

~~DRAFT 9/5/14~~

REPORT OF THE WELLESLEY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

The Wellesley Historical Commission (WHC) is the body of Town government responsible for preserving and protecting local historical assets through education, legislation, policy recommendations, and physical conservation. The Commission works in collaboration with the Massachusetts Historical Commission, operating under the provisions of Chapter 40, Section 8D of the Massachusetts General Laws, as revised April 2, 2014, and with Wellesley's boards and commissions according to Article 17 of the Town Bylaws.

In 2013-14, the Commission had seven principal members, who were appointed by the Board of Selectmen for three-year terms, and a small number of advisory members, who were invited by the Commission to contribute their expertise. (At the end of the period, the Selectmen appointed three alternate members, authorized by the revised statute to vote in place of absent principal members, to serve in 2014-15.) At the start of the 2014 Fiscal Year on July 1, 2013~~For the twelve-month period ending June 30, 2013~~, the Commission's principal members were David Wright (Chair), Lawrence McNally (Vice-Chair), Peter Fergusson, Dwight Lueth, Helen Robertson, and Kathryn Venne. Terry Catchpole, Joshua Dorin, and Joel Slocum served as advisory members. In November 2013, Tad Heuer was appointed a principal member of WHC and chosen to represent it on the Community Preservation Committee (CPC), and Maureen Staley Cary and Arvid von Taube were named advisory members. Terry Catchpole resigned as advisory member in February 2014. Each member took on individual assignments and made significant contributions to meeting the Commission's goals.

As the reporting period began, WHC continued to pursue options to preserve the 1876 Beebe House during redevelopment of the site of the former Wellesley Inn in Wellesley Square. WHC and the developer jointly proposed locating two of the site's five affordable housing units in a rehabilitated~~stored~~ Beebe House. Following an unfavorable response from the CPC regarding funding for ~~restoration~~ rehabilitation of the Beebe House, WHC voted in favor of the developer's alternate proposal, to build a ~~replica~~ reconstruction of the Beebe House on the same site, re-using materials from the original structure where possible. In October, ~~with permission from the owner~~, members of the Commission ~~enter~~retrieved ~~the house to preserve~~ items of historic or architectural value from the house, including a tile fireplace previously salvaged from the former Wellesley Inn and stored in the Beebe House. During the rest of the period, WHC sought and sometimes received models and drawings of the proposed reconstruction for review. Consultation with the developer is still ongoing.

In April 2013, Annual Town Meeting (ATM) approved funding to restore the north chimney wall of the Wellesley Hills Branch of the Wellesley Free Library, a building listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). During construction, which was completed in May 2014, WHC monitored the work to assure that the

chimney would be restored to its original appearance, in compliance with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

In December 2013, a Special Town Meeting voted in favor of a land transaction involving the purchase, and transmittal to the Town, of a segment of the Cochituate Aqueduct, which is listed on the NRHP, by the owner of a Dunkin' Donuts franchise, who proposed to build a parking lot extension within the historic district. A conditional judgment of "no adverse effect" had been rendered on the transaction in 2011 by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC), pending review of the building plans, when available. Beginning in November 2013, WHC shepherded a submission of plans by the Town to MHC. At the end of the reporting period, the final judgment of MHC was still pending.

Late in 2013, the Town formed a School Facilities Committee (SFC) to determine whether to renovate or rebuild Upham, Hardy, and Hunnewell Elementary Schools. ~~the mix of old and new school buildings that would be needed over the next 20 years.~~ Though not represented on the SFC, WHC weighed the historic value of the elementary schools under review. Attention focused on Hardy School and Hunnewell School for their historic roles in the development of their areas of town, and for their unique architecture and present value as visual symbols of education and as neighborhood anchors. Members of WHC toured both schools, accompanied by school officials, on May 28. WHC observed meetings of SFC, and supplied that committee with historical information about the school buildings.

The package of major repairs to Town-owned buildings prepared for the 2014 ATM by the Permanent Building Committee (PBC) included two options for replacement of the deteriorated slate roof of the Sprague School's original 1924 building: a new slate roof, or a lower-cost, shorter-lived roof of asphalt shingles. WHC testified before Town boards and the Advisory Committee in favor of using slate, to preserve the building's historic character. ATM eventually approved this option.

Comment [JD1]: Did we testify in front of multiple Town Boards and Advisory? I recall only BoS. Advisory consulted with us. Did you also speak at one of its meetings?

In June 2013, after a process lasting several years, Fuller Brook Park was approved by the United States National Park Service for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. ~~WHC observed presentations on proposed renovations to Wellesley's NRHP-listed Town Hall, and remained on alert to preserve the building's historic values as the project proceeded gradually toward a future Town Meeting.~~

Comment [JD2]: Did we ever do this? I don't recall any presentation including any very specific details. And according to Kathy Nagle, the plan has been put on hold indefinitely. I would scrap this paragraph from the Annual Report. It doesn't really seem significant enough for inclusion.

WHC helped provide oversight of the Fuller Brook Park Preservation Project throughout the period. David Wright represented the Commission on the interdepartmental Fuller Brook Park Coordinating Committee (FBPCC), which concluded its work by presenting a park design and obtaining construction funding at ATM.— Wright will continue to represent WHC on a new Fuller Brook Park Committee, established by ATM to oversee the construction phase of the project.

Comment [JD3]: Do you want to include something about Fuller Brook getting listed on the NRHP?

In November, the owner of the 1824 Joseph E. Fiske House (built 1824) at 126 Woodlawn Avenue approached WHC to have the structure declared a Single - Building Historic District. (Fiske played a critical role in the founding of the Town of Wellesley and remained a leading citizen during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.) At around the same time, the owner of the house at 26 Elmwood Road

(built 1946), the childhood home of ~~where the~~ the -renowned poet and novelist Sylvia Plath--~~once lived~~—and which served as a setting for her autobiographical novel *The Bell Jar*—sought a similar designation. With WHC expediting the process through state and local boards, the necessary approvals were obtained in time for the 2014 ATM to establish the two new Single Building Historic Districts.

For over three decades, ~~wood~~ plaques bearing a building's date and the name of the Commission have been the most conspicuous sign of WHC's presence in the town. To be eligible for a plaque, a structure had to have been built in or before 1881, the year the Town was ~~founded~~ incorporated. In April 2014, WHC voted to adopt a 100-year horizon for plaques, effectively moving the eligibility date from 1881 to 1914, and allowing the date to move forward each year until 2019, when the program would "sunset" and be evaluated. As a pilot project, residents of Abbott Road organized as a neighborhood to receive plaques, and even prior to formal announcement of the program, requests for plaques began to come to WHC from elsewhere in town. This project is still ongoing.

At its meeting on May 7, WHC welcomed its former chair Margie Arcand, who delivered to the Commission the sign reading "WELLESLEY" from the Wellesley Square train station, designed by H.H. Richardson and demolished in ~~the early 1960s~~ 1962 to make way for the present Wellesley Square Post Office. A resident had rescued the solid-metal sign, which appeared to weigh close to 100 pounds, from a pile of debris, and stored it in his house for about 50 years, until Ms. Arcand obtained it and presented it to the Commission. The valuable sign was placed with other historic artifacts for safekeeping in WHC's locked storage space.

In May, WHC met with representatives of the Wellesley Congregational Church (the "Village Church") to review the church's application for listing on the NRHP. (The church had previously consulted WHC on an earlier draft of the application in 2011.) While endorsing the application as presented, WHC asked for and received permission to add more information in an appendix, to fill out the historical record on the building and cemetery. The following month, WHC testified in favor of the application before the state eligibility hearing, at which the application with appendix was approved for transmittal to the U.S. National Park Service for NRHP consideration.

Late in the reporting period, Wellesley College announced its intention to sell ~~several fringe~~ ~~ome of its~~ properties it owns that are separate from the main campus ~~in the town. The~~, and WHC began to study and evaluate the various parcels for their historic significance. The Commission found itself focusing less on the large, centrally-located "North 40" than on areas such as the NRHP-listed Cheever property at 828 Washington Street, with its significant buildings and associations with prominent persons in the area's history. This ~~development~~ review is still ongoing.

At its meeting on June 9, WHC heard testimony that construction of an expanded swimming pool facility at the Wellesley Country Club had adversely affected the historic monument marking the location of the original Town Hall, specifically by exceeding the dimensions of the plan approved by the Zoning Board of Appeals. Based on the evidence presented, WHC voted to file a Request for Enforcement with the Building Inspector, the goal being to reduce the construction to the agreed-

upon size. Later that month, the Inspector of Buildings ~~Inspector~~ notified WHC that he had denied the request.

WHC provided direct assistance to residents during the period. With support from WHC, a homeowner on Clovelly Road obtained a permit to replace some of her current windows with historically-appropriate ones that could be adapted to meet the building code for insulation factor. WHC approached owners of a deteriorated historic house on Wellesley Avenue with an offer of advice on affordable historic preservation. The Commission advised residents of the Standish Road ~~area~~ neighborhood on how to establish a Neighborhood Conservation District.

On June 23, the Board of Selectmen appointed Maureen Cary, Joel Slocum, and Arvid von Taube alternate members of WHC, authorized under M.G.L. Chapter 40, Section 8D, revised April 2, 2014, to act in place of principal members who are absent or otherwise unable to vote. This ~~e~~ action is expected to improve WHC's ability to respond quickly to events that affect the T~~o~~wn's historic assets.

Respectfully submitted,

Wellesley Historical Commission
David Wright, Chairman

Comment [JD4]: I would delay putting this into the Annual Report until next year. I think we need to resolve this matter first. I don't think it looks good for the WHC (or the Town) on its own.

Comment [JD5]: I would also include here something brief about 62 Wellesley Avenue.