

THE BEDFORD CITIZEN

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

JUNE 1, 2016

The Historic District Commission's 3 to 2 decision this evening to deny the petition of the First Parish Church, UU to install solar panels on parts of the church roof is difficult to understand. The motion for denial was mostly framed that the central and highly visible location of the building makes it un-touchable as an historical entity. Not part of the motion, but an earlier statement by the Senior Alternate Member to the effect that the Commission cannot set a time limit on a permit then seemed to preclude even a temporary suspension of historical standards which I had submitted at the hearing in the following words:

“We would not be asking you to deviate from accepted standards of historical conformity except we, the citizens of this Commonwealth, are facing a unique situation. I say “unique” because of events that are unlikely to repeat within the next thousand or so years that are occurring in a time frame of just a few decades. Our concern is that if industrialized nations continue to burn fossil fuels at the current rate, the consequent emission of greenhouse gases will raise the global temperature to the point of climate melt up in about 20 years. To me this means we must now begin to reduce our use of fossil fuels on the order of 10% a year, with a crash program of replacing them with other sources of energy. This drastic imperative convinces me that early installation of solar panels on all large roof surfaces of the Church building will be needed to help offset the rapid phasing out of fossil energy. As major sources of solar and wind generated energy come on line over the next couple of decades, the First Parish solar installation would retain some economic value, but would no longer be a critical ecological asset. Accordingly, aesthetic and historic values would then dictate its removal.”

It would make sense to give up historical authenticity for a couple of decades to help assure there is a posterity to which our history will still be relevant.

Brown Pulliam,