

**REPORT OF THE PLANNING BOARD
For the Period July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011**

Membership

On March 1, 2011 Sara Preston was elected to a five-year term. On June 23, 2011 the Board elected Stephanie Wasser as Chair and Jeanne S. Conroy as Vice Chair. Donald S. McCauley and Neal Glick continue to serve as members of the Planning Board. Rose Mary Donahue completed her term on the Board on February 28, 2011 after 12 years of service.

On November 15, 2010 at a joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen, Mark Synnott 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

Brookside Road Scenic Road Designation – Article 30

The Planning Board received a request in July of 2010 from a resident to investigate the potential for designating Brookside Road as a Scenic Road pursuant to M.G.L Chapter 40 Section 15C. The Board later received a petition from over 120 residents supporting the designation of Brookside Road based on its significant aesthetic value due to trees framing the views of Rosemary Brook and the Town Forest, and trees contributing to the woodland character of the roadway.

The Planning Board, after careful consideration, found that Brookside Road met the criteria for designation. The state law requires any request for the alteration of trees or stone walls within the right of way of a Scenic Road be approved at a public hearing before the Planning Board. Town Meeting agreed and approved the designation by voice vote.

Tree Bylaw– Article 34

The Town took great strides in preserving the Town's "green" infrastructure. The Planning Board was encouraged to pursue this provision by a number of residents who have experienced clear cutting of lots in their neighborhoods. The provisions of the Tree Preservation and Protection Bylaw require that new construction, construction of a retaining wall with a height of 4' or more, demolitions of structures with footprints of 250 square feet or greater, and additions that increase the footprint of a house by 50% or more within a Single Residence or General Residence District protect or compensate for the removal of trees over 10 inches in caliper within a given setback. In all other districts, trees over 10" in caliper are considered protected trees and must be preserved or compensated for if removed. Construction projects that require Large House Review or Subdivision Review, and portions of projects requiring Wetlands permitting, are exempt from the provisions given the thorough review of landscaping and trees.

The Tree Bylaw establishes alternative methods for compensation. If tree removal is necessary, applicants have the option of replanting half the number of caliper inches lost. The alternative option is to contribute funds to a "Tree Bank". Trees removed on a property not undergoing a construction project are exempt from the Tree Bylaw provisions. To try and prevent property owners from removing trees, then selling their properties to a developer, the bylaw has a 12 month look back. Trees removed within 12 months prior to a permit for construction must be compensated for by either a contribution or replanting.

After Town Meeting the Planning Board established Rules and Regulations to help facilitate the administration of the Tree Bylaw by the Building Department. The Bylaw became effective July 1, 2011.

Single Building Historic Districts - Article 36

Town Meeting, by a voice vote, approved the establishment of two new single building historic districts: Methodist Meeting House District at 377 Weston Road and the Tufts House District at 38 Lowell Road.

The Methodist Meeting House played a significant role in the early development of the Methodist Revival Movement in the United States. The house was Wellesley's second meeting house, and first Methodist meeting house. The Methodist Meeting House was one of the earliest in this country and in 1842 held the largest camp meeting at the time with over 20,000 participants.

The Tufts House was designed by Nathaniel Perry Tufts. Tufts was a Wellesley resident and architect recruited by Royal Barry Wills, a prominent architect. Tufts was one of Wills' earliest associates and during his years with Wills, Tufts helped develop Wills' style. The Tufts House, occupied to this day by members of the Tufts' family, and was constructed in 1930 in the signature Colonial Revival Style of the Wills' firm.

The Wellesley Historical Commission worked closely with the Planning Staff for over six months to complete a report on the historical significance of these two properties. The report was well received by the Massachusetts Historical Commission and was approved for Local Historic District Designation. Local Historic District designation requires that all exterior modifications proposed to a project be reviewed and approved by the Historic District Commission.

Single Residence A – Article 37

Article 37 was approved by voice vote and amended the Single Residence A District provisions to allow for temporary or occasional sale of farm produce or natural products located with the issuance of a Special Permit. In working closely with the Board of Selectmen the Planning Board proposed Article 37 as an alternative to a proposed rezoning of a portion of the Cochituate Aqueduct owned by the Town, but leased to Gravestar Inc. for parking at 442 Washington Street, from Single Residence A to Business to allow for a Farmers Market. The Planning Board evaluated the handful of Single Residence A sites, which are primarily used as

parking for commercial uses, and found that Farmers Markets could be successful on a number of sites. Town Meeting agreed and passed the provision. At the close of the fiscal year, one special permit has been issued for the establishment of a Farmers Market.

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 recodifying the Zoning Bylaw, studying the St. James the Great parcel, working with the Board of Selectmen on a transit study for intra-town bus service, and investigating cluster development zoning.

A copy of the Comprehensive Plan can be found online at www.wellesleyma.gov.

Zoning Recodification

The Planning Board hired Community Opportunities Group, Inc. (COG) in September 2008 to reorganize the Zoning Bylaw. The Planning Board has reviewed a number of technical memorandums on different approaches to restructuring the Zoning Bylaw without significantly altering the zoning provisions. The recodification effort has been challenging. Based upon the findings to date, the Planning Board is now considering several substantive changes which have become necessary to create a user-friendly version of the Zoning Bylaw.

At the end of the fiscal year, the draft has been delayed to investigate alternative approaches to the recodification efforts.

St. James Committee

The St. James Alternative Land Use Study was completed in May 2010. The completed study generated interest from the Board of Selectmen and Recreation Commission. The possibility of constructing a long sought after Town Recreational Complex on the site brought together an extended Town Development Review Team (TDRT). In June 2010, the St. James Committee had acquired funds from the Community Preservation Committee and had hired an appraisal company, (Colliers, Meredith and Grew) and Gale Engineering to investigate the value of the property, and the potential for the land use described in the Planning Board study of the site.

The feasibility study for the site was completed September 29, 2010. The study focused on a phased construction approach for the rectangular turf field, ice arena, and pool facility. A preliminary site cost estimate was included as part of the study, and was anticipated to cost \$16.8 million at full build out. The feasibility study recommended additional studies be performed with regards to traffic, curb cuts, land acquisition, stormwater, and wetlands. The Town has expressed an interest in the property to the Archdiocese.

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. The Board of Selectmen contracted the MPO's Central Transportation Planning Staff to assist in the analysis of potential transit service within the Town, and established a Public Transportation Working Group (PTWG). The Planning Staff was asked to join the PTWG in May 2010. The mission of the PTWG is to address the Selectmen's objectives to support policy goals supporting the expansion of public transit service and to address the public demand for a broader array of transportation alternatives. The transportation policies and goals for the Town were established by the Comprehensive Plan and the Sustainable Energy Plan, and include reducing traffic volumes, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, enhancing mobility, encouraging "healthy" transportation options and reducing parking demand.

In the past year, the PTWG has performed a thorough review of previous studies, examined existing transit services and opportunities, and analyzed current and future transportation needs and available transportation alternatives. 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. At the end of the fiscal year, the surveys have been tabulated and much of the analysis for the report has been completed. It is anticipated that the PTWG final report would be complete and submitted to the Selectmen and other key stakeholders in September 2011.

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 Comprehensive Plan recommends the Town consider mandatory cluster development zoning for the few remaining large open space parcels lacking conservation restrictions. In November 2011, the Board hired Dodson Associates to conduct the study and 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 study is investigating what types of incentives are available to encourage subdivision design to promote open space as well as affordable housing. The Planning Board is anticipating the commencement of a public forum in November of 2011.

Wellesley Square Initiative

In February of 2011, the Planning Board began discussions on the number of vacancies in Wellesley Square. These discussions prompted a joint meeting with the

Board of Selectmen in May, 2011 to begin discussions on revitalization efforts. The Comprehensive Plan recommends the Town try and 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 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. At the close of the fiscal year it was anticipated that forums would be conducted with the merchants and property owners in September 2011.

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 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 three applications from applicants proposing to build new or expand existing houses whereupon the above

described review was triggered. The Board reviewed proposals for Kimlo Road, Russell Road, and Highledge Avenue. The Planning Board determined Highledge Avenue's frontage was illusory, and therefore required the applicant to reorient the house along Woodside Avenue, also an unaccepted way, for which a bond was posted to insure the roadway was not damaged. The application for the Kimlo Road property was continued due to required alterations to the lot lines; the property owner did not return to the Planning Board for continued review during the fiscal year.

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. In addition to Brookside Road, Scenic Roads under the State Act include Benvenue Street, Cartwright Road, Cheney Drive, Pond Road, Squirrel 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 did not receive any applications for alterations to any of the scenic roads requiring review. The Board worked with residents on establishing Brookside Road as Scenic Road, and worked to improve the Scenic Road Regulations by creating two methods for designation of a Scenic Road. The Planning Board can now propose designation of the right of way or a scenic road layout which extends onto private property to Town Meeting. The right of way designation does not require a complete survey of the scenic road, and allows for a more economic approach to investigating and designating potentially scenic roads.

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 73 petitions during the year. Of the 73 recommendations, the Planning Board recommended denial of 15 petitions of which 13 were granted by the ZBA. The Planning Board also reviewed 6 Site Plan applications including proposed work at 990 Worcester Street (CVS), Ten Acre Day School, Babson College Knight Auditorium Parking Lot, Toyota at 234 Worcester Street, and revisions to 27 Washington Street, and the DPW Administration building. The Board also worked with the ZBA on two Comprehensive Permit revisions at 139 Linden Street and Wellesley Commons located at 65 Washington Street

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 Planning Board reviewed and approved a preliminary plan on January 3, 2011 and a definitive subdivision plan on June 27, 2011 which proposes to create two lots from an existing lot located at 184 Cliff Road. The subdivision approval is currently being appealed by an abutter. The Planning Board also discussed two additional plans on an informal basis located at 40 Kimlo Road and 18 Deerfield Road.

The Planning Board reviewed and endorsed six 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 \$247,254 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 \$23,467.00 in submission fees in FY11 which were submitted to the Town Treasurer for deposit into the Town's general fund.

Large House Review

The Planning Board received 5 Large House Review applications. Two of the applications were for new houses: 60 Royalston Road and 50 Beechwood Road. Three of the applications were for additions: 39 Cottage Street, 37 Poplar Road, and 89 Abbott Road. The reviews, along with 3 modification requests on past approvals and 2 waiver requests, took significant time and occupied space on 13 of the Board's 29 regular meetings.

The Planning Board has been working towards making the Large House Review more efficient. At the April 2010 Town Meeting, the Planning Board proposed changes to the bylaw to grant the Planning Director the authority to approve minor modifications to approved projects. Modifications reviewed by the Board within the past year have been major modifications to approved projects.

The Planning Board has been working towards making the Large House Review more efficient. At the April 2010 Town Meeting, the Planning Board proposed changes to the bylaw to allow for minor modifications to approve projects to be authorized by the Planning Director. Modifications reviewed by the Board within the past year have been major modifications to approved projects.

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 has worked with other Town officials, Representative Alice Peisch and the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in encouraging that this needed bridge reconstruction project is designed and constructed as soon as possible. It is anticipated that the Rockland Street Bridge will begin construction in the fall of 2011.

Cedar Street Bridge

The Cedar Street Bridge over Route 9 has been approved for reconstruction under the accelerated bridge program. In order to reduce construction-related inconvenience, Massachusetts Department of Transportation will be using accelerated bridge construction methods which minimize the duration of work performed in the roadway. The replacement bridge deck is currently being constructed in the work area within the cloverleaf, immediately northeast of the existing bridge and entirely outside of the roadway. It will be made of cast-in-place high performance concrete on top of steel beams. The replacement bridge will be moved into place with special remote-controlled machines called 'Self-Propelled Modular Transporters' (SPMTs). The SPMTs will lift the replacement bridge from the shoring towers, drive it a short distance on Route 9 to its final location and then lower it into place. It is currently anticipated that the replacement bridge will be installed in July 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. Beginning with the next fiscal year the staff will be keeping a phone log which will keep a record of the total number of calls and length of the calls.

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).

Chairman 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

Chairman Stephanie Wasser 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. Member Donald McCauley 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. This web site includes updated information on the regular activities and special projects of the Planning Department.

Meetings

During FY-11 (July 1, 2010 - June 30, 2011) the Planning Board held 29 regular meetings, 5 public hearings, 2 joint meetings with the Board of Selectmen, 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.

This year, Planner Ethan Parsons, became AICP certified. The certification represents comprehensive knowledge of the field of planning.

Future Initiatives

In the upcoming fiscal year, the Planning Board and Staff will continue to work on implementing the Comprehensive Plan. A study will be conducted on the Planning Department fees, and the Staff will continue to improve the rules and regulations, guidelines, and procedures governing the Planning Board and Department.

The Planning Board will be working on completing the Cluster Development Study, Public Transportation Working Group Report, and initiatives to increase the vitality of Wellesley Square.

In addition to ongoing Zoning Bylaw Recodification, initiative, the Planning Board will be analyzing the off-street parking, Project of Significant Impact, Site Plan Review, grading, building size and cluster development zoning regulations.

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.