

The BallardVale Gazette

Newsletter of the BallardVale Historic District Commission

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BallardVale, Massachusetts

November 2003

TREE LIGHTING

The annual tree lighting will be held on Sunday December 7 at 5:00pm at the BallardVale Green. Join neighbors and friends for holiday cheer and song. Dogs are welcome, but please bring them on a leash. Refreshments will be provided by members of the BallardVale Historic District Commission. So bundle up and bring your singing voices and holiday spirit.

One half hour before the tree lighting, there will be an informal dedication and installation of a historic plaque at the BallardVale Fire Station. The station house, built in c.1890 has undergone some changes over the years, but remains an important civic and architectural building in the center of the Vale. Please join us at 4:30 on Sunday December 7 at the Fire Station.

ADOPT A FIRE HYDRANT

Winter is coming and so is the snow! Deep drifts and mounds left by snowplows bury fire hydrants along town roads. The Andover Fire Department clears snow from fire hydrants in high-risk areas such as schools and nursing homes, but relies on residents to help keep other neighborhood hydrants clear. "Fire trucks are equipped with a reserve of water, but for any sustained fire fighting, water provided by a hydrant is needed. Crucial minutes can be lost if a hydrant is inaccessible because of deep snow," says Fire Prevention Officer Lt. Todd Pomerleau, of the Andover Fire Department.

Locate the hydrant or hydrants nearest your home. Clear snow from the area with each snowfall. Adopt a hydrant and keep it accessible or alternate the job of shoveling with a neighbor. "Clear a 3' circle around the hydrant so that all the ports are accessible, and remember to clear a path to the street for the firehose", instructs

Lt. Pomerleau. "We really appreciate everyone's help." So please help the fire department keep your home and BallardVale safe this winter.



HALLOWEEN PARADE

Halloween came twice to BallardVale this year! Good weather on October 31 made for fun trick-or-treating around the neighborhood. But on Friday October 24, one week before Halloween, several local moms organized an hour of games and a parade for about 30 children. "The kids got to wear their costumes for more than just one evening, and it was a dry-run for parents to see how well the costumes held up and how easily the kids could walk in them", said Jan Holden, one of the organizers. A registered dietician, she is always trying to balance "the lure of salt, fat and sugar", and thought it would just be a lot of fun for the kids to have a costume parade and play some games in the playground after dark. Holden and neighbors Cristin Farrell, Sandy Christopher, Mary Banbury and Diane Huntress coordinated the after-dark fun and games, which included an obstacle course, "pumpkin patch wiggle", digging for buried treasure and a marshmallow munch!

Holden was a bit worried that traffic would be a problem when the parade crossed Andover Street from the playground, "but traffic stopped to let us cross and everyone was so enthusiastic," she said. "All the drivers were smiling and waving at the kids. They seemed to really enjoy it." The moms, and probably the kids too, hope to make this an annual event in BallardVale.

WE'VE BEEN ASKED...

1. What kind of work or changes to my house does the BallardVale Historic District Commission review?

Any owner or resident within the historic district contemplating work on any part of his or her property or building that is visible from a public way should file an application for changes to be made with the BallardVale Historic District Commission. "Work" should be interpreted to include alterations, rebuilding, new construction, restoration, removal, demolition or changes in exterior composition. "Building" refers to a combination of materials forming a shelter for persons, animals or property. The BVHDC guidelines include but are not limited to, architectural style, general arrangement and setting, building materials, fences and walls, sheds, garages, outbuildings, style of windows, doors, lights, signs and other exterior features. Both homeowners and business owners must be in compliance with historic district regulations.

2. What happens when I submit an application to the Commission?

The first thing that happens is that you attend the first of two required meetings with as much information on your project as possible. At this meeting a decision is made, based upon the guidelines and restrictions of the Commission, as to whether your project falls under Commission review. It may be judged to be a matter of maintenance and repair or beyond the purview of the Commission, in which case you may proceed without further. If the Commission decides that your project does require review, it must then decide whether to hold a Public Meeting or Public Hearing. Public Hearings are generally called when the project calls for significant alterations. The main difference between the two is that a Public Hearing is advertised in the Townsman, as required by law, and that an advertising fee must be paid by the applicant. Following that decision, the applicant presents the proposed project for informal review where Commission members ask questions and engage in a discussion with the applicant about the project. Ideas are generated and problems or new concepts are considered; it is

essentially a working meeting for the Commission to become familiar with the project and to make suggestions for consideration by the applicant. Applicants will be asked to gather specific information to bring to the second meeting (i.e. manufacturers literature, materials specs, elevations, etc.) if they did not include it with the original application.

At the second meeting, one month later, discussion continues among the applicant and Commission members (and public) to complete the process. Once the Commission determines that the proposed work is consistent with the requirements of the BVHDC By-law and Regulations, and is in keeping with the historical character of the neighborhood, a Certificate of Appropriateness shall be issued, following the legally required 20-day appeal period. Please see question #10 for further information.

3. How do I proceed with an application when I'm not sure about my design or materials?

One option is to attend one of the Commission's monthly meetings (held on the first Wednesday of each month at Town Offices at 7pm) and ask questions during our regularly scheduled "Citizen's Speak" time. This is an opportunity for you to ask general questions about a project. The more specific you are about materials and architectural details in your application, the more efficient the process. You can also contact one of the Commission members by phone or email at any time with your questions.

4. Will I be able to put an addition on my house?

Yes, additions may be added to houses and buildings within the historic district. Homeowners built additions in the 1900's and they build them today. The Commission has jurisdiction over the review of new construction and additions to existing buildings, and considers the appropriateness of the size and shape of the building or structure both in relation to the land area upon which the building is situated as well as to the buildings and structures in the vicinity. The Commission may impose dimensional and setback requirements in addition to those required by an applicable Town By-Law. The Commission also considers the general design arrangement of the

architectural features involved (i.e. windows, dormers, trim, etc.) and the relation of those features to the original or main structure.

5. If a building permit is not required for my project, does that mean I do not need approval from the Commission?

Not necessarily. If your project meets the criteria listed in question #1, you will need approval from the Commission regardless of the need for a building permit.

6. What is exempt from review by the Commission?

The following are exempt from review:

1. Ordinary maintenance and repair to your home or property, as defined by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts State Building Code 780 CMR.
2. Landscaping with plants, trees or shrubs.
3. Terraces, walks, sidewalks, driveways and other similar structures provided that the structure is at grade level. However, parking lots or parking areas require Commission review, and must be in compliance with the Town of Andover Zoning By-Law.
4. Storm doors and storm windows, screens, window air conditioners, residential light fixtures, and conventional antennae no larger than six feet in any dimension. However, dish antennae and solar collectors require Commission review.
5. The color of paint.
6. The color of materials used on roofs.
7. Temporary signs or structures to be in use for not more than ninety days. However, temporary signs shall further comply with the requirements of the Town of Andover Zoning By-Law, as amended from time to time. Temporary structures shall further comply with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts State Building Code 780 CMR.
8. Signs used for residential occupation or professional purposes, of not more than two square feet in area, provided that a) no more than one sign is displayed on or near

any one building or structure, b) the sign consists of lettering painted on wood without a symbol or trademark, and c) all signs must comply with all applicable requirements of the Town of Andover Zoning By-Law. In addition, signs for commercial and institutional purposes require Commission review.

7. What do you mean by "ordinary maintenance and repair"?

Ordinary repair and maintenance work is that which uses basically the same materials to replace or repair and which does not change the previous style or appearance.

8. Does the Commission have control over what color I paint my house?

No, paint color is exempt from Commission review. The Commission can, however, assist an interested applicant in selecting historically accurate interior and exterior paint colors. One of the resources the Commission provides is the Historic Colors of America paint chart from the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA) headquartered in Boston. The Commission is willing and pleased to assist homeowners in any way possible and to refer applicants to resources and information. The Commission is also interested in expanding its resources with input from BallardVale residents.

9. If I have questions about my application or plans, whom should I call?

You should always feel free to contact one of the Commission members, or Chris Huntress, Commission Chair, and Diane Derby, Vice Chair with questions or concerns.

Since many renovation and construction projects run up against unexpected changes or problems once they are underway, a Commission member is selected to be a liaison at the end of your application process. The liaison is available to ask questions of while work is underway and their role is to provide timely answers to you to keep your project moving forward in a timely manner.

10. What can I do if I'm not satisfied with the Commission's decision on my application?

Within the 20-day appeal period (following the Commission's decision on your application), you may request a review of the decision. Your request and any supporting documentation should be filed at the office of Community Development and Planning at Town Hall. The decision will be reviewed by the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission.

CALENDAR

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| Dec. 3 (Wednesday) | BallardVale Historic District Commission monthly meeting Town Offices – 2 nd Floor Conference Room – 7:00PM |
| Dec. 7 (Sunday) | Historic Plaque Dedication at BallardVale Fire Station – 4:00PM Tree Lighting Celebration on the BallardVale Green - 5:00PM |
| Jan. 7 (Wednesday) | BallardVale Historic District Commission monthly meeting Town Offices – 2 nd Floor Conference Room – 7:00PM |
| Feb. 4 (Wednesday) | BallardVale Historic District Commission monthly meeting Town Offices – 2 nd Floor Conference Room – 7:00PM |
| Mar. 3 (Wednesday) | BallardVale Historic District Commission monthly meeting Town Offices – 2 nd Floor Conference Room – 7:00PM |

BallardVale
Historic District Commission

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***See you at the Fire Station and the Tree Lighting
on December 7!***