

## **One-Page Suggestions on the Future Use of the Nichewaug Inn Buildings and Site**

**PLEASE NOTE: The following one-page 'proposals' were submitted by Petersham residents in response to an invitation at the November 7, 2018 Forum meeting to submit a one-page suggestion for the future of the Nichewaug buildings and site. Statements contained within have NOT been fact-checked by any town official or staff person as to conformity with official records or minutes. At this stage, the emphasis is on articulating possibilities and understanding the reasoning behind viewpoints. PLEASE do not quote statements of 'fact' based on these documents.**

## **Forum Proposal #1: A Low-density, mixed-use vision for Nichewaug reuse (11-8-18)**

The town-owned Nichewaug property offers Petersham a viable opportunity to address several critical town needs in an affordable way by creating a low-density, mixed use facility that will generate new revenue without disrupting the visual appeal or current uses of the common as follows. No single new owner should be expected to engage this plan. Rather, over time, several entities will take on individual projects under town ownership and management. Leasehold improvements would fall to new tenants.

**Town offices** are presently housed in an antique building that could only be brought up to accessibility codes at great expense. They could move to the Nichewaug buildings and easily be made accessible.

The town has no **senior housing**. Senior apartments could be created at the Nichewaug. Assisted living units could also be accommodated. (see attached suggested building plan) There is ample space to include **offices** for the Petersham Committee, a group working to provide elder support services.

**Moderate income housing** is also lacking. State law **Chapter 40B** gives developers who include low and moderate income housing in their development plans a pass on local zoning rules. Petersham currently has no low or moderate income housing. The Nichewaug could provide a small number of units and satisfy existing requirements in the former nun's quarters.

**Market-rate housing:** Sale or rental of condominiums and/or apartments in the former Inn and second floor classroom building space would generate significant revenue.

More than 100 local **home-based businesses** have no place in which to grow locally. A first-floor portion of the brick classroom building could accommodate a business service center and rentable office space. Broadband for the complex is available from a connection at the adjacent library

The rooftop has value and could also produce new revenue. It could host about 3,500 square feet of **solar panels** and produce an estimated 85,000 kilowatt hours of electricity a year and new revenue. A redevelopment could even provide some **relief to the nearby library** by supplying water and sewer.

**Entertainment and functions:** A detached chapel could be renovated into an art and concert space.

A Community Development Corporation or a local Redevelopment Authority could serve as property manager and landlord for several tenants. Leasehold improvements could be the tenants' responsibility.

**Parking** can be offered in small pods located at several entrances and allocated by function.

**Open space** of 5-plus acres can be preserved for gardens etc. if the existing footprint is preserved as is.

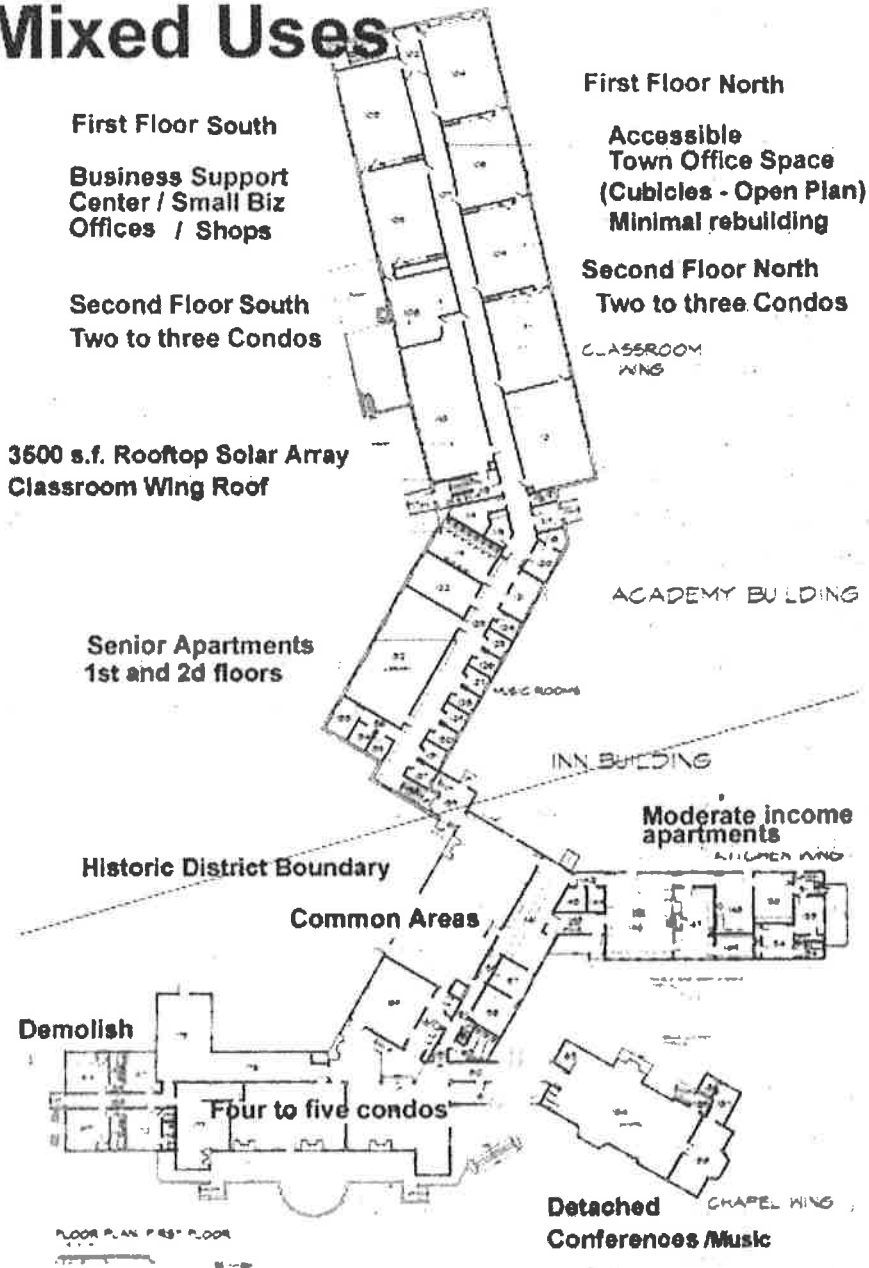
**Septic:** Technology is available to provide sanitary disposal service on the site.

**Potable water:** Explore seeking an exemption or waiver from current state rules for the existing well.

**Financing sources:** Public funds, foundation grants, property leases and condominium sales.

**Property Management:** Convey or lease the property to a newly created **Redevelopment Authority** (Exempt from Chap 30B Procurement) with a clear mission to restore the property. Access to expertise and possible grant funding. Sale of the complex to a single redeveloper/owner has not proven feasible.

# Mixed Uses



## **Forum Proposal #2: Plan for Demolition of the Nichewaug Inn & Academy Buildings**

At a 2010 Special Town Meeting, it was voted to demolish the Nichewaug Inn & Academy Buildings. The vote was 149 for demolition and 2 opposed. With this vote in mind the Demolition Plan is as follows:

### **Step 1**

Demolition of all of the Inn and Academy Buildings

Cost is estimated around \$500,000

Funding would be through a Town debt exclusion loan

This would result in a property tax of about \$0.625 per \$1,000.

The Town would then have a land asset worth approximately \$500,000

### **Step 2**

The Town would then have various options in utilizing the property

One option would be to keep the property as open space, a park, an orchard etc.

Another option would be to divide the property into 4 to 7 house lots that could be sold to cover the cost of the demolition.

Other options could, also, be considered.

### **Benefits to Demolition**

The Town would free up and control a valuable land asset

The Town would maintain "design control" over what would happen to the property – keeping it aligned to the historic character of Petersham Common

A developer would not be necessary

The Town would not be giving the property away for \$1 or some other nominal fee

The Town would not be subsidizing a developer's profit margin

An ongoing safety hazard would be eliminated from the center of Town (if the Nichewaug caught fire, the Legare's affirm that the fire fighters of Petersham and of all the surrounding towns would be unable to extinguish it).

Unforeseen negative consequences of a large development in the center of Town would be eliminated

## Forum Proposal #3: Proposal for Nichewaug re-use-

The main goal I see is 2 pronged:

- #1) Provide for senior housing for varied income levels in Petersham and for some disability housing as well.
- #2) Provide a hub for services that support Aging-in-Place in Petersham and that enhance and nurture the entire community.

If a business or non-profit or a combination of those two, took this project on it would relieve the town of the financial burdens of insurance and upkeep and it could also provide revenue back to the town.

To re-use historical buildings or to build new:

To me the decision of whether or not the old buildings at the site can be re-used is up to whatever business entity we can find that will have the funds to build and maintain this operation. I love the old buildings but they may not necessarily be the best use that will support the housing and services that I feel are the key goals.

Size—I am not worried about the size of this project, because I believe you can build deep, and you can build in such a way that you minimize visual impact and utilize the back of the property fully and possibly buy more acreage if necessary. If you build new, then gardens, open space or a community center those could be at the front of the property. If you had 50 units that would be 100 extra people to the town, and the employment for young people and the services this would provide the town would maintain and nurture the energy of the town. I believe the town needs vitality to maintain itself and attract new young families. I think the impact of moving seniors from huge homes they can no longer maintain to the town center would not change the base population of Petersham that much and allowing the big homes to be purchased by young families who might possibly want to co-own a big house would be one among many alternatives. There might be a few additional people who would come to for this development, but I think some new blood could benefit Petersham.

I do think there will have to be some compromise on size so that this can be financially viable. I see that there are risks, but I think the benefits outweigh the disadvantages.

Services that would benefit all of Petersham and elders-aging-in-place in particular:

1-a center that would coordinate & publicize services like Meals on wheels/home health services etc. through state and federal funding, as well as a volunteer group that would provide services not covered through the former. Examples of this are house maintenance and repair/light housekeeping and the most pressing of all:

2-coordination and publicity for Transportation for seniors to doctor appointments/shopping etc. is one of the most important services in our area. The Petersham aging-in-place group is working on this but it will need more resources as time goes by.

3-a community center with areas for:

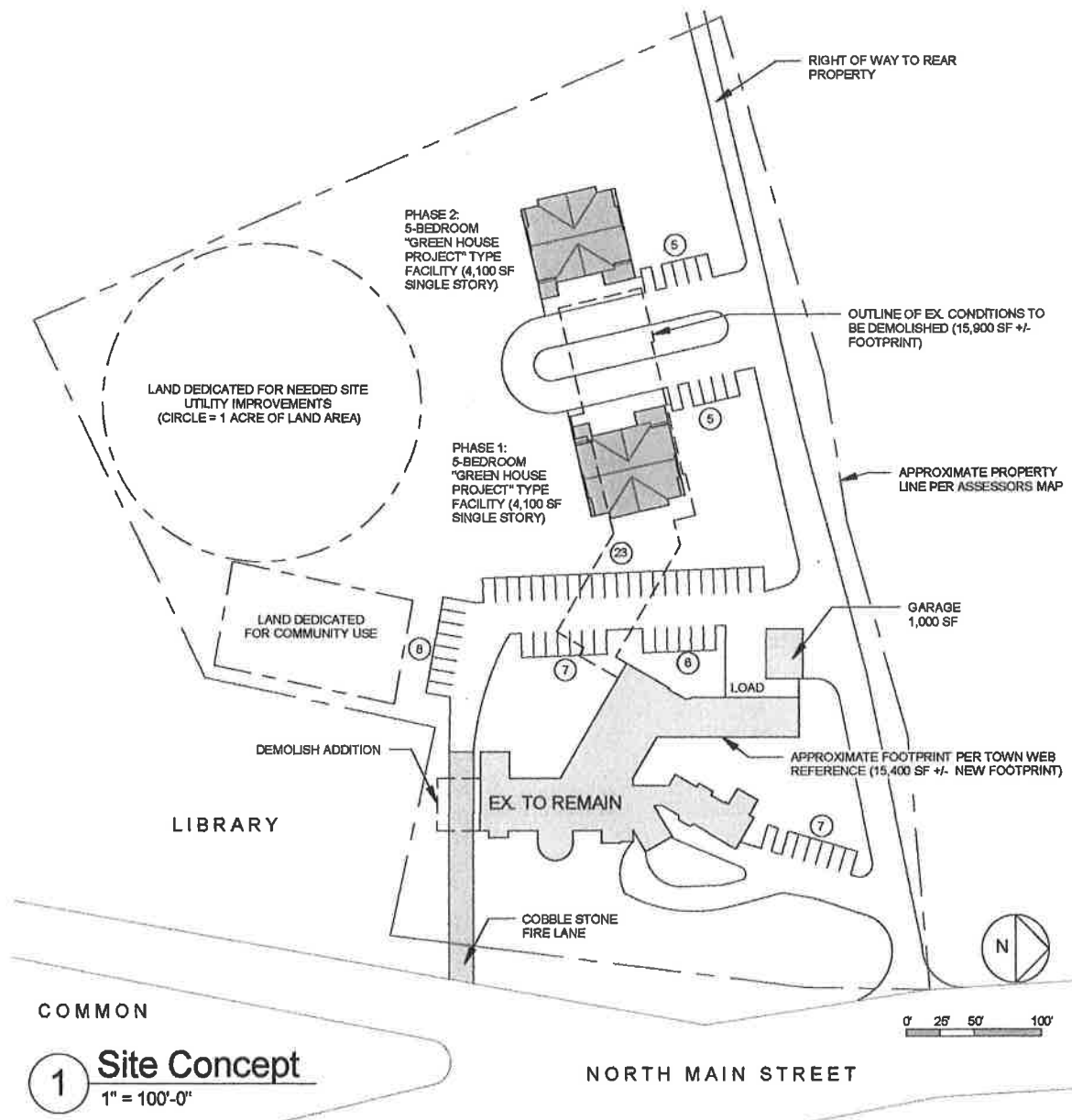
A- art shows, interesting speakers, dance, or movie nights as well as a venue for theater groups or performances.

B-A certified kitchen that could be used to prepare local food at seasonal surplus times for freezing or canning for use in the school, the senior center, Meals on Wheels or local community suppers would be another welcome addition. I think in the winter Petersham can be an isolating place and people would love to engage in more community activities such as the above.

C-A technology center where seniors or the community to share a business/work space, computer resources, a fax machine, skype or other kinds of technology that are difficult to afford or access would be helpful.

Just a note: we have several older buildings in town including the town hall and several churches that we have used for functions. Having a new building that could use green building codes, solar panels that would provide for heat and energy use could make this a more financially stable and more environmentally-friendly development.

## Forum Proposal #4



### GOALS:

To balance the need for more cost-effective housing for all ages while maintaining the "sense of place" of Petersham as a small town.  
 Provide a phased solution to long term care housing to allow residents to stay in Town.  
 Create a buffer between the Library and any Nichewaug use.

### POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:

Phased construction of assisted living/congregate care housing modeled on the Green House Project ([www.thegreenhouseproject.org](http://www.thegreenhouseproject.org)).  
 Multi-use of the retained portion of the Nichewaug:  
 \* upper floors as apartments and/or condominiums  
 \* first floor as a mix of retail (restaurant & small business)  
 \* music room/Chapel turned into a multi-purpose space (community use & rental)  
 \* Portions of the first floor rear facing wing used as needed support space with some areas reserved for Town use. Basement for utilities including tank storage for sprinkler system.

## Forum Proposal #5

Important Goals of this Proposal are:

- Meet some unmet community needs;
- Preserve character and architectural features of historic town center;
- Preserve and attractively restore the historic Nichewaug Inn;
- Repurpose the Nich property no cost to town;
- Relieve town of annual property maintenance/insurance costs and liability;
- Provide annual revenue to town.

Main Features of this Proposal:

- Rehab some/all of the Nichewaug buildings to serve residential needs of seniors in a sustainably designed combination of energy efficient, professionally maintained residences with accessible, assisted living options and services;
- Provide community "aging in place" opportunities so that seniors can live at town center with Library, churches, Country Store, Town Hall, Town Common activities such as band concerts and Friday Market at walking distance;
- Include young residents/ affordable units, if desired, and adapt total number of residences/common spaces/public spaces/services as a function of financial feasibility;
- Repurpose @5 acres of existing, seldom used, open space for productive gardens, parkland, recreation such as tennis, volleyball, ice skating, bocce, croquet, all as integral part of town;
- Incorporate community service features such as work bar, copy/fax/printers, WiFi, commercial kitchen and walk-in coolers, office hub for elder care/senior services, community center, presentation venue with display/performance space, promote locally produced foods for senior and limited public dining.

Financial Plan for this Proposal:

- A well researched, concrete business plan underpins this Proposal that anticipates creation of a CDC ( non profit Community Development Corp.) to qualify for public/private grants and to acquire the property;
- It assumes acquisition of property at little/no cost and is based on sales of residences/lease of spaces/rentals to balance rehab costs with revenue streams from as many as 52 residential units, many of which can be for single residents.

## Forum Proposal #6

- Re-purposing the Nichewaug into residences for seniors, with assisted-living facilities and back-up medical and nursing care, would provide Petersham's elderly and for those of surrounding towns, with a safe, high quality, dignified solution, now unavailable, for how to spend the remaining years of their lives. It would allow them to stay in the town they have lived in and loved, among their families and their friends.
- Restoring the Nichewaug Inn would preserve a highly attractive historic building in an historic town center where it belongs, where it has been for almost 120 years.
- by including state-of-the art energy systems in this restoration, such as solar hot water, photovoltaic panels, perhaps geo-thermal, and the most efficient insulation of the building's envelope and the most energy- efficient windows, the Nichewaug could become a model for how to restore an historic building in the most sustainable way possible, a model for Worcester County and for the state, a model to be emulated by others.
- It has been proposed that the Nichewaug could include walk-in refrigerators for fruits and vegetables. As someone who runs a small, heirloom fruit orchard in town, I am among many farmers in Petersham who have no means for keeping their produce from spoiling and no outlet for it to be used and enjoyed by others. Such walk-ins could serve the eating facilities in the re-purposed Nichewaug, and would greatly benefit a growing population of farmers in town.
- A resolution of what to do with the Nichewaug, about which most could agree, would serve to end a conflict that has been festering, and has divided the town into warring camps, for many years.
- My wife, \_\_\_\_\_ and I have been residents of Petersham for \_\_\_\_\_ and have long admired the architecture of the Nichewaug Inn. As it has been determined that it is a viable building and that it could be re-purposed, it would be a tragic and un-necessary waste for it to be torn down.
- Preserving the Nichewaug would honor the fact that the Inn has been declared by the state's historic and cultural heritage preservation organization, PreservationMass, as one of the Ten Most Endangered Historic Resources in the state. Preserving it would also honor its history—that it was built by James Willson Brooks (1833-1912), a prominent Petersham lawyer and son of Petersham attorney Aaron Brooks (1794-1845), whose one room law office sits on Route 32, just north of the town center. Aaron Brooks was apparently friendly with Asa Gray, a Professor of Botany at Harvard, widely considered to be the most important American botanist of the 19th Century. Gray was very close to Charles Darwin and was reputed to have seen early copies of Darwin's manuscripts, before they were published. I have heard that Gray showed these manuscripts to Aaron Brooks. J.W. Brooks not only built the Nichewaug Inn in 1899, but also built the adjacent Petersham Memorial Library, founded the Petersham Historical Society, and was instrumental in attracting the Harvard Forest to our town.

These are our thoughts.

best wishes and good luck with this negotiation,



## Forum Proposal #7

These thoughts are colored by my values, which emphasize:

- Building a vibrant community that is diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, religion, age, number of children, and gender identification.
- Reuse rather than re-building.
- Sustainable infrastructure that is based on renewable energy, energy efficiency, and attention to recycling.
- Food access for all members of the community through the use the land and of "Food as Medicine" farming practices.

I envision re-purposing the buildings as housing for seniors and low income families (with or without children) in need of small apartments or condos for a reasonable price. I do not envision having restrictions on who can live there.

I see solar panels over parking lots (canopies) and the use of some of the land for a community solar project.

I see a small farm with produce/meat made available to the community. The farm will be based on the sustainable practices being developed by NOFA - MA

I see common space for encouraging community activities such as exercise, cooking, health care services, meeting space, and shared meals for special occasions.

I also see, although this is not related directly to the use of that property, transportation for residents and other town members to local places of interest -- the mall, the Quabbin Harvest Food Coop, the Athol Library, etc. The more places the better and the more frequent the service at a reasonable price, the better.

I am not weighing in on how this would be funded or how it would become palatable to the residents of Petersham. I am just imagining something very special in the center of a lovely town that many people should be able to enjoy without discrimination.

## **Forum Proposal #8:**

I wanted to give you an idea of the ways in which I hope to see the Nichewaug building transformed.

In the front facing building I think it makes sense to renovate the upstairs' second and third floors into small apartments for aging Petersham residents who still want to live independently. There seem to be a lot of people who want to downsize from their houses and stay in Petersham, but currently Petersham can not accommodate them.

In the downstairs space, I envision common rooms to be used for music, lectures, meetings and classes for all ages. I think it would be lovely to have a farm to table restaurant some nights a week and a commercial kitchen that could be used by the community for community functions.

The back academy building could easily be divided into apartments/ condos, again for Petersham residents or could be made into an assisted living option. Let's keep tax paying, committed Petersham residents in the town they love.

In my opinion the old Nichewaug Inn is a beautiful building which is part of Petersham's history. I strongly believe it is our responsibility as a residents to repurpose it, and recondition it to meet the modern needs of the Petersham community.

Thank you for your consideration And best of luck with the negotiating!

## **Forum Proposal #9**

It seems a large, unmet need in Petersham is for units of housing for elders in the center of town. Elders who needed to downsize, in the past may have had to leave town in order to do so.

Petersham has a legacy of history which I feel is important to preserve in it's historic property.

Aspects of the master plan for Petersham need full consideration:

- historic legacy
- evolving need for community space
- other aspects?

Thank you.

## Forum Proposal #10: A Proposal for the Re-Purposing and Re-Use of the Nichewaug Inn

**Introduction.** In 2002, sixteen (16) years ago, *The Friends of the Nichewaug Inn* was formed by over sixty residents to “support and encourage the appropriate use and preservation, positive social benefit, and economic sustainability of the historic Nichewaug Inn Property”. The intention of this proposal is to envision those goals for a sustainable and ecologically conscious community in which local cultural, educational, creative arts, and environmental organizations and practitioners become partners and long-term collaborators for the vibrant future of the Nichewaug Inn.



**Components of the New Nichewaug Inn.** The repurposing and restoration has three components:

1) Community Residency; 2) Community Facilities & Services; and 3.) North & East Quabbin Regional Services.

### I.) Community Residency - The Academy Brick Building section

Twelve to fifteen (12-15) units of affordable residential housing in the Brick/Academy Building based on the popular sustainable design of the co-housing model. Residents of the units would have access to a large industrial kitchen, a private dining room, a community space, and the facilities and services of both the community spaces and the Inn, restaurant, and museum. Included will be, facilities for health and well-being; public recreation; community gathering places; and outdoor spaces for rest, relaxation, and education. The community housing portion of the



new and revitalized Inn could house local residents looking to “down-size” into smaller apartments and it could provide housing for those working in the on-site offices and project spaces. Within the residential complex, there will be four (4) B&B-type guest rooms for family, friends, and guest travelers. The Establishment of community housing will provide short-term and long-term residency and bring vitality, economy, and community to town.

### II.) Community Facilities & Services – The Southern & Western Inn Sections

The community facilities of the refurbished Inn would serve the community of Petersham in both the private and public sectors and serve as a “Hub” for community engagement and interaction, including, but not limited to:

- a.) Spaces for private offices and business enterprises;
- b.) Creative art studios, workshop spaces, and an exhibition gallery;
- c.) Senior Center with program, community, and fitness spaces; and
- d.) Program facilities for community-wide events and gatherings.

### III.) North & East Quabbin Regional Facilities – The North & Central Inn Sections

a.) **Small Inn & Restaurant.** A 20-bed Inn & Restaurant with a range of hospitality services to meet the needs and interests of local residents, guests, and visitors to the area. Outdoor areas for vegetable gardens, herbs & flowers, reflective spaces, public recreation facilities, and meeting spaces. The kitchen facility of the Inn would serve the “Farm-to-Table” restaurant and provide services to the public, like food processing, and give a boost to Petersham’s evolving local food industry. The physical location will provide for a range of community gatherings and events to be used in collaboration with other components of the Nichewaug Inn, like the residential community and the community services components. The inn and restaurant would operate under the principles of sustainable and regenerative design, entailing the purchase of ingredients from local sources, or sourced directly from the property, while possessing “state-of-the-art” alternative energy.

b.) **The North Quabbin Center & Museum** A cultural, environmental, and natural history center, built in collaboration with local Quabbin Region environmental, community, and creative arts groups, including the Nipmuc Cultural Preservation, Inc., and a range of local organizations dedicated to land and cultural preservation and education of the unique bioregion. The small Museum, with Kiosk-type displays, would focus on the story of the North & East Quabbin Regions, and interpret the long and rich history of the Nipmuc Tribe in the Nichewaug section of central New England.

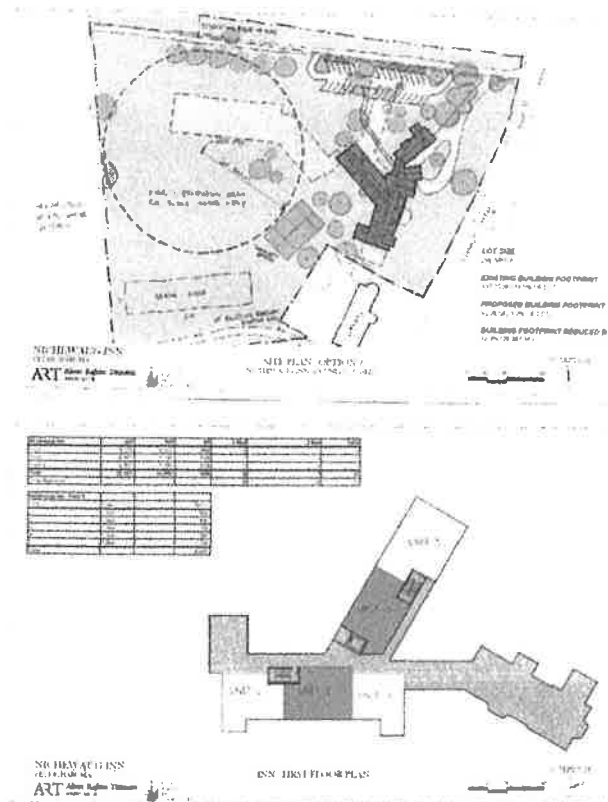
**Conclusion.** The new Nichewaug Inn Project, outlined in this proposal combines private and public resources and expertise to help ease the private residential property tax burden. The Project would also meet the goals of the 2003 Petersham Master Plan, specifically, for seniors to “age-in-place”, provide a vibrant and thriving center of the community, and preserve the historic nature of the village green.

looks forward to working with others to create a vibrant and sustainable Petersham.

## Forum Proposal #11

### Partial Demolition Option – 15 Units

- “Potentially close to break-even” solution as identified by Concord Square Planning & Development, Inc. With completed environmental clean-up, it may now present a potentially profitable opportunity for a competent/knowledgeable developer.
- 15 new residential units (one & two-bedrooms) in old “Inn.”
- Remaining portions of Inn can be used for:
  - (1) common space for residents’ use;
  - (2) hub for elder care/senior services;
  - (3) a gathering/performance place for the community; and
  - (4) a privately-run commercial kitchen for prepared meals, value-added local food ventures, and catering.
- Reduces building footprint on site by 72.2%
- Allows for water supply and septic system for Inn and Library.
- Provides space for residents and town folk alike to enjoy outdoor activities near the common. Such activities might include seasonal bocce, badminton, volleyball, skating, gardening, etc.



## Forum Proposal #12

### Positive suggestions

- Restore and re-purpose, at a minimum, the original old historic building, if not the Academy building as well.
- Housing uses would/could include elder-housing, housing for others who want to downsize or for young folks to start a new home in "condo" fashion. Part of the structure(s) could accommodate elders and other parts can be fitted for the general public who do not have any special health needs. Some units could be for short-term rentals. There is evidence that elder communities benefit greatly when other generations are in the mix of the living situation.
- Mixed use is a plus.
  - Could include coffee house as place for community to gather, have wine tastings, have poetry readings, or acoustic music performances, in addition to quiet place to drink coffee/tea, read, and be on the internet.
  - A gift shop for local artisans.
  - Some of the wings in the connector or in the Academy can be rented as artist/writer/musician/teleworker spaces.
  - Space for yoga/pilates/matial arts/excercise classes - both for residents and for the paying public.
  - Some units/space could be designated as controlled climate storage for the community.
- Take full advantage of grants for green building, historical preservation, community development funds, elder-housing grants, etc.
- Composting toilets and other green approaches can be used to mitigate the issues with septic and insufficient water sources.
- Reserve some acreage for community or resident gardening (vegetable and otherwise).
- Tennis and other types of courts the community could rent as a membership as well as be available to residents.
- The Inn chapel and music rooms can be made available for rent to the community and to those beyond the town of Petersham.
- These uses will increase the town's tax base and avoid cost of demolition. Taxes will be in the form of real estate taxes as well as taxes on business profits.
- Money the town would have to spend on demolition is avoided. If the town is willing to spend a million on demolition, then it can spend half that on additional refurbishment to make the sale of the Inn more attractive to a buyer/developer.
- Saving the old Inn preserves the character of our town.
- Adding uses to the Inn adds vibrancy to the center of town that is otherwise lacking. It will make this town feel more "ALIVE" and provide needed and desired services.

## Forum Proposal #13 25 November 2018

### What I Would Like to Happen at the Site of the Nichewaug Inn/Maria Assumpta Academy on The Common in Petersham MA

I believe that the best use for the Nichewaug Inn/Maria Assumpta Academy is multiple use that includes a mix of rental and ownership, including low-income, housing units, all easily modified to meet accessibility requirements. I would also like to see some AirBnB-type rentals or a hostel to provide inexpensive lodging for visitors, some community space for meetings and gatherings with kitchen or catering access, a small destination dinner restaurant, and, possibly, town offices. Uses that integrate with other uses or that require little space and that add value to our community should also be considered. Such uses could include a small business incubator; both dry and cold food storage for individuals, businesses, and farms; and a community-use kitchen. In the rationale below, I assume that the financial means can be developed to accomplish some combination of the above uses.

Several issues present themselves with the Nichewaug Inn property. The townspeople have other needs. I present the most concerning here in the order of my perception of their priority to the people of Petersham:

1. The property is difficult to secure in terms of safety, e.g., against fire, against intruders, against a breeding ground for wildlife (e.g., rodents and raccoons), against drowning in the flooded cellars, and for structural integrity for first responders and intruders (some floors and ceilings are unsound).
2. The Town of Petersham must relieve itself of the financial and other burdens of maintaining the property, e.g., liability insurance; police, fire, building inspector, and other town officials time and stress.
3. The elders of Petersham don't have independent- or assisted-living retirement housing within the town and must move out of town to access such living arrangements once they are no longer able to live in their own free-standing and sometimes isolated homes.
4. Petersham has no official affordable housing units, meaning that young and low-income individuals and families have difficulty finding housing.
5. Petersham has need of moderate-cost rental housing in good shape.
6. Re-use of a large part of the shingle building will keep a distinctly recognizable and historic structure on the Common.

A private or not-for-profit organization that purchases the property and develops a mix of ownership and rental units should be able to resolve each of these first 6 issues in either or both the shingle and brick-faced buildings. Ideally, one unit could be discounted for an aide to be available to assist those who need an occasional check or other assistance.

In no particular order, other Town of Petersham and resident needs and desires include:

1. Accessible town offices.
2. Inexpensive lodging for overnight to 1-2 week stays, e.g., 1-2 units of AirBnB and a small hostel.
3. Gathering and meeting space for approximately 100 people, ideally with a fully functional kitchen and/or catering services available.
4. Occasional access to phone; high-speed internet services; computer access; comfortable and quiet desk space; and high quality and large format print, scan, copy, and FAX services for town businesses, town residents, and business travelers.
5. Access to a secure community food storage facility for both imminent use food stuffs and storage for emergency food for use by farms, businesses, and residents.
6. A community-use kitchen for preparation of special meals and/or for development and low-volume production of commercial foodstuffs.
7. A dinner restaurant. If this were a destination establishment, it's long-term viability would be more assured.

I believe that some combination of for-profit and not-for profit organizations, pre-construction sales, grant funding, and state and federal tax incentives can make viable some combination of the uses I have suggested.

## Forum Proposal #14

Demolish all but the main historic building facing North Main Street (approx.. 20,000 sq.ft)

- Historic rehab with affordable, senior rental units. Preference given to Petersham residence.
- Central gathering area for functions, social occasions (e.g., main hall)
- Enclosed front porch for summer festivities and relaxation.
- Professional management with strict limitations on exterior alterations, fixtures, lighting, parking, grooming, landscaping, etc.
- Number of units determined by financial feasibility, grants, historic tax credits, etc.
- Nonprofit ownership & redevelopment a likely scenario.



## **Forum Proposal #15**

### **Nichewaug Property: An Idea**

#### **Objectives:**

- Long-range community value
- Conservation of our community's setting

#### **The Idea:**

- Transfer 1 – 1.5 acres to the library for use as a leach field and possible off-street parking area.
- Remove all of the brick-veneered buildings and the connector wing, then remove the demolition debris (not bury it).
- Use the remaining property, excluding the inn and its frontage, as a demonstration woodlot.
- Expand the community garden and move the Wood Bank to the property.
- Keep the inn building and maintain it responsibly until there is an apparent use, suitable buyer, or other clear community choice.

#### **Brief Justifications:**

- Future uses for sprawling academy structure are out of scale with our community.
- The library is an essential feature of our town and it needs a proper septic system.
- A demonstration woodlot will provide educational opportunities, a carbon sink, a wildlife corridor, a future firewood resource, a common area, and a land-use consistent with the look and feel of Petersham.
- Having the inn bordered by a managed woodlot and no longer connected to the academy buildings makes it considerably more attractive to responsible buyers.
- and... the Wood Bank would work well at the the woodlot.

**The Next Step:** Explore partnerships and funding opportunities.

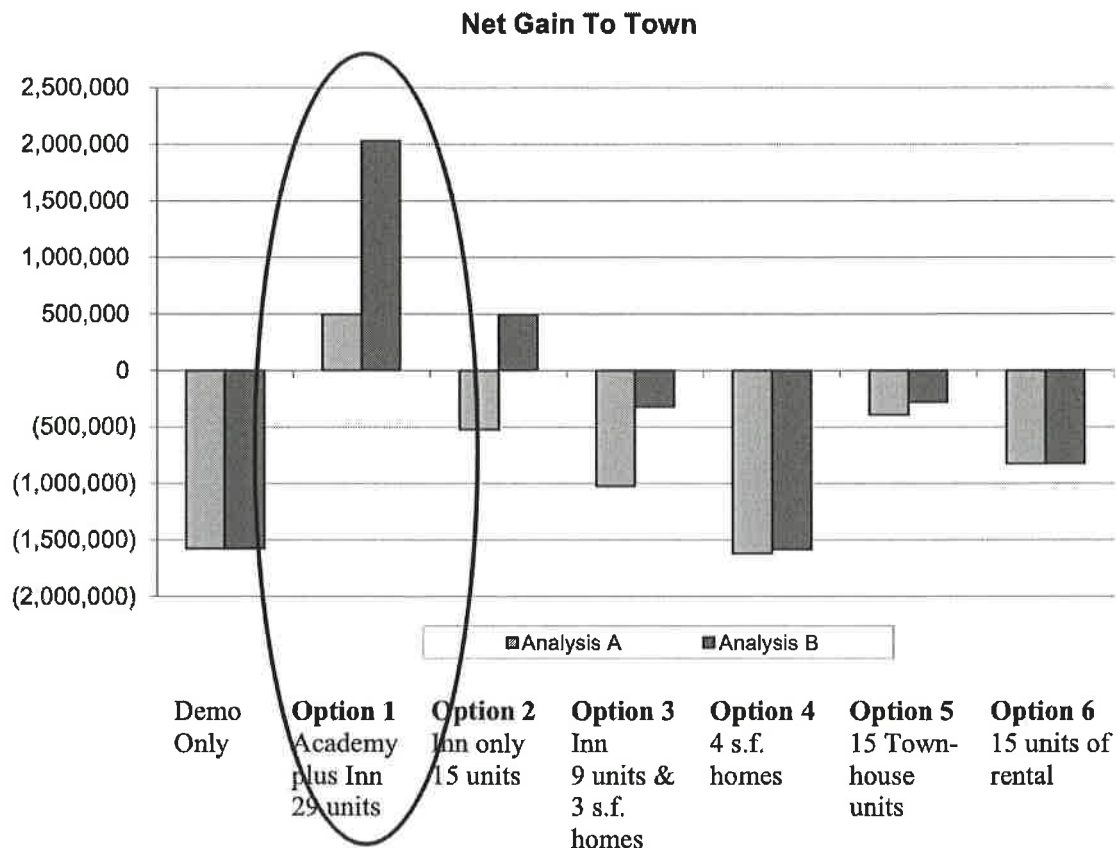
## Forum Proposal #16

### Nichewaug Inn Proposal - Concord Square Report "Option 1"

#### Goals:

1. Generate revenue for future town tax rolls
2. Create housing for seniors, young families, and semi-permanent residents
3. Preserve the unique, historic town center
4. Support library, Country Store, churches, Friday Market, etc.

The best approach would be to follow "Option 1" from the Concord Square analysis.



Source: Concord Square Report, 2016.

The project would comprise 29 housing units (~42 residents):

1. Inn (at least its facade) preserved and renovated into market-rate properties for permanent or seasonal residents
2. Academy building made into lower-cost properties and handicap accessible units
3. Connector building demolished and replaced with public landscaped outdoor space

This proposal would draw in new residents as well as provide housing for current residents. I would recommend adding community event space using Inn's large gathering space.

Nov. 2018

Once upon a time, long long ago the King of Siam gave rare albino elephants to courtiers who had displeased him, so that they might be ruined by the animals' upkeep costs.

In modern English usage the term now refers to an extravagant but ineffectual gift that cannot be easily disposed of and most especially to an extremely expensive building project that fails to deliver on its function and/or becomes very costly to maintain.

If the King of Siam were to come back to earth in the guise of a wealthy benefactor, and bless The Town of Petersham with a gift of say, 15 or 20 million dollars (or a guaranteed loan of the same amount,) we would be wise to refuse it.

***1) I feel strongly that the decision to demolish the Nichewaugh should be made first. Even if we cannot find the funds immediately we should at least agree upon the necessity for demolition. Then there should be a planning process to decide what happens next.***

***2) If you force me to choose now, I am strongly in favor of open space. But I think that the process for making that decision should be based upon an extensive public process and vote at Town Meeting.***

I would like to submit the following facts to support my White Elephant position.

### **25 COMMON STREET – PROPERTY FACTS:**

- The building has had minimal use since 1973 – 45 years – when the Academy school ceased operation and a handful of Sisters remained on site.
- The building has been unoccupied & unused since 1985 -- 33 years -- when the Sisters sold it after a long period of looking for a buyer. During those 33 years, NO owner or developer has solved the fundamental financial formula of investment benefit for the owner versus viable real estate demand.
- Over the years, the Town has voted to change Zoning By-Laws to allow some uses by Special Permit but no owner/developer has ever made use of those zoning allowances.
- Subsequent private owners over the past 33 years have done little to protect their “asset.” Recent owners have “wasted” their asset.
- The last private owner of the building ripped out copper and other fixtures from the building and performed no building maintenance or upkeep before defaulting on their mortgage loan.
- The private owner prior to the last owner never used the property and kept it for exactly the 10 year period legally allowed for tax benefit purposes and then sold it at auction.
- The building is a regular target of break-ins and vandalism.
- In 2017, a criminal break-in involved 7 hours of police response from 6 area Police Depts. and the State's regional SWAT response team.
- The Police Dept. responds regularly at all times of day & night to the alarm going off at the building, though frequently due to animals, the police must always respond.
- Used candles lit by trespassers and vandals have been found in the building since Town ownership.
- Due to unsafe conditions, the Fire Chief has declared & posted the building as 'No Entry' for fire personnel in the event of fire response.
- Portions of the building are collapsing internally and externally.
- In 2010, residents voted 149-2 at Special Town Meeting to demolish the building upon receipt of grant funding.
- During the 2010 Town Meeting focused on property disposition, a break-in occurred requiring police response.
- The neighborhood surrounding the property is one of the densest, tightest, most intimate neighborhoods in Petersham with multiple shared driveways, small lot sizes, back lot houses, and multiple public use properties. Any use or reuse of the property needs to consider these factors very carefully.
- In current condition, none of the following building codes meet compliance – structural, seismic, energy, electrical, plumbing, life safety, ADA access, lead paint, sprinkler requirements, septic Title V.
- On a regular day-to-day basis, during the ten years since the electricity was turned off in 2008, the basement level of the Academy wing has been flooded in 4 feet of standing water.
- Building codes -- both public use and residential -- have become more restrictive and expensive over time; the cost of construction and re-development has increased since 2007 when the Town accepted and since 1985 when the Sisters sold. The base cost to renovate the existing 100,000 square foot building using a construction figure of just \$150 per square foot would be \$15,000,000.
- Town-owned real estate can be transferred in only two ways: Via a correct RFP method and via public auction.