

## **WELLESLEY HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

The Wellesley Historical Commission 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 Section 8D, Chapter 40 of the Massachusetts General Laws, and with Wellesley's boards and commissions according to Article 17 of the Town Bylaws.

The Commission has seven voting members, who are appointed by the Board of Selectmen for three-year terms, and a small number of advisory members, who are invited by the Commission to contribute their expertise. For the twelve-month period ending June 30, 2012, our seven voting members were David Wright, Chair; Lawrence McNally, Vice-Chair; Peter Fergusson; Dwight Lueth; Helen Robertson; Vicki Schauffler; and (beginning August 2011) Kathryn Venne. Erin Hester and Joel Slocum served as advisory members throughout the period. In November 2011, advisory member Robert McConnell stepped down after seven years' service (including six as a voting member), and Terry Catchpole came on the Commission as an advisory member. Vicki Schauffler retired from WHC at the end of the period. Each member took on individual assignments and made significant contributions to meeting the Commission's goals.

In accordance with the 2009 Memorandum of Agreement among state and town bodies regarding documentation of the 1938 building of Wellesley High School, WHC has assisted in developing a 1938 Room in the new high school to commemorate the history of the earlier building. During this period, WHC continued to work on the details of that room, particularly the text and design of a bronze plaque to be mounted there. An audio-video recodation of the historic structure, with a script prepared by WHC from a description and narrative written in 2009 by historical consultant Kathleen Kelly Broomer, was completed during the summer and fall. On November 20, 2011, during a series of town-wide celebrations of the 1938 building, WHC hosted a "history doubleheader" at the Wellesley Free Library, beginning with the first public showing of this video, followed by an illustrated talk by historian Beth Hinchliffe, sponsored by the Wellesley Historical Society, commemorating the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Town of Needham, of which Wellesley was once a part. On April 29, 2012, WHC participated in the public dedication of the 1938 Room, which took place during a week of celebrations of the new building.

WHC helped provide oversight of the Fuller Brook Park Preservation Project throughout the period. The Commission was represented on the Fuller Brook Park Coordinating Committee first by Peter Fergusson and, after October 2011, by David Wright. On September 22, 2011, during preparations for the Special Town Meeting on November 14, WHC issued statements in support of funding for historic preservation in this project and of the selection of a consulting team headed by Beta Inc. to prepare Phase 3 of designs for the Park.

During October 2011, a chimney at the north end of the Wellesley Hills Branch of the Wellesley Free Library showed signs of deterioration and then partially collapsed. Because the building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, WHC worked with library administrators and trustees, the Permanent Building Committee, Community Preservation Committee, Department of Public Works, and

other interested parties to assure that the chimney would be restored to its original appearance. On June 26, 2012, at the request of the library director, WHC issued a letter in support of historic-preservation funding for the chimney restoration, outlining the building's considerable historical and architectural significance.

The Town's prospective acquisition of the St. James the Great church property at 900 Worcester Street aroused interest among Town officials in the possible historic importance of the church buildings and site. WHC looked into the question in May 2012, and concluded that the church's significance resided mainly in the lives and hearts of its parishioners, not in architectural distinction or historic events.

In all the projects mentioned above, the Historical Commission enjoyed a close consultative relationship with the Community Preservation Committee, the Town board that administers funding under the state Community Preservation Act for historic preservation and other purposes. WHC member Dwight Lueth served throughout the period as the Commission's representative on CPC.

During the period, WHC assisted several citizens or groups with their projects. Residents of the Brookside Road area sought advice on getting their neighborhood protected as a historic district; in July 2011, WHC informed them of available options and received a study it ordered of the area's history by Kathleen Kelly Broomer, which was then filed as a historical database entry (Form A) with the Massachusetts Historical Commission, a necessary first step in any designation process.

In November 2011, a resident of Linden Street sought advice and support for the repair of an old stone pillar on her property, damaged by a Town snowplow. WHC issued a letter to the Department of Public Works, noting the historic significance of the masonry walls and pillars on Linden and Kingsbury Streets as reminders of a more rural era, and urging that the Town do its best to restore the damaged pillar to its original appearance.

In January 2012, a committee from the Wellesley Congregational Church, also known as the Village Church, submitted a historical study of the building and its burial ground by Shary Berg and indicated their intention to apply for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. WHC offered encouragement and some advice on how to strengthen their application.

In May 2012, EBI Consulting, representing Cellco Partners and Verizon Wireless, invited WHC to comment on a 75-foot communications monopole proposed for a hilltop on the Wellesley College campus, located less than half a mile from the Wellesley Historic District (Cottage Street). Visiting the area, WHC members noted the presence on the site of other tall communications structures and even taller trees, and concluded that, owing to thick woods and obscured sight lines, the proposed tower would almost certainly not be visible from any public way, historic area, or campus location.

At the conclusion of the period, the members of WHC looked forward to a summer without meetings, and engagement with issues new and old in the fall.

Respectfully submitted,  
David Wright, Chairman