

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

The U.S. Department of Interior's National Park Service and the Connecticut General Assembly empower the Historic District Commission to promote the educational, cultural, economic and general welfare of the Town through the preservation and protection of buildings, places and districts of historic interest. The Old Saybrook Town Code authorizes the Commission to review designs for the erection or alteration of buildings and structures within the local North Cove Historic District for regulatory compliance.

The Board of Selectmen appoints 5 members and 3 alternates to the Commission for a term of 5 years each. This year we thank Rich Peters and Don Brigham for participating as in-District and out-of-District members, respectively.

During the 2015-2016 fiscal year, the Commission continued to conduct non-regulatory historic preservation activities throughout town by garnering state and federal resources and by collaborating with State and local organizations like the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation and the Old Saybrook Historical Society. The Commission finalized its historic resources inventory of 230 properties located along the commercial roads in Old Saybrook funded with a \$30,000 Survey and Planning grant from the State Historic Preservation Office and arranged for a public presentation of the findings. Many thanks to Tedd Levy of the Historical Society for acting as the Grant Administrator for this project. The Commission worked with the Board of Selectmen to install and maintain plants for the North Cove roadside along the Clothesline Marine facility within the District; the Commission also requested waste receptacles at the Town facilities within the District. The Commission worked with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to benefit from its \$8 million grant from the National Historic Preservation Fund in support of historic preservation efforts in shoreline towns affected by Super Storm Sandy. The SHPO conducted a historic resource inventory of 300 properties in the Cornfield Point neighborhood, screened candidates to sponsor nomination of two historic properties in Old Saybrook to the National Register of Historic Places, undertook an archaeological investigation of several nearby shipwrecks and other underwater sites, assessed how climate change and sea level rise will affect historic and cultural resources along the shore and how we can plan for a resilient future, and created an electronic file of the State's historic resources. The Commission began consideration of a town-wide demolition delay that would offer a moment of protection while the Town seeks resources to preserve historic structures outside the historic district from demolition.

The Commission undertook a handful of housekeeping efforts. It removed the requirement for a land survey for its application materials, exempted from its requirement for a Certificate of Appropriateness any maintenance or repair when there is no change in materials, and updated its application form to prompt more narrative describing how any proposal meets the Commission's criteria for decision. The Land Use Department updated the resources available on the Commission's webpage and made the overall look more obviously a part of the Town's complete land use program. The Commission chose not to pursue any further its efforts to organize support within the Connecticut historic preservation community to update State laws to make the procedures for Commission action and appeal from action consistent with similar procedures of other land use agencies. The Commission is appreciative of the special training session conducted here locally by the Circuit Rider from the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation and the SHPO for the benefit of the Commission members, residents of the historic district, the Old Saybrook Historical Society and local architects. Town staff began to update the photos and text of the Historical Society's original "Main Street Walking Tour" brochure in anticipation of a more modern production.

The Commission approved 4 and denied 1 application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the erection, alteration, demolition or removal of the exterior architectural features of principal or accessory buildings, structures, or other work on properties visible from a public place in the North Cove Historic District or the waters. One of the proposals was by the Town itself to restore a gate across the Cromwell Place coastal access point, known to history buffs as the one-time location of "Coulter's Wharf," as indicated on old maps.

The Commission meets on the 3rd Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall, second floor conference room. Stella Beaudoin of the Land Use Department supports us as our administrative clerk. Chris Costa, Zoning Enforcement Officer, and Don Lucas, Building Inspector, enforce our regulations. Christine Nelson, Town Planner, who directs our CLG programs and physical improvements, is available Monday through Thursday by appointment, in the Land Use Department of the Town Hall to assist with applications and to answer questions concerning land use in Old Saybrook.

William A. Childress, *Chairman*