

New board will work to preserve character

As you know, the Town of Pittsford recently adopted a unique new context-based approach to residential zoning. The new zoning code, and the tools and resources necessary to implement it, were developed over the past 18 months with input from a variety of staff members, volunteer boards, community resources, and others with a vested interest in Pittsford.

The resulting Residential Neighborhood (RN) Zoning District – made up of over 8,700 parcels – reflects a commitment to preserving the existing characteristics of individual neighborhoods while developing an approval process for construction and modifications that is easily understood and navigated by our residents.

An integral part of the RN zoning process is our new Design Review and Historic Preservation (DRHP) Board, which will provide an expert and unified review process for both general and architecturally significant structures. This board maintains all the requirements and responsibilities of the two previous boards which it replaces (Architectural Review Board and Historic Preservation Commission), with the added benefit of having those with preservation experience and those with an architectural/design background “at the table” together when decisions are being made.

The combined strengths of the DRHP board members will be especially important in cases where a structure is on the historic inventory list but not yet designated (and therefore not bound by the certificate of appropriateness rules), or when a new home is being built or modified in close proximity to an historic home. The DRHP board will also continue the valuable work of inventorying and designating historic structures and is charged with providing expanded education and outreach with regard to ownership and stewardship of historic structures.

The RN zoning code also includes valuable tools to clarify the zoning approval process for residents and to serve as a comprehensive and detailed reference for DRHP board members. The illustrated “Residential Design Standards and Guidelines” outlines requirements and considerations for modifications and new construction. The “Standards and Guidelines for Certificates of Appropriateness” details acceptable modifications for historically designated structures and includes suggested lists of acceptable building materials, etc. The “Styles Guide” provides illustrations and characteristics of various architectural styles. Finally, our interactive database lists the required dimensional guidelines for each property in the Residential Neighborhood District. All materials are currently accessible on the Town website.

As we move forward utilizing this new Residential Zoning approach, there will no doubt be opportunities for improvement and clarification. Should you have any input or comments regarding the new process please feel free to reach me at bcarpenter@townofpittsford.org or stop by and see me at Town Hall.