**Presentation by Diana Stein on Congregational Church Sprinkler Proposal**

The First Congregational Church on Main Street is one of the oldest structures in the Dickinson Historical District. This church was built in 1868 under the direction of Austin Dickinson, and he and his extended family worshiped here. Therefore it is an integral part of the Dickinson legacy in Amherst. The building is faced with granite quarried in Pelham – but it is completely timber-framed and very vulnerable to fire as there are no firewalls to stop a fire once it starts. The Church will undergo a major renovation this year to make the building both safe and accessible. This includes upgrading the electrical system, improving the restrooms and installing an elevator—work that will cost well over a million dollars. The church asked the CPAC for $357,000 to pay for a fire sprinkler system. Given our budget constraints, CPAC will award $200,000 upon approval of Town Meeting:

Some have asked why fund a church even if it is an important and beautiful structure that is part of the Dickinson Historical District. The church also serves the community in other ways, so much so that it could be considered a second community center. Here are some of the ways:

1. They allow homeless people to use the church, which is open from 8 a. m to 9 p.m. every day, and are right now overwhelmed with the number of homeless people who use it every single day.
2. They host the Not Bread Alone Soup Kitchen on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays, which provides about 200 hot meals and bags of groceries to the hungry each week.
3. They host 6 AA groups and 2 Al-anon groups that meet often during the week.
4. They host the not-for-profit Spring Street Preschool of about 25 children.
5. It also hosts Primera Inglesia, a Hispanic congregation.

Therefore, helping to fund a sprinkler system not only protects the town's interest in preserving this historic structure, but it also protects the personal safety of some of our more vulnerable residents.

Since the First Congregational Church is such an important part of the Dickinson Historical District and serves the Amherst Community in important ways, CPAC hopes you will support the award of $200,000 for a fire sprinkler system. The vote of the Committee was 6 to 0 with two abstentions.