



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

***MASSACHUSETTS CULTURAL COUNCIL CONDUCTS SITE VISIT FOR
PROPOSED FRANKLIN CULTURAL DISTRICT***

Franklin, MA (September 21, 2018): The Town of Franklin hosted the Massachusetts Cultural Council for a site visit of the proposed Franklin Cultural District on September 20, 2018, the last step in the process to establishing an official, State-designated Cultural District in Franklin. The Franklin Cultural District (FCD) will be a demarcated region within the town that encompasses the cultural facilities, activities, and assets that lie in a compact, walkable area. Franklin's vibrant cultural atmosphere is already home to the nation's first public library, the Franklin Historical Museum, Dean College School of the Arts, over 25 other performing, visual arts and dance studios and associations, and a variety of restaurants and cafes. Establishment of the FCD will likely attract additional arts and cultural organizations in the future, driving economic development.

Cultural District status will make the FCD eligible for a variety of state grant programs, state economic development opportunities and monies, strategic planning and historic preservation assistance, and marketing through the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism.

This effort has been years in the planning, beginning with the Franklin Cultural District Steering Committee, who were tasked with gauging interest in the project and starting the organizational efforts necessary to begin the application process. The Steering Committee met with potential partners, the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC), and Town of Franklin administrators to determine the needs, geographic area and types of businesses to be included, and the roles and responsibilities of the District itself. A preliminary site visit with the MCC and the Town resulted in a decision to move forward with the formal cultural district application.

On June 28, 2017, the Franklin Town Council passed Resolution 17-45, which endorsed the FCD's cultural district goals, namely to "attract artists and cultural enterprises; encourage business and job development; establish the district as a tourist destination; preserve and reuse historic buildings; enhance property values; and foster local cultural development." The FCD will be managed by a Town-appointed Franklin Cultural District Committee, made up of seven Franklin residents, established in November 2017.

The FCD Committee filed a formal application for Cultural District status with the State in June of this year. After the application was reviewed, the MCC scheduled a final, more detailed, site visit, the last step in the process. The site visit, held on September 20, began with a meeting between Anita Walker, Executive Director of the MCC, and the complete MCC Communities staff, Franklin Town administrators, and members of the FCD Committee to discuss the District's potential impact on arts and economic development in the area. Then followed a walking tour of key District partners' facilities, led by MA State Rep. Roy.

"It is inspiring to see that the idea for a Cultural District has blossomed, and know that this tour will be the capstone presentation for the State approval process," said Representative Jeffrey N. Roy (D-Franklin). "Arts and culture are essential, as they help us better understand and interpret the world around us, they improve our ability to think critically and act creatively, and they offer the opportunity to see and communicate better. Having designated space for cultural enrichment will also be an economic boost for our community and spread the message that Franklin is a place where culture is thriving. I applaud the committee for its hard work over the past five years, and thank them for their commitment and dedication to the District."

The walking tour began at the Franklin Public Library, and included stops at the Franklin Historical Museum, Franklin Downtown Partnership offices, The Black Box and Franklin School for the Performing Arts, Franklin Senior Center, Franklin High School, Teddy Gallagher's, Emma's Quilt Cupboard, The Little Shop of Olive Oils, and Dean College.

Says Dr. Paula Rooney, President of Dean, "Dean College is proud of our long history in the town of Franklin and excited about the Franklin Cultural District. Dean's impact is significant in Franklin from both an educational and cultural perspective, and our geographic location serves as a meaningful footprint within the district. We look forward to doing whatever we can to make this endeavor a continued success."

The site visit ended with a Q & A session and meeting of many of the FCD partners with the State MCC representatives. Now that the MCC has reviewed the application and conducted a site visit, the State can render a verdict on the application. A decision should be announced early in 2019.

"The site visit went very well," says FCD Committee Chair Philip Regan, "We are pleased by the State's response to our application, and are excited by what the advent of a Cultural District could do for the Town of Franklin."

To learn more about the Franklin Cultural District, their partners, and upcoming activities and events, visit their website at www.franklinculturaldistrict.org, or follow them on Facebook (www.facebook.com/FranklinCultureMA), Twitter (@FranklinCulture), and Instagram (@franklinculture).

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