

Report of the Historical Commission (2021)

The Historical Commission regularly meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the Senior Center, all are welcome. Meetings of January through April were held on Zoom; in May we started meeting in person again. Personnel: Chair-Jeanne Johnson; Vice-Chair-Paul Russell; Treasurer and Community Preservation Committee (CPC) Representative-Eugene Liscombe; Cher Hamilton; McKenzie Ward; Morgan Harris; and Rich Eustis.

Notices of Intent to Demolish Historic Houses

Notices of intent to demolish the houses at **28 Milford Street (1930)** (April 2021); **47 Winthrop Street (1845)** (April 2021), **243 Village Street (1946)** (September 2021), **288 Village Street (1721)**(October 2021) were received. After meetings and discussion of their history and locations, they were deemed not historically significant to Medway's history.

Historically significant sites and resources in Medway

The Commission voted to designate all three cemeteries and Harry T. Johnson, Jr. Park historically significant to the Town, and thus, "Prominent Historical Locations," worthy of being preserved and cared for. Other sites in this category are Matondi Square, GAR Memorial Park (318 Village St.). At a special October 6th virtual meeting attended by town officials, particularly the fire department, the HC voted to designate the **1964 Maxim Fire pumper** built for Medway and now in extreme disrepair, a historic resource.

Flagpoles

Town Meeting approved CPA funding for the purchase of three flagpoles (Eagle Flag of America, Hingham) to be placed at Evergreen Cemetery, St. Joseph Cemetery, and Harry Johnson Park, a project begun in 2020. The flagpoles are equipped with solar lighting.

New Chain-link Fencing for Garnsey House Foundation/Dog Park (Village Street)

The old wood fencing separating the historic house foundation from the dog area was falling apart, and CPA funding was used to reconfigure the fenced area and purchase new fencing. Medway DPW installed fencing and gates.

Evergreen Cemetery

The Massachusetts Historical Commission listed Evergreen Cemetery on the Massachusetts Register of Historic Places in 2020, and it was accepted by the federal government for placement on the National Register of Historic Places this year, truly a milestone for us. This cemetery, which dates to the 1700's, has seen numerous volunteers since the 1990's working to achieve this status, and we owe a debt of gratitude to HC member Paul Russell for his work in the last few years bringing it to fruition. Barbara Saint Andre, Director of Community and Economic Development in Medway, was of great assistance keeping this project going along the way and deserves much credit for helping us.

Long-time cemetery trustee George Lee retired in 2021, and new trustees, including Tim Ward and Christine Spencer, have taken on responsibility for the cemetery. Some long-neglected legal and mapping issues are being addressed by them as well as landscaping matters. Future plans involving this Commission include repair of more damaged historic headstones.

Plaques/Signs for Historic Buildings and Sites

Informational signs for Evergreen Cemetery and the Garnsey House foundation are needed. Other historic sites will have signs as more research is compiled. Owners of historic homes may order house plaques through the Medway Historical Society.

Historic Photographs on traffic signal boxes

Throughout the year we discussed the possibility of installing flexible wraps around some of the new traffic-signal boxes, which would feature photos of historic Medway sites. The boxes could then be an attractive point of interest and can inform people of some Medway history. Paul Russell has acquired cost estimates and there is a plethora of old photos from which to select. Several other towns have successfully done this. The project will be presented to the Select Board in 2022.

Medway Master Plan

The Historical Commission has been included in Master Plan meetings regarding historical resources, and concern has been raised about Medway's Building Demolition Bylaw, Article XVII, and the need to strengthen it. Demolition of historic buildings is happening in every town due to pressure for new housing, and we want to preserve as much of our town's heritage as is reasonable and possible.

Revision of Building Demolition Bylaw, Article XVII

To strengthen this bylaw and better preserve certain historic buildings, a longer than 12-month delay-of-demolition may be needed when a house is determined after a public hearing to be preferably preserved. Members suggested an 18-month delay when a house is 100 or more years old. Steps that owners should take during the delay period, and how the law will be enforced, should be clarified. Because Medway has no property-maintenance regulations, "demolition by neglect" is problematic and would need to be coordinated with the building inspector. The Historical Commission needs the right to request a professional engineering report regarding what can or can't be repaired instead of demolition. A draft proposal of a revised bylaw was prepared by Ms. Saint Andre for us to review and act on in 2022.

Other Projects and concerns

Local Historic District

We are considering the formation of a Local Historic District comprised of houses built in the 1700's and 1800's which are not necessarily near each other. Such districts are governed by state guidelines, and homeowners would need to help in order to accomplish this. **(See May 26th and November 17th minutes for details of this possible project.)**

Digitizing Photographs from Historical Commission files in Town Hall basement

This is an ongoing project for photographer Tim Rice.

Facebook Page (Medway, Massachusetts Historical Commission)

We continue to contribute to and monitor our page and invite everyone to join the page.

Multi-family overlay district

We continue to monitor proposed building projects and zoning changes which might affect the historical character of Medway's National Historic Districts ([Rabbit Hill](#) and [Medway Village](#)).

Future Consideration

- Evergreen Cemetery—signs; repair tombstones
- Oakland Cemetery—tombstone repairs; begin process for nomination to Historic Register
- Having the portrait of Sanford cleaned (currently displayed at Town Hall)
- Partial excavation of Garnsey House foundation if Mass Historical sanctions this
- Compiling a booklet of historic parts of Evergreen Cemetery
- Creating a book of photos from Medway's collection of about 150 glass images, which Mr. Russell has digitized, giving more people the opportunity to see them
- Arranging for the preservation of more historic town records.

We thank all members of the Historical Commission for their service to the Town on this Commission.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeanne Johnson, Chair