Medfield Historical Commission
May 9, 2023
Subject: Old Corner Store

Dear Historical Commission,

The first store where Starbucks is located today was built circa 1795 by Oliver Wheelock, the great-great-grandson of the Founder of Medfield, Ralph Wheelock. He built the small store on the northeast corner of Main and North Streets in Medfield Center. Here he kept store until 1809 when he sold the building to David Fairbanks. David Fairbanks came to Medfield from Sharon and became the "businessman of the town." He bought and enlarged into a tavern what had been the original home of Rev. John Wilson, now the site of town hall. In 1816 he built the current house opposite the head of South Street. He then cut the original 1795 Wheelock store in two and moved one half to 13 South Street where it remains today and the other half to 15 South Street where it too remains today as a residence. On that North and Main Street site he then built a new store, replacing the long narrow Wheelock one.

For over 200 years now the 13 and 15 South Street houses have served as successful residences offering an ideal in-town location. During the recent Medfield History Weekend both 13 and 15 South Street were stops on the Historic Walking Tour of Medfield Center.

This is not the first time Salvatore Capital developers have attempted to demolish this piece of Medfield history. When they purchased what is now the Brothers MarketPlace building, they also tried to demolish the house for expanded parking. Due to town concerns and uproar about the historic nature of historic 13 South Street, that effort was withdrawn.

Historic building by historic building and board by board, Medfield continues to lose its historic houses and hence its historic character. *The Boston Globe* recently ran an article of what towns need to do to hold their property values. It went on to say that communities need to build upon those unique characteristics that make that community special- examples were the revolutionary history of Lexington and Concord, the whaling of New Bedford and the Industrial Revolution and the mills of Lowell. Here in Medfield, it is our open space and historic homes that helps to make Medfield, Medfield. We cannot continue to lose these pieces of Medfield's character. In the past 65 years, some 28 historic buildings have been demolished.

By unanimous vote of Town Meeting several years ago, Medfield adopted the one-year demolition delay bylaw, giving the Historical Commission the authority to halt demolition of historic properties for up to one year. The fact that it was a unanimous vote clearly shows the community support in protecting our historic properties. Developers have the ability and money to hire architects and lawyers to present their side to justify proposed demolition of historic homesteads. The citizens off Medfield rely upon the Historical Commission and the bylaw they unanimously adopted to try to save the town's historic character. Joni Mitchell wrote a song Big Yellow Taxi that had the memorable chorus line "*they paved paradise and put up a parking lot."* as Medfield's Town Historian, I strongly the Historical Commission to make sure a new version of that song in Medfield doesn't go "*they demolished a historic piece of the town character and*

put up a parking lot. Included in Mitchell's song is the line "*Don't it always seem to go that you don't know what you got 'til, it's gone?*

Please stop the bit by bit, board by board and house by house demolition of our historic character. Loss of that house separates it from its historic twin at 15 South Street and will drastically change the nature of the neighborhood. The property borders the downtown historic district. Loss of that property would also distract from the historic corner of Main and South Street with the historic Baptist Church, the historic 1816 Fairbanks House and the historic 17th century Fisher Homestead.

For over 200 years 13 South Street has successfully been a residency. The need for smaller houses is especially in demand in Medfield. Please enact the demolition delay bylaw and work with the developer in saving, preserving and making use of this town historic gem.

Sincerely,
Richard DeSorgher
Medfield Town Historian