

An argument for updating zoning by laws, definitions and use tables for Brewster, MA  
Brewster Chamber of Commerce, Inc.  
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In Brewster, there are one hundred forty-five (145) properties along Route 6A where business activity is taking place. At several locations, there is more than one business on a property (i.e. Lemon Tree Village, Foster Square and others). Most of these businesses are in the Residential Medium Density zone, and based on the Town's current Use Tables many are not permitted here. At the Brewster Chamber, we have reviewed the current Use Tables making suggestions for changes that would put these businesses into compliance with the zoning laws without changing the actual zone, or distract from the historical character that we all wish to preserve.

Today, there are fifteen (15) lodging businesses and one resort on Route 6A in Brewster, and all but one are in residential zones. In FY 2016, the rooms tax revenue sent to Brewster by the State, collected from visitors by all of Brewster's lodging businesses, was \$1,145,272.00.

There are eighteen (18) eating establishments on Route 6A in Brewster; 75% of these are in residential zones and, based on the current Use Tables, are not permitted here. Instead, they are pre-existing non-conforming. The FY 2016 meals tax revenue sent to Brewster by the State was \$161,049.00; this is collected by the eating establishments.

And there are thirty-three (33) galleries on Route 6A with 90% in private residences, all bringing tax dollars, beyond the property taxes they pay, into the town. Not that fine art and antiques galleries are permitted in residential zones under current definitions and uses, but retail stores are not.

### ***Looking to the past when considering the future***

Brewster has been home for small business entrepreneurs since 1633 when the first grist mill opened on what is now Stony Brook. In the "Factory Village" a fulling mill and shoe and furniture factory were added. A salt works was established on Cape Cod Bay, and whaling and fishing were lucrative for the town.

Relying on the land and sea, business has always supported the natural setting and rural nature of the town. And as Brewster's population grew, businesses adapted to meet the needs of the residents: for instance, in 1866 when the Brewster Store was started, there were six other general stores in town and all of them thrived.

Perhaps the most notable of Brewster's entrepreneurs were the sea captains who settled here. From the 18<sup>th</sup> into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as many as fifty sea captains lived in Brewster, building stately homes along the main thoroughfare adding a sense of elegance to the community.

Today, many of these sea captains' homes are still occupied by entrepreneurs including innkeepers, restaurateurs, antique dealers, fine artists, business professionals, museum curators and educators. Business continues to support the rural and natural setting of Brewster by creating services for residents and visitors and at the same time maintaining many important antique buildings and the natural surroundings.

The owners of these antique properties are passionate about historic preservation and maintaining a high-quality condition for these buildings, which improves Brewster's property values. They coexist with the residential nature of Brewster as it is today and encourage/market to visitors at their own expense. Those visitors spend money in Brewster and believe in preserving what we have as much or more than the residents do.

### ***Looking to the future***

Today's business owners have a huge stake in what happens in Brewster. They have invested millions of dollars to preserve our Main Street, our beaches and landing roads, so they have a vested interest in maintaining the historic character of Brewster because it is this trait that is so attractive to residents and visitors alike.

In addition to the property taxes paid by property owners, the business pays taxes and fees as well. These businesses also supply jobs and volunteer opportunities to the residents and career training opportunities to our youth, which has historically been the largest segment of the Nauset School system.

The idea of having businesses along 6A does not conflict with the residential uses and is neither unique historically or in the present day. Many towns are working diligently to allow for "in town" living where services are within walking distance and affordable housing is provided in accessory apartments and living units. This also creates additional security to the business owner, and a sector of the housing market is served, aside from the revenue and jobs based benefits.

Brewster's zoning by laws, combined with those of the Old King's Highway Historic Commission, include many protections when it comes to business taking place in a residential zone. But changing a business' status to "special permit" from "pre-existing non-conforming" would provide for some permit relief for these properties while still giving the Town control and not actually creating a new zone.

Our suggestions are not about changing zoning or the character of Brewster. Rather we are advocating a comprehensive review of zoning by the Planning Board to remove unwanted or unnecessary restrictions to support a vibrant and diverse business and cultural center under the long-range planning in Brewster that is currently taking place.