



TOWN OF GRAFTON
GRAFTON MEMORIAL MUNICIPAL CENTER
30 PROVIDENCE ROAD
GRAFTON, MASSACHUSETTS 01519

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Information Regarding the Grafton Common Historic District Commission

The Grafton Common Historic District, established in 1981, consists of the Grafton Common and the surrounding buildings. Though they represent different styles and periods of time, together these buildings create an architecturally significant landscape and convey a remarkable sense of connection to Grafton's history. It is one of the most intact commons in Massachusetts and has been designated as worthy of preservation.

The Grafton Common Historic District Commission is the town board responsible for administering the provisions of the "Historic Districts Acts" (Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40C) with respect to historic districts within the town. It is charged with preserving the architectural and historical integrity of the buildings within the District, so that its heritage may be appreciated and enjoyed for generations to come.

The regulations for buildings within the Historic District apply only to exterior features that can be seen from a public way. The Historic District By-law is different from zoning and does not deal with the usage of the property. It simply requires that the owner must apply to the Commission for approval before beginning work which will alter the exterior of the building.

There are three kinds of Certificates:

- A ***Certificate of Non-Applicability*** certifies that the proposed changes will not affect the design, color, or materials. It is granted for ordinary maintenance, repair, or replacement of any exterior feature which does not involve a change in design, material, color, or outward appearance.

Examples of work only requiring a Certificate of Non-Applicability are repair of wooden trim, painting with the same color, and roofing with the same material.

- A ***Certificate of Appropriateness*** certifies that the proposed change is consistent with the Historic District objectives of preserving and protecting distinctive characteristics of the buildings. This is the certificate is required when there are proposed changes to design, material, or color of any structure visible from a public way.

Examples of work only requiring a Certificate of Appropriateness are replacement of windows with others of a different design, style, or material; new signs, changes in siding, and any changes in materials.

- A ***Certificate of Hardship*** may be issued where the Commission determines that, although the proposed change is under its control and is not able to be certified as "appropriate", nevertheless, a failure to certify the work would result in a substantial hardship to the applicant or the public. In addition, the Commission must make a determination that the change would not be a substantial hardship to the applicant or the public. In addition, the Commission must make a determination that the change would not be a substantial deviation from the intent of the Historic Districts Act or the Grafton By-law.

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Information Regarding the Grafton Common Historic District Commission – continued

Certification by the Commission is not required for:

- Temporary signs or structures as defined by the Grafton Zoning By-law
- Landscaping with plants, trees, or shrubs
- Terraces, walks, driveways, and sidewalks

The Commission may well permit changes that are consistent with the long-term historic integrity of the District. We are eager to work with owners of buildings in the District and find ways to maintain and improve these buildings so that they meet present-day needs and preserve Grafton's architectural legacy for the future.

Application Process

To submit a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness:

- Obtain an application from the Town Clerk or from the Town of Grafton Web Page (Boards and Commissions / Grafton Historic District Commission)
- Complete the application
- Additional information to include: a reasonably complete description of the proposed work, including specific details regarding the type and appearance of materials to be used
- File application with the Town Clerk (in person or by mail) – Grafton Memorial Municipal Center, 30 Providence Road, Grafton, MA 01519

Applicants can always appear in person at any of the Commission meetings and ask for an opinion as to whether the proposed work is subject to review by the Commission. Dates of the Commission's meetings are posted at the Grafton Memorial Municipal Center.

Within 14 days of receipt of the application, the Commission will meet to make a formal determination as to whether the proposed work is subject to its control. If it is, the Commission will notify all interested parties (abutters will be notified by mail), and hold a public hearing. No public hearing is required if the proposed work is, in the Commission's opinion, insubstantial. All affected parties will be notified as such. If the work is not subject to the Commission's control, a Certificate of Non-Applicability will be issued.

The Commission must decide on all requests within 60 days of receipt of the application. Otherwise the request is automatically granted.

Commissioner John Marro III is authorized to issue a Certificate of Non-Applicability. Applicants can arrange to meet Mr. Marro at the work site and an evaluation will be made. A Certificate of Non-Applicability may be granted at that time if warranted. In addition, the Chairman of the Historic District Commission has secondary authority to issue a Certificate of Non-Applicability.

Appeals

Although the Commission will attempt to both helpful and flexible in addressing all applications, there are bound to be differences of opinion. Decisions may be appealed to the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Agency who designates a person experienced in architectural preservation to review the Commission's decision.