

## **West Tisbury Historic District Commission Application Instructions**

### **Historical Character**

In 1982, the voters of West Tisbury adopted the West Tisbury Historic District By-Law, which established a small historic district consisting of 14 structures and historic sites in the town center. At the 1999 Annual Town Meeting, by 2/3rds vote, West Tisbury's voters significantly enlarged the West Tisbury Historic District, to include significant portions of the roads leading in and out of the town center.

Historic districts do not prevent changes from occurring, nor do they prevent new construction. The intent is to make changes and additions harmonious with the architectural character of the existing building and the neighborhood, and to prevent the intrusion of elements which might detract from the historic aesthetic values of the district. The purpose of the district is not to halt growth, but to allow for thoughtful consideration of change.

It is clear that what characterizes the Town is an essentially rural ambiance. What has primarily contributed to the Town's distinctive atmosphere is the spatial patterns defined by woodland, farmland, and open areas, with clusters of relatively old public buildings and private dwellings bounded and enhanced by the spaces between them. West Tisbury's historic character has thus been marked inescapably by the visible patterns of communal life to which all the buildings and sites contribute.

The primary responsibility of the WTHDC is to review applications and issue the appropriate certificates.

### **The WTHDC must issue a certificate before any external alterations can be made to any building, structure, or sign, as defined in the By-Law.**

Applications are available at the Town Hall, from the Office of the Building Inspector, and on the Town of West Tisbury website.

There are three types of certificates:

**1. A Certificate of Non Applicability** is issued for any proposed work or any alteration to a building or structure which does not require a public hearing because it is allowed under the provisions of the By-Law. For example: a proposed change not visible from a public way, or otherwise specifically excluded from design review in the By-Law; normal maintenance and repair with no changes in outward appearance; landscaping with plants, trees and shrubs. *These certificates are required before work commences and are easily obtained.* Please note that when determining that an alteration is not visible from the public way, the HDC assumes there are no natural landscaping features or fencing blocking the view.

**2. A Certificate of Hardship** is issued when construction or alteration is deemed inappropriate yet the Commission has determined that denial of a Certificate would constitute a hardship, financial or otherwise, on the property owner. In each case, the proposed work should not conflict substantially with the purposes of the bylaw or the design guidelines. Furthermore, the hardship should not relate generally to other property owners in the district; it should be a

specific hardship to an individual property owner based on unique circumstances affecting the owner's property.

**3. A Certificate of Appropriateness** must be obtained for all new construction, and all alterations to buildings and structures, including driveways, fences, walls, paths, exterior lighting, trees over 30 feet in height and signs visible from a public street, public way, public park, or public body of water. A public hearing will be held after proper posting and notification of abutters and other interested parties. Notice to abutters must be postmarked at least 14 days prior to the date of the hearing, and proposed plans must be available for public view on the Town website on town calendar, date of hearing, WTHDC agenda during this entire notice period.

Upon receiving an application, the WTHDC may determine that the alterations proposed in the application would be insubstantial in their effect on the Historic District. In that event, a **NOTICE OF WAIVER OF PUBLIC HEARING** will be sent to owners of all adjoining properties and other properties that the Commission deems may be materially affected by the alteration, and if none of the notified property owners requests a public hearing within ten days from the date of mailing, the Commission may act upon the application without a public hearing.

A public hearing on an application need not be held if such hearing is waived in writing by all persons entitled to notice thereof. A **REQUEST TO WAIVE A PUBLIC HEARING** must be mailed by the applicant to all persons entitled to notice, executed in writing, and returned to the Commission. The Commission may then act upon the application at its next scheduled meeting.

Fill out the application and submit it, along with each of the following:

\***Photographs** of the existing building, showing the location of the changes.

\***Site plans** that clearly show the existing buildings and structures and proposed changes.

\***Drawings** of the building project sufficiently complete so as to be suitable for submission for a building permit. Scaled drawings may be required. Written specifications for materials including measurements are required. Plans must be permit-quality in detail. Design detail must be included.

\* **Catalog cuts** in lieu of drawings may be used to show windows, doors, light fixtures, fences and other manufactured products.

\***Listing of all exterior materials and colors** to be used and their intended location, and, where appropriate, samples.

Submit your application to the Office of the Building Inspector. It will be forwarded to the Chair of the WTHDC, who will read it for clarity and completeness. You will be notified as to the date of the hearing. The WTHDC holds most meetings and all hearings on Monday evenings, at 5:30 at the Howes House, and does not meet on State or Federal holidays which fall on a Monday. We encourage applicants to come in and discuss their project before submitting a formal application. Please contact the Chair, Sean Conley, to be put on our meeting agenda. If you have any questions, please contact Sean Conley, Chair of the WTHDC by telephone 508-693-6677 or by email [nautilus@vineyard.net](mailto:nautilus@vineyard.net) or by mail to West Tisbury Historic District Commission, P.O. Box 278, West Tisbury MA 02575.

West Tisbury Historic District Commission Members:

Sean Conley	Meg Carman	Nancy Dole	Anne Fisher
Joshua Gothard	Charles Kernick	Sheila Morse	Carol Sarason

