to accommodate the next phase of Saxonville's evolution.

## Invite pedestrian activity:

Rehabilitate and widen sidewalks, add shade trees and benches, restore and enlarge the island on Central Street in the center of the Square, increase the number of crosswalks on Concord Street, install updated signals that create safe street-crossing for pedestrians.

## Calm motorized vehicles to promote on-foot and bicycle traffic:

Set the Village speed limit at 25 mph. per the recently enacted State law; re-line Concord Street to narrow the traffic lanes; re-allocate the roadways for other public purposes such as on-street parking, bike travel, sidewalks, and green spaces; consider alternative geometries for the Central and Concord/Elm Streets intersection.

## Facilitate local commerce, working with property owners:

Make it easier for motorized traffic to stop and park; add vehicle parking places, including on-street parking during designated hours; increase on-foot traffic.

## Memorialize and celebrate Saxonville's history:

Set aside public space for kiosks that describe the history of Saxonville's settlement and development and the evolution of the Mills; improve visual and physical access to the historical, cultural, and recreational resources in the Village Center.

## Mitigate visual blight:

Continue and connect the physical improvements from the recent project on Water Street, at the Central Street Bridge, and the new Concord/School Street intersection; replace traffic signals with updated equipment and posts; replace remaining older street lights in the Village Center with new equipment as installed on Water Street; reduce continuous asphalt, plant trees and add planter boxes; reduce or eliminate overhead wires in the Square and overburdened, leaning poles. ❖

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## Town Moves Forward with McGrath Square Re-Design (continued)

Committee. Paul Barden, DPW Deputy Director, stated, "Be assured that we [the Town] are committed to obtaining input from the neighborhood and others as this project progresses." FOS has asked the DPW to coordinate the plan's development with other stakeholders, organizations, and departments, including but not limited to Saxonville Mills, Friends of Saxonville and other area residents, the Town's Economic Development Investment

Corporation, the Historic District Commission, and the Conservation Commission.

The Village Center Improvement Committee met with DPW representatives in late January 2017 and offered a set of high-level project design objectives for discussion and consideration, along with sample strategies that could support these objectives. We will meet with the DPW again in early spring to consider design alternatives. ❖

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## FOS News

- The FOS Discover Saxonville Events Committee is planning a fun-filled day highlighting the walking village of Saxonville. Save the date – Saturday, September 16 (rain date September 17).
- The FOS Annual Meeting will take place on Thursday, April 13 at 7 pm at Fireseed Arts
- A new FOS website is in the works! It will be easier to navigate, more useful and attractive. Send your suggestions to [lynne@DamianosPhotography.com](mailto:lynne@DamianosPhotography.com). ❖

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## FOS Business Members Please support our Business Members! For more information, visit [www.Saxonville.org](http://www.Saxonville.org)

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**T**he mission of the Friends of Saxonville is to educate the public about the special identity of Saxonville, an historic neighborhood of Framingham, Massachusetts, and to preserve, enhance, and protect its cultural, economic, environmental and historical qualities.

Membership fees help support our initiatives, newsletter, and our annual Discover Saxonville events.

Please renew your membership or consider joining us for the first time. If you renewed already – Thank you!

***If your membership is not up to date, this may be the last newsletter you will receive.***

Memberships or Donations:

Pay online at **www.Saxonville.org**

Or detach form below and mail your check to:

Friends of Saxonville, P.O. Box 3236  
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## Become a Member!

Membership year runs May 1 to April 30

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- 1 year Individual Membership: \$25
- 1 year Business Membership: \$50
- Connection to this wonderful village: Priceless!
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I am interested in:     Athenaeum     Trail Heads     River Stewards     Village Center Improvements  
 The Saxonville Historical Walk     Specific tasks     Fundraising     Membership



## Top 10 Reasons to Join Friends of Saxonville:

- 10. Because you live in Saxonville.
- 9. Because you love Saxonville.
- 8. You love Saxonville history.
- 7. You like to hear people say, "Friends of Where"?
- 6. To learn about local lore; what's true and what's gossip
- 5. To keep up to date on the Cochituate Rail Trail, Carol J. Getchell Trail, Danforth Bridge, and Athenaeum.
- 4. To help preserve the history of the oldest part of our town.
- 3. FOS members are my new BFFs!
- 2. Saxonville is historical, hip and happening.

## 1. We need you to complete us!

# Saxonville's Proposed Historic District (continued)

dense, and 10 to 15 forms a year is a slow pace for an area immediately threatened by development. Creating an historic district in Saxonville would help preserve its historic character. Property owners are notified of the process and may provide input. ❖

*Jennifer B. Doherty is a Historic Preservation Planner consultant with the Framingham Historical Commission and HDC. Gerald Couto is an architect and chair of the HDC.*

# Pinefield Shopping Plaza Expansion Proposed

by David Longden

**P**inefield Shopping Plaza owner, Richard Aronovitz, is proposing a new 5,000 square foot building at 1 Nicholas Road in the Plaza's parking lot. The new building, as proposed, would include a Dunkin Donuts, with a drive-thru window, and two other unnamed businesses. Pinefield Plaza, built in 1955, is 6.67 acres. The 43,500 square foot strip mall at the rear of the property is fully occupied.

The Plaza is in a B-2 zoning district. The Town's Zoning By-Law says that development of this zone "is intended to be pedestrian oriented and buildings with an improved quality storefront are encouraged." The B-2 zone expressly prohibits Drive-thru Accessory Use for a Fast Food Establishment.

Mr. Aronovitz requested a variance to the drive-thru restriction by the Framingham Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA). A letter submitted to the ZBA by Arthur Robert, Director, Community & Economic Development, in response asked the ZBA "to deny [this] request for a drive-thru variance" and stated, "retail development that is primarily designed for people on the go does not contribute to walkability or Saxonville's sense of place. Nor does such development encourage patrons to spend time – or patronize local merchants – in Saxonville."

A Dunkin Donuts representative described the proposed shop as having 20-25 seats indoors, a fireplace, and some outdoor seats. He said that a drive-thru window is required by Dunkin Donuts to proceed.

At two ZBA public hearings, many residents spoke against the drive-thru, concerned that it could hurt the walkability of Saxonville village, promoted in the Framingham Master Plan and supported by Friends of Saxonville. While welcoming the addition of a coffee shop, which could attract customers to existing businesses, residents were worried about the proposed design and dangers caused by Plaza traffic.

On February 13, the ZBA approved the requested variance to Mr. Aronovitz for a drive-thru window. For construction to proceed, he must next submit his plan to the Framingham Planning Board for Site Plan Review and other approvals. During this continuing review, the public will have more opportunity to comment on the project. We encourage residents to participate in this process, as this project could significantly affect Saxonville in the future. Look for information on upcoming public meetings. ❖

## Vibes from the Village

by Lynne Damianos

A bald eagle was spotted eating a fish along the Sudbury River.



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