



Newsletter of the Old Village Association of Chatham, Massachusetts

Volume VIII

Issue 1

Winter, 2006

1997-2007: The Old Village Association is Ten Years Old – and Counting!

On January 10, 1997, when William Francis Galvin, the Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts put his official stamp on the application of the Old Village Association, Inc. little did he know that he was probably certifying the smallest organization in Massachusetts with the most dedicated – and the most terrified – interim Board of Directors. Nor did the small group of Old Villagers who met in the fall of 1996 to write bylaws and prepare tax forms have any idea that their work would result in an organization of almost 300 members (and an actual bank account) that would survive to celebrate its 10th anniversary.

Official papers aside, the continuing success of the Old Village Association reconfirms that the unlikely sometimes happens. Who would imagine that a couple of old(ish) ladies in sneakers with no experience in such things could bring together a small group of neighbors who would then have the courage to join together to preserve their neighborhood? More amazing still, the grass-roots

organization proposed that August day on Hammond Hill Road is still around ten years later working hard to live up to its goal of “preserving and protecting the historic nature and architectural beauty and integrity of the Old Village area of Chatham.” The reason for this is, of course, the members. Over the past years, Old Village property owners have delighted in their history (some would say obsessed) and have exhibited an unfailing determination to protect their neighborhood. Successes have been treasured, failures overcome and memories refreshed. Despite a few disagreements along the way, members have kicked up their heels and made a little history of their own.

We have worked hard and 2007 is our year to celebrate! In honor of the Association’s anniversary, a special newsletter, published early in the new year, will look back on what has been accomplished and what remains to be done. And be sure to save Sunday, August 26: President Nancy Koerner and the Board of Directors have already started planning for a very special Annual Meeting.

One More Milestone: The OVA National Register District is Five Years Old

The Old Village Association’s most notable success, the inclusion of the Old Village on the National Register of Historic Places, took place five years ago. This was a massive two-year long effort, requiring the whole neighborhood’s cooperation and support. Looking back to 2002, with development starting to reach new heights and demolition becoming an increasingly popular way to renovate, that accomplishment was a singular event. Since then, thanks to the Cape Cod Commission review of the demolition of and substantial alteration to historic (contributing) properties, the neighborhood, although evolving, has managed to maintain its character and historic beauty.

Near the five year mark, the Association sponsored a meeting, held in April, with representatives of the Cape Cod Commission (CCC) to discuss the review process and the recent assault on the Commission by a small local group of Chatham voters. In attendance were Don Aikman and Nancy Yeaw from the

continued on page 5



The Coast Guard's new whip antenna

EDITORIAL

The Old Village Association was formed to give us all a voice in town affairs, particularly as they affect our neighborhood and our quality of life. For this reason, the Board of Directors has always considered wide public participation to be a key element in creating consensus and finding mutually satisfactory solutions to problems. Your willingness to play a part in the process and to clearly state your interests and concerns is vital to our effectiveness in dealing with difficult issues.

Since the Association believes so strongly in civil discourse, the elimination of an avenue for the expression of differing points of view can be distressing. This October the selectmen did just that when they chose to remove the Long Range Planning Committee, which had been formed by the voters at Town Meeting to write a Comprehensive Plan for Chatham. After many revisions, the plan was unanimously approved by Town Meeting in 2003. At that time, the selectmen chose to leave the committee in place during the implementation process. With this recent action, the selectmen reversed direction and fired the whole committee, some members of which had put in years of service and were dedicated to see the job through. What exactly was the committee's crime? Its members dared to reconvene this summer to study the proposed zoning bylaw rewrite in terms of the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. This is the same bylaw which was withdrawn by the Planning Board in August, after its author, a town consultant, was fired for incompetence. One would have thought that the selectmen might have directed their ire to those who were responsible for letting the consultant write on with no oversight at the cost of \$150,000 to the taxpayers. Not only did the selectmen think that the Long Range Planning Committee had no business judging the bylaw, one selectman even said that the Comprehensive Plan itself was "disruptive." So much for Town Meeting votes and the will of the public.

Unfortunately, this is not a one-shot event. At this point in Chatham's history, wide-ranging public participation such as we experience in the Old Village is discouraged and often maligned. Those in power – the selectmen, the town manager and even some members of appointed bodies – have made it clear that meaningful discussions of varying opinions are not truly welcome. Those who disagree can be silenced, treated rudely, or summarily ignored. More disquieting is the ongoing purge of a whole segment of the community, those who are advocates of preservation and limited growth, from committees or boards. (The elimination of Maureen Vokey, an ardent conservationist and friend of affordable housing, from the ZBA, and scientist Paul Kelley from the Board of Health are only the latest examples.) Those who remain to speak up on town matters are a few strong souls who can take the heat. The others give up, and not without some justification. When, for whatever reason, citizens curtail their participation in discussions of important issues, consensus and progress are almost impossible.



From the President How Are We Lookin' ?

The Old Village is truly a special spot in the world. With all the pressures around us of "big is better," "bottom line is profit," "me, me, me," we really have a challenge. We applaud those who have been willing to temper some of their impulses to change, update, enlarge and remove in order to maintain the lovely ambiance that our forefathers left us. What a treat to drive around and see a shed that might have been demolished now looking so at home in its new location; to see a home renovated for modern life-style with the original lines of the house maintained; to see a garage with charming doors rather than one you could pick out at the Big Box lumber yard, a garden restored to its beauty of 50 or more years ago, a waterfront cottage restored to its original charm, saving the bead boards, old windows and floors. How fortunate we are to have these good things happening. We ARE lookin' good, aren't we?

Nancy H. Koerner, President

Those in power seem to feel they should be free to act unilaterally and that public participation only creates problems. But, what if a few dedicated individuals and the Long Range Planning Committee, under its able chairman Richard Batchelder, had not looked hard and long at what the consultant had written? Would that document, which the Planning Board was gearing up "to sell" throughout the community, have gone unchallenged before Town Meeting – all 100+ incoherent pages of it – and possibly passed by the electorate? Would a flawed bylaw have been good for Chatham? Is this how democracy should work? The argument we often hear is that those citizens who question, object or disagree only delay approval of important items, that the selectmen and the town manager could work everything out for us if we all would only agree to keep our opinions to ourselves (like with Main Street Reconstruction – remember that?). We must admit that democracy can be messy and may well delay decisions. You want something else? Indeed, strong leaders left to themselves can be very efficient: we all know that Mussolini got the trains in Italy to run on time.

Now more than ever, fortitude and courage will be needed to stand up for what we think is best for our neighborhood and our town. With your help, the Old Village Association will continue to be an advocate for a fair and robust public dialogue and will make every effort to define your needs. Without you, our members, the Old Village Association Board of Directors can do nothing. Membership in the Association: \$5.00; your participation, priceless.

Carol Pacun

Note: As has always been the case, this editorial expresses the views of the editor and does not necessarily reflect those of the Association.

Zoning:

The End Game or A New Beginning?

In August, the long awaited zoning rewrite draft was ditched after a large number of citizens objected to its content, its many errors and inconsistencies, as well as its failure to adhere to the goals of the Comprehensive Plan. The process of the rewrite, which lasted over a period of two years, had been a bumpy one with what seemed to be a disconnect between the Planning Board, the consultant, the Director of Community Development and the general public. At the summer public meetings, even the chairman of the Planning Board seemed stunned by the quality (or lack thereof) of the document.

Those who, early on, were concerned about the direction of the rewrite were thwarted in their efforts to study the document and make suggestions or ask questions. Unlike most rewrites readied for the public, the formatting made it difficult for the reader to compare the old document with the new drafts. The work to analyze what was actually being changed involved hours of work. The Old Village Association, which had tried to help the public understand what was and what was not being proposed, owes a great debt to those who did this work, most notably Debby Ecker, Gloria Freeman, Norm Pacun and John Sweeney. Bill Horrocks came in at the end to do detailed research on the definitions section. Until it was disbanded by the selectmen, the Long Range Planning Committee also began an analysis of the bylaw in terms of the goals of the Comprehensive Plan.

Remember this?

TOWN OF CHATHAM, COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Adopted by Town Meeting 5/13/03

Goal of the Land Use Section:

- To permit only that growth and development that is consistent with the carrying capacity of Chatham's natural environment in order to maintain the quality of life in our Town. Chatham should retain its small town and seaside resort character and any development should maintain that, not minimize or destroy it. Promote the re-development and reuse of existing developed property rather than the development of vacant land. Bylaws and regulations should be created to ensure that intensity is maintained or minimized – never maximized.

Bylaw “White Papers” On the Way

Now that the bylaw draft has been scrapped and the consultant who did most of the work axed, what's next for Chatham's zoning? The Planning Board and the Department of Community Development have come up with a concept whereby the staff will produce “white paper” memos on topics suggested by the Planning Board, including several aspects of specific sections of the bylaw. The Planning Board will assist in pinpointing issues and will review and vote on each draft as it is completed. A public hearing will then be held and, after any necessary revisions, the Planning Board will approve each specific section, to be used in creating proposed new bylaw provisions. It is unknown how many white papers will be needed, although Kevin McDonald, the Director of Community Development, is planning on five or six for non-conforming properties alone. He also told a Women's Club group that he does not foresee the work on bylaw revisions to be completed any time soon and expressed some doubt that anything would be ready for this May Town Meeting.

As of this writing, McDonald has produced one memo, an introduction to the issues involved in the section of the bylaw dealing with nonconforming uses, structures and lots. This white paper has been posted on the Chatham web site, under “zoning rewrite” and a hard copy can be picked up at the Annex. The Association would be glad to send a copy to members unable to obtain one from the town (call 945-1627, Carol).

Some concerns about this process have surfaced. It is uncertain where the new bylaws would go – into the existing zoning bylaw, or into the rejected 2006 rewrite. Once again, it appears that the public will be allowed to participate only at the very end of the discussion of each section (a system which proved to be counter-productive the first time around, resulting in months of wasted effort). Hopefully, the new rewrite (and the Planning Board meetings) will be people friendly and make every effort to achieve consensus. McDonald has stated that the old and new sections will be presented together, noting deletions and additions. Also, the prevailing opinion is that this time around, the voters will not be asked to approve an entire bylaw all at once, but rather a few sections at a time. These two changes in process would be a great improvement.

The Old Village Association will continue to monitor the work being done on the rewrite, with special attention to the Land Use section and non-conforming bylaw changes that have the potential of affecting the Old Village in a substantial way.

Chatham's Sign Code: A Forgotten Bylaw Issue

During the most recent rewrite, the present sign code was inserted into the proposed bylaw without any changes, perhaps in a last minute effort to complete the document in time for summer hearings. This was unfortunate, in that an open discussion might have increased public awareness of the code and what it really says. Secondly, a focus group, appointed by the Planning Board back in 2001, was asked to review the code and make suggestions for its improvement. The group, comprised of Debbie Aikman, John Geiger, Audrey and Bill Gray, the late Barbara Streibert and David Veach, submitted their report to the town in 2002. A planned for public hearing was never held. Now, with a less frantic zoning rewrite schedule, perhaps the Planning Board will find the time to discuss the present sign code and the focus group's suggestions.

The following is a summary of what the sign code allows and does not allow in residential areas, and lists some of the group's recommendations.

What *permanent signs* are permitted:

- A one or two sided two foot square sign, from the ground, a post or attached to the building (historic plaques are safe!)
- A larger sign, 6 foot square, to announce a home business
- Ladder signs for property owners, group listings in remote areas ("remote?" -not applicable here!)
- A 1 foot square sign indicating a driveway entrance or exit, or for warning purposes

What *temporary signs* are permitted:

- For-sale or rent single faced signs, no larger than 6 square feet, to be removed within 48 hours of sale, termination of sale or rental agreement
- Builders, architects, developers and engineers are permitted one temporary single-faced group sign...



Sign Code or not: Multiple temporary signs are permanent fixtures in Chatham today.

which shall not exceed 24 square feet of sign face area. It must be removed within 48 hours of issuance of certificate of occupancy

- (Rules also affecting development properties, again not applicable to the Old Village)

The focus group suggested that a six square foot size for home occupations and/or ladder type signs were probably unnecessary and questioned the definitions and clarity of the temporary sign rules. For example, painters' signs are not mentioned in the code, and real estate signs have no height or setback restrictions. Also, since renovations do not require a certificate of occupancy, the rule on the removal of builders' signs in those cases is not mentioned. (Renovations require a final inspection, the timing of which is largely up to the builder.)

The group unanimously agreed that enforcement was problematic and difficult to achieve due to lack of staff time. Other more pressing town issues have tended to put the sign code down the list of priorities. The group also considered the formation of a citizen's advisory board to help educate the public about the code. But right now, everyone is on his own: any questions about the code or concerns about violations can be directed to the Annex.

You Say Elphamets; I Say Elphalets: Let's Call the Whole Thing Off

Perhaps this fuss about signs permanent or temporary, legal or illegal, is much ado about nothing. But Old Villagers take their signs very seriously, and events seem to conspire to keep the argument going on many levels. For example, signs announce Hallet Lane at the eastern end of the street, but change the spelling at the corner of School Street to read Hallett Lane. Of course, all of us know it should be Hallett, or do we?

If that weren't enough, the town is now replacing our (beloved?) old black and white street signs with six inch high white lettered signs on a florescent green background. Upon occasion, the lettering is reduced to 4 inches. (examples at the corner of Water and School Streets). The reason for the new color and design is said to be safety – four inch or six inch safety depending on? However, already there are those who think that, however big the print, these signs are not appropriate for an historic area. The question remains as to what a consensus of residents would think might be appropriate. Blue? White? Green? With "Old Village" added? Or not? These issues segue very nicely into the wider question concerning a possible free-standing sign welcoming people to "The Old Village: A National Register District." If approved, where exactly would that go – at the "beginning" of the Old Village? Where's that?

continued on page 5



The mother of all controversies now, and over the past decades, is the street sign at “Eliphamets Lane.” That name, as Don Edge mentioned in his recent You Guest It column for the Cape Cod Chronicle, is mostly likely a misspelling of Eliphalet. The story goes that the lane was originally named for Eliphalet Hamilton, who owned much of the property on the lane (and elsewhere in the Mill Pond area). However, when the sign came back with the wrong spelling, our cost-saving ancestors decided it was just fine. Those who feel this mistake should be rectified believe that it’s time to give poor old Eliphalet his due. Others are perfectly content to leave well enough alone. As long time resident Betty Davis remarked, “The misspelled sign makes for a great story to tell house guests from out of town.” So the matter rests. We understand petitions are circulating, but we also understand that this issue, which is raised every few years, most probably will go away, serving as yet another example of the unique charm of the Old Village and a people’s love for their neighborhood and its history.

Now, let’s think about Andrew Harding’s Lane – or is it Andrew Harding Lane. Or perhaps Andrew Hardings Lane. Aaah – a simple “s” couldn’t make that much difference, could it? Stay tuned.



Historical Commission; Kay Frazer, Chatham’s representative to the CCC and three Commission staff members: Sarah Korjeff, planner, Dorr Fox, chief regulatory officer, and Deputy Director John Lipman. Debbie Aikman, Carol and Norman Pacun, represented the Old Village.

The local groups reaffirmed their support for the Commission and its importance to the Old Village National Register District and offered any help the Commission might need in the days ahead. While all present felt the review process was by and large successful, the discussion centered on the responsibilities of the Chatham Historical Commission as they related to the CCC. Some present felt that the CCC’s document, “Guidelines for Historic Properties”, was somewhat confusing and led to misunderstandings. Sarah Korjeff agreed that the guidelines, last reviewed in 1992, are in need of updating.

The representatives from the Old Village Association expressed the opinion that, unless they were clearly inappropriate, the local historical commission’s decisions on individual projects should be given considerable weight. The Association also stressed that, in the case of these CCC hearings, every effort should be made to guarantee that neighbors who wish to attend are notified and given final plans well in advance of the hearing date. All agreed that the days ahead will be difficult ones for preservation and those who support saving historic houses and streetscapes must be very vigilant. Therefore, the groups plan to communicate with each other on a regular basis.



In Memoriam

Marguerite Tuttle

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED
CHATHAM, MASSACHUSETTS 02633
POST OFFICE BOX 188



*Happy
Holidays*

WHO'S WHO: 2006-07

OFFICERS

Nancy Koerner, *President*
Debbie Aikman, *Vice-President*
Mary Ann Gray, *Treasurer*
Mary Olmsted, *Assistant Treasurer*
Carol Pacun, *Clerk*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Debbie Aikman, Betty Davis, Ann Ellis, Mary Ann Gray, Nancy Koerner, David MacAdam,
Mary Olmsted, Carol Pacun, David Veach, Bob Walsh and John Whelan

ARCHITECTURAL CONSULTANT: Sam Streibert

MEMBERSHIP/FUND RAISING: Bob Walsh, Debbie Aikman, Nancy Koerner

COMMUNICATIONS: Debbie Aikman, Sally Daniel, Betty Davis, Ann Ellis, Nancy and Bill Koerner,
Ellen McKinley and Carol Pacun, Newsletter Editor

LAND AND PROPERTIES COMMITTEE: Norm Pacun, chair, Vic Tyler, Bob Walsh

NATIONAL REGISTER DISTRICT: Carol Pacun

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE: Lisa Edge, Ann Ellis, Marty Fairbanks,
Nancy Koerner, Debbie Aikman

SAILORS' CEMETERY FLOWERS: Kim Smith