

The Wellesley Historical Commission is the body of town government that works with officials and the public to preserve and protect Wellesley's historical assets through education, legislation, policy recommendations, and physical conservation. The Commission works in collaboration with the Massachusetts Historical Commission and operates under the provisions of Section 8D, Chapter 40 of the Massachusetts General Laws regarding historic preservation. The seven members are appointed by the Board of Selectmen for three-year terms and serve as liaisons with the Massachusetts Historical Commission. In addition, there are four advisory members appointed by the Commission itself who do not vote.

For the twelve-month period ending June 30, 2009, our seven members were Helen Robertson, Joel Slocum, Robert McConnell, Dwight Lueth, Erin Hester, Kara Cicchetti and Linda Buffum, chair. The advisory members were David Wright, Judith Hull, Lawrence McNally and Vicki Schaufler. Each of these members took on individual assignments and made significant contributions toward advancing the objectives of the Commission during the past year.

The Commission is indebted to Megan Jop, AICP, Planning Director of the Town of Wellesley; Hans Larsen, Executive Director of General Government Services; and staff of the Office of Selectmen for their cooperation and assistance in many of the matters confronting us over the past twelve months.

There were a number of ongoing projects that the Commission continued to work on over this period. These included the Wellesley Farms Commuter Rail Station, Original Town Hall, Fuller Brook Park, the Taylor Block and a proposed telecommunications tower on the campus of Wellesley College.

In addition, the Denton Road Neighborhood Conservation District (NCD), established by Town Meeting in 2008, was expanded in 2009. Originally comprising 16 properties, the NCD added three properties, at 56, 60 and 72 Denton Road. This action, based upon a petition of the property owners to the Wellesley Historical Commission, was approved by the 2009 Annual Town Meeting.

Also during this period the Commission began the process of updating documentation on historic properties in Wellesley. This is a significant project that will require a few years to complete.

The Massachusetts Historical Commission maintains an Inventory of Historic and Archeological Assets of the Commonwealth. This statewide inventory contains a record of information on buildings, structures, objects, areas, burial grounds, landscape features, and sites that are of historical, architectural, or archaeological importance to the community, the state, or the nation. The

Wellesley Historical Commission contributes surveys of eligible properties found in the Town of Wellesley.

During the summer of 2009, the Wellesley Historical Commission engaged an architectural historian to assess the existing inventory records for properties in the town and to assist the Commission in preparing a plan for updating the inventory. The last major update was completed nearly 20 years ago. The currently contracted work is fully financed with Community Preservation Act funds.

Without question, the most significant issue we faced last year was the future of Wellesley High School. The Historical Commission, by unanimous votes, declared that the award-winning, Robert Dean-designed 1938 Gamaliel Bradford High School building is an important historic and cultural resource in Wellesley, and urged that it be incorporated as a renovated and adapted element in the new high school design. However, an extensive public process resulted in a decision to replace the existing school with new construction. In December 2008, Town residents voted to authorize funds for the project. Demolition of the existing campus buildings is scheduled to follow construction of the new building, in 2013.

The Town's intention to demolish the 1938 building prompted the Massachusetts Historical Commission to conduct a permit review of the project. This was a condition of the anticipated use of state funds for the demolition and construction project, because of the 1938 building's eligibility for placement on the National Register for Historic Places and its inclusion on in the Inventory of Historic and Archeological Assets of the Commonwealth.

In July and August 2009, State and Town officials signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the Massachusetts Historical Commission that acknowledges the significance of the building and mandates measures to mitigate its demolition. These include full documentation of the 1938 building in the interest of providing a comprehensive recordation for future study by the academic community and for the benefit of members of the community at large. This documentation is to include as-built laser-measured drawings, professional photographic and videographic documentation, an architectural history narrative, and preservation of the original Perry Shaw and Hepburn architectural drawings. Significant architectural elements of the building are to be salvaged and preserved. The Wellesley Historical Commission, the Wellesley Permanent Building Committee and the Wellesley School Building Committee are managing and coordinating the documentation effort.

The Wellesley High School Historic Working Group, which includes representatives of several interested town bodies, including the Historical Commission, has developed an architectural and a town historic memorabilia plan. The Wellesley Permanent Building Committee and Wellesley School Building Committee will implement the plan. They are charged to incorporate distinctive architectural features of the 1938 building into the design of the new high school building, to develop a history room in the new school library, and to preserve and display historic artifacts from the existing high school buildings.

The number and complexity of projects facing the Historical Commission has increased in the past couple of years. Moving forward, a major task of the Commission will be finding the most effective and efficient way to meet this increased workload while holding to our deep commitment to preservation and our high standards of excellence.

Respectfully submitted,

The Wellesley Historical Commission

Dwight Lueth, Chair

September, 2009