

**Sharon Historical Commission  
And  
Sharon Historic District Commission  
90 South Main Street  
Sharon, MA 02067**

April 14, 2007

**PRESS RELEASE**

Historic Properties, Areas and Lands  
Archaeological Significant Areas  
Historic Cemeteries  
Scenic Roads  
Preservation Restrictions (by deed)  
Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit  
Local Historic Districts  
Massachusetts Historic Register  
National Register & National Register of Historic Places

To The Residents of Sharon:

The Sharon Historical Commission has requested funding from the Community Preservation Committee to complete a survey and inventory of historical resources. The Commission also applied for a very competitive survey grant administered by the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Initially 65 preliminary applicants were whittled down to 22. Those 22 municipalities were invited to compete for \$200,000 of which \$70,000 must have been given to Certified Local Governments (Sharon is not one of them). In the end only 12 communities were successful and our grant was approved, conditionally, for \$15,000, or 60% of the estimated cost to revamp our inventory.

To put this in perspective your Commission, a committee of volunteer citizens, first completed an inventory in 1975, listing approximately 60 properties dating from 1860 or earlier. Our records indicate that over the ensuing years the Commission had tentatively prepared another 100 to list but never had enough money budgeted to complete the required forms with photographs and requisite research. Since 1991 the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) has expected our town to prepare an inventory that would include properties up to 1960 and given our size they estimate that our inventory should include between 5% and 10% of our housing stock. In 2003 Commissioners spent many hours just updating the original 1975 inventory.

In order to get the state grant of \$15,000 it will be necessary for voters at the annual Town Meeting to approve the CPC request for the full funding anticipated at \$25,000. The state grant will reimburse the CPC upon completion of this project and financial documents provided.

Further, the purpose of this letter is to make clear the different designations of what exactly is considered an historic resource and what has already been identified prior to the creation of a comprehensive inventory. Once an inventory has been completed we might be able to create an equally comprehensive plan for future preservation and educational opportunities.

What is considered historic? In Sharon our local bylaws have established that any structure or area that is 100 years old or older is automatically considered historically significant. Any building, whether it is a residence, business or town owned property that is over 100 years old is subject to our local demolition delay bylaw. This means that any building permit to demolish all or part of any structure or any modification of the exterior in any other way for one of these structures must first receive the permission of the Historical Commission in writing before our town's Building Inspector can issue the permit. If the Commission feels that the demolition or change will irrevocably and detrimentally change a valuable resource it has the ability to order a 12 month delay of that building permit in hopes that the owner of the property can either restore it by other means or perhaps sell it to someone else who might be able to take an active role in preservation.

Other properties could be considered historic that are less than 100 years old by either adding them to the town's inventory or by including them in a Local Historic District.

What are scenic roads? Our Historical Commission, Conservation Commission or Planning Board have the authority to research and apply for scenic road designation. A scenic road has certain protections of trees and other vegetation, the laying out of the road, and protection of historic stone walls. However, it is only the Sharon Planning Board that has the authority to make rulings with regard to changes to these roads. The town has designated the following listed streets as scenic roads in accordance with the provisions of Section 15-C of Chapter 40 of the General Laws: Bay Road, Bullard Street, Cedar Street, Deborah Sampson Street, East Foxboro Street, Everett Street, Gunhouse Street, Mann's Hill Road, Maskwonicut Street, Mohawk Street, Moose Hill Parkway, Morse Street, Mountain Street, Pine Grove Avenue, Richards Avenue, Upland Road, Wolomolopoag Street, Lakeview Street, Mansfield Street, Massapoag Avenue, Mont Fern Avenue, Moose Hill Street, Morse Street, Old Post Road, Pine Street, South Walpole Street, Walpole Street, except sections of the above named streets which may be specifically exempted by statute.

Are there any historic cemeteries in Sharon? Actually every cemetery in Sharon is considered an historic site with the exception of Sharon Memorial Park. There are several small family based cemeteries dotted throughout the community. About five years ago the Chestnut Hill Cemetery was the project of local Eagle Scout candidate Carl Desberg. Currently a reclamation project, undertaken by Eagle Scout candidate Russell McAvoy, is being conducted in one of the Drake family cemeteries off of Mansfield Street.

Archaeology is a component of any building that requires state or federal funding or aid. It requires any project that may have historically sensitive areas to do a dig and catalogue any findings. There are several areas of Sharon that are archaeologically sensitive from the time of Sharon as a resort community, the Civil War and Revolutionary War eras, the period of the King Philip's War era and earlier.

What is a preservation restriction? A property owner with a property that has a significant distinguished history can enter into an agreement to add a deed restriction for that property. The restriction could be as little as protecting open space to as detailed as preserving the entire exterior and interior of a home. A preservation restriction can have several benefits to the existing homeowner, as it has the potential to reduce the value for the calculation of property taxes. The more restrictive the easement the more low interest loans and grants may be available for repair and maintenance. Restrictions in perpetuity preserve the property forever.

What is the difference between a local historic district (LHD), state historic district and the National Register? The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the American cultural resources worthy of preservation. Authorized under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect our historic and archeological resources. Properties listed in the National Register include districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. These resources contribute to an understanding of the historical and cultural foundations of the nation.

The National Register includes:

- all historic areas in the National Park System;
- National Historic Landmarks which have been designated by the Secretary of the Interior for their significance to all Americans; and
- properties significant to the nation, state, or community which have been nominated by the states, federal agencies and others and have been approved by the National Park Service.

National Register properties have been documented and evaluated according to uniform standards. The Secretary of the Interior's National Register criteria for evaluation and documentation standards are used by every state and territory and by federal agencies to identify important historic and archaeological properties worthy of preservation and of consideration in making planning and development decisions.

The National Register program provides federal, state and local governments and the general public the following:

- National recognition of the value of historic properties individually and collectively to the nation

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- Eligibility for federal tax incentives and other preservation assistance
- Assistance in cultural resource planning

An LHD offers the strongest protection of a property or district. Because it generally has to follow the guidelines of the US Department of Interior AND needs the approval of the local government, an LHD is given priority by the Commonwealth. Most, but not all state historic districts are formed as a result of either national or local designations.

In Sharon there are six historical properties or districts that are registered with the state. Of the six, five are listed on the National Register and three are certified local historic districts.

1970 Sharon's First Historic District becomes an LHD. This is the area on North Main Street from Post Office Square to School Street and includes the Library and the Unitarian and Congregational Churches. It becomes a National Register District in 1975.

1974 Cobb's Tavern becomes a National Historic Landmark. Located at 41 Bay Road, it becomes Sharon's Second Historic District in 1991.

1980 Stoneholm, located at 188 Ames Street, becomes a National Historic Landmark.

1984 The Stoughtonham Furnace Site (partially in Foxborough) becomes a National Historic Landmark.

1997 Borderland State Park (partially in Easton) becomes a National Register District.

2004 Sharon's Third Historic District is approved by Town Meeting and accepted by the Commonwealth. This includes the Charles R. Wilber School, the Pleasant Street School (owned by the Sharon Housing Authority) and the Kate Morrell Park.

The Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit is an exciting addition to the preservation toolkit. Under the program a certified rehabilitation project on an income-producing property is eligible to receive up to 20% of the cost of certified rehabilitation expenditures in state tax credits. There is an annual cap, so there are selections criteria that ensure the funds are distributed to the projects that provide the most public benefit. The MHC certifies the projects and allocates available credits. This, along with available federal tax credits, was one of the compelling reasons that the Wilber School was attractive for developers to offer plans to rehabilitate.

Signed,

Robert S. Young, Chairman; David A. Martin, Vice-Chairman;  
Gordon H. Hughes, Member; Shirley A. Schofield, Member;  
Reese Schroeder, Alternate

Brent Gundlah, Member;  
Susan Rich, Alternate; W.