

Fifth Public Forum exploring possible options for Nichewaug Inn property to be held on Wednesday, February 13th

PETERSHAM – The Selectboard is convening the fifth public forum in a series exploring possible options for the town's Nichewaug Inn & Academy property. The meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 13th in the Petersham Town Hall, lower level, at 6:30pm. Bart Wendell, Petersham's town moderator and a professional facilitator, will continue to lead the meetings.

Following up on the successful first four meetings, the fifth forum will build upon the ideas and input of the various participants who have attended the previous sessions. The focus of the first meeting was on 'ideal uses' and the consequences/advantages of leaving the building and property 'as is' for the foreseeable future. The focus for the second meeting was to discuss 'drivers' (issues and outcomes that should influence any action concerning the Nichewaug), and possible unintended consequences of any action or inaction. The third meeting focused on developing further a set of drivers that could be used in future decision-making by the town. In response to a solicitation at the end of this meeting, seventeen one-page conceptual proposals for the 6.6 acre property were submitted by residents in late November. These proposals provided test cases at the fourth meeting for evaluating the usefulness of the drivers in furthering the conversation.

Two proposals currently appear to garner the most support of attendees in the room. The goal at the fifth meeting will be to focus on these proposals to determine ways in which they can both be clarified and improved, and to consider what additional information would be advisable or necessary for the Selectboard and town residents to have if they should reach formal consideration by the Selectboard and at a Town Meeting.

These meetings are the core of an exploratory process to provide insight to the Selectboard and Town Meeting based on the collective wisdom of the participants. All are welcome and encouraged to attend and to participate. The overall goal is to explore whether town residents can formulate an approach to the town's Nichewaug Inn property situated on the Town Common. The plan is to explore the potential for a consensus proposal as well as its limits. The end product will evolve based on the participants in the room. At the outset it was assumed that there would be a number of such meetings and that information collected in each meeting would be brought forward to the following meeting so that as little is lost as possible. This has continued to be a broad discussion with the hope that the conversation can lead to feasible solutions for the Nichewaug property to which all or at least two-thirds of Petersham voters might be expected to agree to at a Town Meeting.

All interested residents are encouraged to come. Previous attendance is not a requirement for future attendance. The hope is that all viewpoints will be present. Background information concerning this property is posted on the 'Nichewaug Property' page under the 'Town Business' tab of Petersham's website, <http://www.townofpetersham.org/>. For more information about these forums, please contact Bart Wendell @ bwendell@me.com or 978-724-0400.