



## PETERSHAM HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION and PETERSHAM HISTORICAL COMMISSION

3 South Main Street • Petersham, Massachusetts 01366 • 978-724-3353 tel • 978-724-3501 fax

### Annual Report for July 1, 2016 – June 30, 2017

The Petersham Historic District Commission & Historical Commission met monthly throughout the year. The Commission received Project Applications and held Public Hearings for two projects during the year: An application was received from a resident for removal of a rear ell from a dwelling and construction of a new addition in the same location; portions of the structure were visible from the public way. A site visit and Public Hearing were held. The HDC approved the Application. A Project Application was received from the Town to replace an existing failed twenty-year old wooden handicap ramp with a permanent exterior ADA compliant ramp for access to the main floor of Town Hall A site visit and Public Hearing were held. Upon review and discussion, the applicant withdrew the application so as to consider providing more information.

The HDC discussed a garden arbor which has been installed in front of a residence without review. The property owner willingly removed the structure knowing they could submit an application if they wished. The HDC was asked by a resident and the Selectboard to review the idea of a plaque at the flagpole on the Common and the possibility of night time lighting of the flag. Discussion ensued with some form of a plaque seeming to be a feasible idea to execute. The need for and impact of night time lighting was questioned and noted that if there was further interest, the subject should return to the Selectboard for further consideration.

The Mass. Attorney General (AGO) approved the HDC-HC's updated Bylaw in October 2016, as had been approved by voters at June 2016 Town Meeting and sent as required by the Town Clerk to the AGO for review.

In November 2016, the National Park Service approved applications for Petersham's two historic East Street Schoolhouses for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The applications has already been approved by the Mass. Historical Commission in the prior fiscal year. An "Open Schoolhouses" event was held in November, organized by the Petersham Historical Society (PHS) with Chris Mandel and Nancy Allen participating. The event was very popular, with visitors and special guests, including several former school students, filling the Ledgeville School, Chris, Nancy, and Jean Sinclair of PHS worked on permanent exhibit displays telling the School history including students' stories & memories. In June 2017, both Schools were used as hands-on historic classrooms for a field trip of Center School students organized by members of the Historical Society and teachers from the Center School with Chris and Nancy working on the project. A local Cultural Council grant supported the successful project.

Other HDC-HC projects included interest from the UMass/Amherst Archaeology Department in the "Stone-Wheeler site" near Monson Turnpike which contains a formation of large stones of unknown purpose. Former HDC-HC member Polly Pillsbury had informed UMass Professor Eric Johnson about the location and with permission, he and a team of students visited the site in April 2017. Chris provided them with critical historical information and documentation about the property. A report is expected from UMass at a future date. The Cemetery Commission, of which Lynn Shaw is chair, is also interested in the site as is Bob Clark, chair of the Open Space & Recreation Committee. The HDC discussed updating of the 'HDC Properties Book,' a listing and brief descriptions of all District properties last published in 1995. With the in-depth individual property research created by Chris combined with the skills and interests of the current members of the Commission, the intensive undertaking seems realistic to attempt and the time right for successful execution.

The HDC-HC was pleased to welcome new members Claudette Bishop and Melissa Martinez during the fiscal year. Claudette agreed to take on the role of Clerk for which members were grateful. The Commission was pleased that Melissa agreed to fill the open position of a member with architectural training.

The Commission is grateful to Petersham residents and fellow town officials for providing their support for preservation of Petersham's history. *Respectfully submitted,*

~ Nancy Allen, *Chair*; Robert Clark, *Vice Chair*; Claudette Bishop, *Clerk*  
Jeremy Gabrenas, Christine Mandel, Melissa Martinez, Lynn Shaw

---

**ABOUT THE PETERSHAM HISTORIC DISTRICT** Through the diligent hard work of town residents and the commitment of Petersham voters, the Petersham Historic District was established in 1967 as one of the earliest in the Commonwealth and followed the signing of the National Historic Preservation Act in 1966. Today, there are more than 600 Historic Districts in cities and towns across Massachusetts. Since the 1930s, over 2,300 local Historic Districts have been established across the United States and the number keeps growing as towns discover and appreciate the benefits brought about by preservation.