

THE WELLESLEY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

The Wellesley Historical Commission is the guardian of Wellesley's past. We are responsible for preserving and protecting its 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. In addition, it has a variable number of non-voting, advisory members. For the twelve-month period ending June 30, 2010, our seven voting members were Dwight Lueth, Chair; Helen Robertson, Vice-Chair; Kara Cicchetti; Peter Fergusson; Erin Hester; Lawrence McNally and David Wright. Our advisory members were Robert McConnell and Joel Slocum. Vicki Schaffler and Barbara Bourque retired with thanks from the Commission for their service. Beginning June 30, 2010, the membership remained the same, but Helen Robertson became Chair and David Wright Vice-Chair.

It is always gratifying to successfully complete a project:

- A monument recognizing Wellesley's Original Town Hall and Poor Farm, both the site and the building, was dedicated on October 23, 2009, the anniversary of the vote to found our Town, which took place at that location on that date in 1880.
- The pre-survey portion of the Inventory Project, which selected the historic areas and properties in Wellesley to be studied for listing on the Massachusetts Historical Commission's Inventory of Historic and Archeological Assets of the Commonwealth, was completed.
- Bronze plaques recognizing their listing on the National Register of Historic Places will soon be installed on the Wellesley Hills Branch Library and the Sprague Clock Tower in Elm Park.
- The Commission reviewed and made recommendations to the Community Preservation Committee on several projects seeking funding under the Historic Resources category: a replacement Belvedere sign; a feasibility study for expansion of the Historical Society's Dadmun-McNamara House; and possible future adaptive reuse of the Electrical Substation building near the intersection of Routes 9 and 16.
- We recommended to the MA Department of Highways that the Route 16 Bridge over Route 9 use plain concrete arches over the highway, not fake stone, and thereby improved the aesthetics and cut the cost.

As is typical for the Commission, several of our projects during this twelve-month period were, and still are, ongoing ones:

- Following the successful completion of the pre-survey planning phase of updating Wellesley's inventory of historic properties, the Commission will apply for funding to begin the actual study of the recommended properties.
- Written and visual architectural documentations of the 1938 Wellesley High School Building, as agreed to by State and Town officials, are being prepared jointly by the Town and Commission.

- The Commission is collaborating with the Natural Resources Commission and the Fuller Brook Park Coordinating Committee to preserve Fuller Brook Park's historic integrity, as described in the application for its listing on the National Register of Historic Places, during its planned improvement.
- A determination of the visual impact on historic sites in Wellesley of a proposed telecommunications tower in South Natick, at Wellesley's border, is nearing completion.
- Artifacts, photographs, documents, and architectural elements salvaged by Commission members and others from the historic headquarters house of American Legion Post 72 prior to its demolition in August 2009 are now in temporary storage, pending conservation by the Wellesley Historical Society or installation in Town buildings.
- The Commission continues to collaborate with the Kepes Panel Subcommittee to determine appropriate sites and uses for the architectural panels created by artist Gyorgy Kepes for the previous main building of the Wellesley Free Library.
- The restoration of the Sprague Clock Tower is continuing in cooperation with the DPW, and the Tower will receive its NHR plaque when renovations are complete.

There is no shortage of issues we hope to address in the coming twelve months and longer term:

- The Commission will bring proposals for the preservation of two individual buildings in town through the use of MGL Chapter 40C, Historic Districts, to the 2010 Annual Town Meeting.
- The Commission will continue to seek out Wellesley properties that should be considered for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.
- We will propose improvements in the process for reviewing and making recommendations to the Community Preservation Committee on projects falling under the Community Preservation Act's Historic Resources category.
- We plan to expand our collaboration with other town Boards and Commissions to help with projects involving Wellesley's historic resources.
- The question of cut-off dates for the plaques on historic homes and buildings in Town will be re-examined in light of MHC's current definition of "historic."
- The Commission will try to determine what new preservation projects are coming up and explore means of private fundraising to help carry these out.
- All of Wellesley's residents are invited to suggest projects they think are important, and we welcome all who want to help us!

The Commission's past year was not "all work and no play." We were invited to be part of the "Wonderful World of Wellesley" Parade for the first time, and we rode, in costume, in a beautiful Ford Model A "woody." A great time was had by all.

Our hearty thanks go to Meghan Jop, AICP, Planning Director of the Town; Hans Larsen, Executive Director of General Government Services; and staff of the Office of Selectmen and the Department of Public Works for their continuing cooperation and assistance in our projects.

In its issue of January 14, 2010, the Wellesley Townsman cited the Wellesley Historical Commission as one of its "Townsman 10" for 2009, ten individuals or groups who "had an impact on the town or in the larger world, especially over the last 12 months." After humorously referring to the Commission as "the town's own Don Quixotes...tilting at the

foes of preservation,” the newspaper’s citation closed with these words from town historian Beth Hinchliffe: “They are the voice for those who have gone before, ensuring that their legacy will enrich us for generations to come.” The Commission thanks the Townsman for this honor and Beth Hinchliffe for her enduring love of Wellesley.

Respectfully submitted,

Helen L. Robertson, Chair
Wellesley Historical Commission

September, 2010