



February 10, 2016

Virginia Hewitt,  
Library Director  
Brooks Free Library  
739 Main Street  
Harwich, MA 02645

**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

RE: Brooks Free Library, 739 Main Street, Harwich, MA

Dear Ms. Hewitt:

The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) was provided with a copy of the Brooks Free Library Exterior Assessment Report, prepared by McGinley Kalsow & Associates, Inc and dated July 17, 2015. The report addresses the assessment of the Brooks Block building relative to the building's condition, prioritized repair recommendations and budget pricing reflecting the recommended repairs. McGinley Kalsow & Associates has requested that the MHC review and comment on this report.

The Brooks Free Library is included in the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing building in the Harwich Center Historic District. The MHC recommends that all proposed work on historic buildings follow the *Secretary of the Interior's, Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. It is the intent of these standards to assist with the long-term preservation of an historic property's significance through the preservation of historic materials and features.

After reviewing the Brooks Free Library Report, relative to the architectural assessment, the MHC understands the proposed recommendations include the following: repairs to the existing windows; miscellaneous repairs and selective replacement to all wood clapboard and trim including wood columns and flashings; chemical stripping of paint to an approximate 90% removal level; and priming and painting. The MHC would agree that the recommended approach will follow the *Secretary of the Interior's, Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* by maximizing the retention of historic building fabric. The use of chemical stripping is a recognized and acceptable method for paint removal, particularly useful when existing paint layer buildup has reached an extreme condition as would appear to be the case with the Brooks Block building. The MHC is familiar with this method and has provided funding for projects involving this type of paint removal approach including the Edmund Fowle House located in Watertown, MA.

The MHC would strongly recommend that historic paint color analysis be undertaken prior to the paint stripping as this paint removal method permanently eliminates any possibility for analysis of paint color evidence in the future. In conjunction with the analysis of the historic paint color layers, the MHC would also recommend the implementation of the original or other historically appropriate paint color scheme as determined through this process.

In conclusion, the MHC has reviewed the referenced report and agrees with the design approach taken which minimizes changes to the important character-defining features of the library and emphasizes the stabilization and restoration of key original features and qualities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul Holtz".

Paul Holtz  
Historical Architect  
Co-Director, Grants Division  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

Cc: Wendall Kalsow, McGinley Kalsow & Associates