

## **Historic District Commission 2014 Annual Report**

2014 has been a year of continued revitalization and reorganization for the Historic District Commission. We began the year with five active members and the selectmen's representative, so a quorum has been easily achieved and regular monthly commission meetings have been conducted each month with the exception of March. In February, Ralph (Tom) Thompson resigned his seat on the Commission. In May, Jade McRae agreed to an appointment to the unexpired portion of Mr. Thompson's term and in October, Elaine Chick agreed to an appointment to a term ending in 2017. With those two appointments, the Commission achieved a full, active membership for the first time in at least the past few years. The Commission's two alternate positions, however, remained vacant throughout the year.

Under Article 15 of the Town of Effingham's Zoning Ordinance, the Commission is charged with ensuring the purposes of the Historic Districts. In addition, the Commission administers designated scenic roads within the town. Tasks range from recommendations to other town boards regarding projects that would aid in these purposes to public hearings related to applications for work on properties in the districts.

During the course of 2014, the Commission dealt with a varied docket of business, including the ongoing project to have signs erected on Province Lake Road (Route 153) delineating the boundaries of the two Historic Districts (the signs and posts are now in hand and will be installed as soon as possible in the spring!); working with the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, and Zoning Enforcement Officer to ensure that properties in the Historic Districts go through the correct application and permitting process; responding to several inquiries by property owners regarding Historic District Regulations; approving two applications by property owners to undertake work on their properties; and working with the town's webmaster to update and revise the Commission's section of the town website to provide more relevant and up-to-date information on the Commission and its work.

Two other projects took up the remainder of the Commission's schedule for the year. First, the Commission proposed to the Planning Board some changes to Article 15 of the Zoning Ordinance. The proposed changes, which the Planning Board initially approved, pending the outcome of the required public hearing, would assist in streamlining the Commission and its workflow, as well as remove language from the article which has been found to be invalid. In addition, the proposed changes correct several mistakes of spelling and grammar. If the proposed changes receive final Planning Board approval, they will appear on the Town's official ballot in March of 2015 for approval by the voters. The second project has been a complete review of the Historic District Regulations, which led to a proposal by the Commission of several updates, corrections, and changes. As part of this process, two public hearings were held in September for the purpose of receiving questions and comments on the proposed changes. The second of those hearings was continued until October, at which time a final vote to approve the proposed changes was taken. The revised regulations were approved by the Commission in their entirety at the November meeting. In addition to official, certified copies which can be obtained from the Town Clerk's office, unofficial copies can also be obtained from the Selectmen's Office or by downloading the regulations from the Documents, Forms, and Applications section of the Town website.

With both recent and expected sales of properties in both the Lord's Hill and Center Effingham Historic Districts, the Commission continues to expect to be busier in 2015 than it has been in the recent past. The Commission meets the second Monday of each month at 7 p.m. at the Municipal Offices and we encourage all Effingham residents to attend a meeting to learn more about the Commission and its work. If you are interested in serving on the Commission, either as a full member or as an alternate, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Potter  
Chair

Erik Jones  
Secretary