

**REPORT OF THE PLANNING BOARD  
For the Period July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012**

**Membership**

On March 13, 2012 Mark B. Synnott was elected to a five-year term. On June 18, 2012 the Board elected Jeanne S. Conroy as Chair, Sara Preston as Vice Chair, and Mark B. Synnott as Secretary. Stephanie Wasser and Neal Glick continue to serve as members of the Planning Board. Donald S. McCauley completed his term on the Board on March 5, 2012 after 5 years of service.

On May 21, 2012 at a joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen, L. Deborah Carpenter was appointed as the Associate Member of the Planning Board. The Planning Board Associate Member is authorized to vote as a full member of the Board on special permit cases if for any reason one of the elected members cannot participate.

**Annual Town Meeting**

**Flood Plain – Article 28**

Town Meeting, by voice vote, approved the proposed amendments to SECTION XIVB. FLOOD PLAIN OR WATERSHED PROTECTION DISTRICTS. and the Zoning Map, to meet a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) mandate to link local flood plain provisions with the National Flood Insurance Program. The proposed amendments are effective July 17, 2012.

The amendments adopted new countywide Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) and linked the FIRM with the Town's local flood plain restrictions in the Zoning Bylaw. The proposed amendments largely included new definitions, the establishment of new flood plain district boundaries, and base flood elevations. The previous exemption for structures constructed prior to March 20, 1974 remains in effect.

The approved Zoning Map amendments adopted the base flood elevations for the 100-year storm as provided by the Norfolk County FIRM, while maintain the established flood plain zones for Rockridge Pond, Sabrina Lake, Wight's Pond, and Abbott Pond.

**PSI Fees– Article 29**

Town Meeting, by voice vote, approved an amendment to SECTION VIA. PROJECT APPROVAL to clarify an applicant's responsibility to pay for peer review costs associated with post-development reviews of approved Projects of Significant Impact (PSI). The amendment helps to assign any costs

associated with the Town's traffic engineer peer review of additional traffic studies and/or plan alterations associated with a PSI to the applicant.

### **Comprehensive Plan Implementation**

In 2007, the Planning Board completed the 2007-2017 Comprehensive Plan. Since the completion of the Plan, the Board has been working towards implementing goals, objectives and projects recommended by the plan. In the past year, the Board has worked on several tasks outlined including purchasing the St. James the Great parcel, working with the Board of Selectmen on a transit study for intra-town bus service and maintaining a diverse array of independent businesses, and investigating cluster development zoning.

A copy of the Comprehensive Plan can be found online at [www.wellesleyma.gov](http://www.wellesleyma.gov).

#### **St. James Committee**

The Comprehensive Plan considered alternative land use scenarios for the St. James site located at 900 Worcester Street. The Planning Board in May 2010 completed an Alternative Land Use Study with Concord Square Development for the site. The St. James Ad Hoc Committee was formed in the summer of 2010 to continue the pursuit of a recreational plan. The St. James Committee continued evaluating the potential acquisition of the St. James the Great parcel through 2010-2011 to construct a town recreational facility to include a turf playing field, ice rink, and swimming pool facility. On April 2, 2012, the Board of Selectmen, on behalf of the Town, executed a Purchase and Sale Agreement to acquire the property for \$3.8 million. The Planning Department worked diligently with the Board of Selectmen to bring to a Special Town Meeting an article to authorize the purchase of the site using CPA funds for a portion of the purchase price. On June 13, 2012, by standing vote, Special Town Meeting approved the acquisition of the property pending due diligence and the resolution of vigiler appeals to the Vatican.

Town Meeting, by voice vote, also approved the establishment of a 900 Worcester Street Planning Committee, which must include a member of the Planning Board, to further study and develop a plan for a recreational complex on the property, to include a playing field, enclosed ice rink and pool previously outlined in the Planning Board's St. James the Great Alternative Land Use Study.

#### **Public Transportation Working Group**

The Comprehensive Plan recommends the Town actively participate in regional transportation planning and explore the possibility of a shared-use

shuttle bus system. To continue the Comprehensive Plan implementation, the Board of Selectmen began exploring the possibilities of intra-town transit. To determine existing public transportation demand and future needs, the Planning Staff spearheaded six separate surveys of eight distinct groups within Town, which included residents of the Town, non-residents working in the Town, and students and employees of Wellesley College, Babson College, and MassBay Community College. On September 14, 2011, the study titled "Developing Fixed-Route Bus Service in the Town of Wellesley, A Report and Recommendations of the Public Transportation Working Group" was released. The two key findings of the report were to recommend the Town join the Metrowest Regional Transportation Authority (MWRTA) and to establish a Transportation Advisory Group to respond to transportation related questions and concerns and to advise the MWRTA representative should the Town join. The Board of Selectmen voted to join the MWRTA in January 2012, and the TAG has informally been created to begin work on finding funding opportunities to create fixed route bus service in Wellesley.

#### Cluster Development Study

The Planning Board requested and received \$10,000 at the FY10 Town Meeting from the Community Preservation Committee to study Cluster Subdivision Regulations. The Planning Board has been working with Dodson Associates since November 2011 to analyze subdivision design options and assess what elements of Cluster Development could be successful in Wellesley given the current developable land constraints and the multitude of environmentally sensitive areas in Town. The Board after a public forum has concluded the Town should proceed with mandatory Natural Resource Protection Zoning provisions and as of the end of the fiscal year was awaiting a draft of the proposed zoning language.

#### Wellesley Square Initiative

The Comprehensive Plan recommends the Town try to preserve the character of village commercial districts and maintain a diverse array of independent businesses. To try and reinvigorate the Town's primary village, Wellesley Square, the Wellesley Square Initiative was formed in 2011 and includes members of the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Executive Director, and Planning Staff; the mission of the Initiative is to evaluate Wellesley Square and to begin coordination between the Town, merchants, and property owners. In September 2011, two successful forums were held with the Wellesley Square Merchants and Property Owners to evaluate how the Square can be improved. The Town applied for a Massachusetts Downtown Initiative Grant to improve way finding and signage in Wellesley Square. Although the Town did not receive the grant in the last round, it is anticipated that subsequent grant applications will be filed. The intent of the

Wellesley Square Initiative is to take a measured, collaborative approach to pursuing current problems, identifying solutions, and taking actions that are beneficial to the Square and its stakeholders: merchants, property owners, residents, and the Town.

The Planning Board and the Board of Selectmen also worked cooperatively with the Chamber of Commerce to hold a Best Retail Practices seminar for all Town businesses on March 21, 2012. At the end of the fiscal year, the Wellesley Square Initiative is looking to include all of the commercial villages in Town to increase discussions on improving the business climate for the Town's merchants and commercial property owners.

### **Projects of Significant Impact**

The Project of Significant Impact (PSI) bylaw mandates an assessment of the development impact on the town's infrastructure. Under this provision, any new project, exceeding 10,000 square feet of floor area and building renovation exceeding 15,000 square feet for a change of use, requires approval of the Planning Board. The Planning Board is authorized to approve a project if it deems that there are adequate municipal services available. If the services are not adequate an applicant may propose off-site improvements (e.g. street and sidewalk improvements, new storm water drainage systems) to correct the inadequacy and/or to insure that the development does not overburden the roads and other municipal facilities. The cost of necessary mitigation is borne by the applicant.

The Planning Board did not have any Projects of Significant Impact reviews during the reporting period.

### **Inclusionary Zoning**

On a motion jointly developed between the Housing Development Corporation and the Planning Board the 2005 Annual Town Meeting adopted Inclusionary zoning as a requirement for Projects of Significant Impact in commercial districts. This requirement was extended to residential subdivisions at the 2006 Annual Town Meeting. These projects are required to provide a ratio of affordable housing units based on the size of the proposed development.

The Planning Board did not have any new Inclusionary Zoning projects during the reporting period.

### **Review of Unaccepted Streets**

The Zoning Bylaw authorizes the Planning Board to determine whether an unaccepted street provides adequate frontage prior to the issuance of any

building permits for construction on lots located on such streets. There are 105 unaccepted streets in Wellesley comprising approximately 12 miles of roadway. A number of inadequate ways have been upgraded at no cost to the Town since this provision was adopted.

During the course of the year the Planning Board received five applications from applicants proposing to build new or expand existing houses whereupon the above described review was triggered. The Board reviewed proposals for Pinevale Road, Oakencroft Road, Caroline Street, Carisbrooke Road, and Edgemoor Avenue.

### **Scenic Roads**

There are seven roads in Wellesley that have been designated by vote of Town Meeting as Scenic Roads with the new addition of Brookside Road at this past year's Annual Town Meeting. Scenic Roads under the State Act include Benvenue Street, Cartwright Road, Cheney Drive, Pond Road, Squirrel Road, Brookside Road and Waterway/Brookway. This Act grants the Planning Board approval authority, at a public hearing, to review the proposed removal of trees, stone walls or portions of stone walls along any designated Scenic Road.

During the course of the year the Planning Board received applications for the removal of public shade trees along Benvenue Street. The removal of the trees was approved through a joint meeting with the Natural Resources Committee.

### **Review of Zoning Board of Appeal Petitions**

The Zoning Bylaw authorizes the Planning Board to review and recommend action on all petitions before the Zoning Board of Appeal. Recommendations are made on cases based on planning principles, legal requirements, fairness, maintaining the integrity of the Zoning Bylaw and Map, and what it believes to be in the best interest of the Town. The Board submitted comments recommending approval, conditional approval or denial of 82 petitions during the year. Of the 82 recommendations, the Planning Board recommended denial of 20 petitions of which 9 were granted by the ZBA. The Planning Board also reviewed 2 Site Plan applications including proposed work at 234 Worcester Street (Toyota) and 169 Great Plain Avenue the RDF Bailing Station.

### **Subdivision Control**

The Planning Board continued its administration of two active subdivisions which are in various stages of development: Polaris Circle (7 lots) and #15 - 27 Pembroke Road (3 lots). The Board also reviewed a sketch plan for 18 Deerfield Road, however a preliminary plan was not submitted at the end of the fiscal year.

The Planning Board reviewed and endorsed three plans as “Approval Not Required” (ANR) under the Subdivision Control Law.

### **Street Construction Bonds**

The Planning Board requires surety bonds for work to be done by private contractors in conjunction with new subdivision streets and for work to improve unaccepted streets to minimum standards. The Board is currently holding \$249,872 in street construction surety bonds.

### **Project Review and Submission Fees**

All building projects involving an exterior change are reviewed including single family houses exceeding the Large House Review thresholds and all exterior changes within Historic Districts. All expenses of these boards and reviews are funded from the Planning Department budget.

The Planning Department collects project submission fees. The fees offset the cost of review of impact reports, plans and other materials. The Planning Department received \$18,575.00 in submission fees in FY12 which were submitted to the Town Treasurer for deposit into the Town’s general fund.

### **Large House Review**

The Planning Board received 4 Large House Review applications. Three of the applications were for new houses: 7 Ingersoll Road, 16 Albion Road, and 23 Wingate Road. One of the applications was for an addition at 62 Glen Road. The reviews, along with 2 bond and bond release requests on past approvals took significant time and occupied space on 17 of the Board’s 23 regular meetings.

### **Rockland Street Bridge**

Six bridges over the MBTA Commuter Rail have been rebuilt in recent years. Rockland Street Bridge is an original structure dating to 1921 and is in poor condition. The allowable weight limit has been reduced by Mass Highway to three tons (less than some SUV’s.) Frank S. DeMasi, the Town’s representative to and Vice-Chair of the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee worked with other Town officials, Representative Alice Peisch and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to have the bridge replaced as part of the accelerated bridge program. The bridge began was closed in January 2012 to begin construction. At the end of the fiscal year, construction

has been delayed due to necessary engineering revisions to the approved design.

### **Cedar Street Bridge**

The Cedar Street Bridge over Route 9 was approved for reconstruction under the accelerated bridge program. In order to reduce construction-related inconvenience, Massachusetts Department of Transportation minimized the duration of work performed in the roadway. The replacement bridge deck was constructed in the work area within the cloverleaf, immediately northeast of the existing bridge and entirely outside of the roadway. The replacement bridge was moved into place with special remote-controlled machines called 'Self-Propelled Modular Transporters' (SPMTs) in July of 2011.

### **Citizen Inquiries**

The Planning Department Office is open weekdays from 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. The Staff assists citizens with questions concerning zoning requirements, setbacks, and the process of project approval and scheduling of meetings with the Planning Board, Design Review Board, Historic District Commission, and the Denton Road Neighborhood Conservation District Commission. Frequently people are referred to the Planning Department by other Town Departments. It is estimated that the Planning Department handles approximately 100 such inquiries per week with approximately 25 % of these involving in-office visits.

### **Regional Liaison**

Former Planning Board member Frank S. DeMasi is Wellesley's representative to the Regional Transportation Advisory Council (RTAC), the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), and the MBTA Advisory Board. He also serves as the Town's representative to the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC).

Stephanie Wasser is the Planning Board representative to the Metro West Regional Collaborative. The Town's membership in MWRC is vital to keep informed on state legislation and programs affecting our community and to participate collectively with neighboring communities in promoting our interests and needs before State agencies.

Planning Board members and Staff periodically attend seminars and workshops conducted in the area concerning legislation and programs relative to town and regional planning.

### **Other Liaison Assignments**

The Planning Board Chairman coordinates planning activities and projects with the Board of Selectmen and other town boards. Member Sara Preston was appointed as the Sustainable Energy Committee Liaison. Jeanne Conroy continues to serve on the Community Preservation Committee.

### **Town Development Review Team (TDRT)**

The Town Development Review Team (TDRT) which consists of elected liaison board members, senior staff officials and Town Counsel, periodically met to discuss major Town developments. The purpose of these meetings is in large part informational so that all departments and boards involved in the review, approval or permitting will be able to conveniently consult with one another and with the applicant concerning proposed projects and that the same information will be shared by all.

### **Web Site**

The Planning Board maintains a web site at the following address: [wellesleyma.gov](http://wellesleyma.gov). This web site includes updated information on the regular activities and special projects of the Planning Department.

### **Meetings**

During FY-12 (July 1, 2011 - June 30, 2012) the Planning Board held 23 regular meetings, 6 public hearings, 2 joint meetings with the Board of Selectmen, 1 joint meeting with the Natural Resources Committee and 2 public zoning hearings.

### **Planning Staff**

The Planning Staff consists of a part-time secretary/technical assistant, a planner, an assistant director and a director. The Design Review Board, Historic District Commission, Housing Development Corporation, Denton Road Neighborhood Conservation District, and Fair Housing Committee receive professional assistance from the Planning Staff. The Planning Staff also supports on an as needed basis the work of the Community Preservation Committee and Historical Commission.

### **Future Initiatives**

In the upcoming fiscal year, the Planning Board will be working on completing the Cluster Development Study, Off Street Parking Study,

establishing a fixed route bus service, and working on initiatives to increase the vitality of Wellesley Square.

The Planning Board continues to work cooperatively with the Board of Selectmen, Zoning Board of Appeals, Building Department, and residents to try and address issues concerning development and land management.