

## **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE WELLESLEY HISTORICAL COMMISSION 2007-2008**

The Wellesley Historical Commission (WHC) consists of seven members appointed by the Board of Selectmen to serve a three year term. The members of the Commission for the period of this report were Joel Slocum, Helen Robertson, Deborah Bates, Robert McConnell, Dwight Lueth, Erin Hester and Linda Buffum, Chairman. There were four advisory members: David Wright, Judith Hull, Vicki Schauffler and Lawrence McNally.

The Commission worked with Meghan Conlon from the Planning Department as well as neighbors from Denton Road on the creation of the Denton Road Neighborhood Conservation District (NCD). In accordance with the provisions of the bylaw passed by the 2007 Town Meeting allowing the creation of NCD's, the Denton Road NCD Study Committee was established with Helen Robertson for the Commission as chair, and Barbara Lehmann (now Bourque) from the Planning Board and Janet Giele, Tucker Swan and Herbert Nolan from Denton Road as members. A joint public meeting was held on February 4, 2008 with the Planning Board to inform citizens about the Denton Road NCD request. Article 33, which forms the first NCD in Wellesley on Denton Road, was passed by majority vote at Town Meeting.

The WHC continues to follow the progress of the preservation work on the Wellesley Farms Railroad Station. Two members of the Commission are researching other uses for the building which might justify further work to be done in the future to make the station weatherproof. Bird-proofing on the inside of the building was completed.

The WHC continues to monitor the status of the Original Town Hall (OTH) portion of the Wellesley Country Club (WCC). Several companies specializing in deconstruction and demolition examined the building. A decision based on their advice was made to deconstruct it and move the post and beam and other components of historical significance to a storage site until a suitable use and end user can be found. A proposal was submitted to the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) for funds to have an inventory done of the building's historical components by a Preservationist; funding was granted. Article 21 came before Town Meeting for the Original Town Hall to be dismantled and stored; the article was approved and \$296,000 was allocated to the project. The Department of Public Works continues to be interested in possible re-use of this building. Many meetings have been held with Department head, Michael Pakstis and representatives of the WHC, CPC, Board of Selectmen, and Wellesley Historical Society regarding the preservation and re-use of the OTH. Plans were made with the WCC Board for a monument with explanatory text to commemorate the site and explain its historical significance to be erected once the clubhouse has been deconstructed.

The developer of the Wellesley Inn site continued to work on the plans, and the WHC continued to follow closely the Design Review Board process. Construction is expected to begin during the summer 2008.

The Walnut Street Firehouse project was completed and the WHC signed off on the building in June, 2007. A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held with members of the Wellesley Housing Development Authority, Board of Selectmen and WHC, along with the architects, the developer and neighbors.

A member of the Commission continues to serve on the committee to study the future use of the Kepes panels from the old Wellesley Free Library which are being stored in the Hills Branch Library basement.

The process to place the Fuller Brook Path on the National Register of Historic Places was advanced as the consultant, Shary Berg, completed her work. The nomination is now in the hands of the Massachusetts Historical Commission, which is expected to complete its review within eighteen to twenty-four months. If approved, the nomination would then go on to the National Register for final approval.

The Commission submitted to the CPC and the State a request for \$10,000 to perform a pre-planning study of the Town. The Massachusetts Historical Commission did not provide any funds, but CPC, with Town Meeting approval, did. Article 22 gives the Historical Commission \$10,000 to inventory the historic and cultural resources of Wellesley.

The Elm Park Clock Tower and Wellesley Hills Library were placed on the National Register of Historic Places in June, 2007. The WHC submitted a request to the CPC for \$1,200 to fund the plaques for the Register designations of these structures Article 22 for the funding was passed at Town Meeting.

The Katherine Lee Bates house was sold in the Spring of 2007. Approval from the new owners will be necessary to continue the nomination process for the National Register of Historic Places. The property continues on hold in the nomination process pending this approval.

Members of the WHC attended many meetings to follow the process of the School Building Committee (SBC) as it considered all options for a new high school. While it continues to be the recommendation of the WHC to renovate and reuse the 1938 building and preserve the exterior of the structure while moving forward with sound educational and fiscal plans, the SBC and Permanent Building Committee voted this Spring in favor of an all-new building. Subsequent to this decision, State Treasurer Tim Cahill has made modifications to the Town's plans.

The WHC portion of the town website was updated and had all pertinent information on NCD's added.

The Taylor Block is being monitored as it remains on the market and several potential buyers have withdrawn. Attempts at contacting the Sullivan family who control these buildings have been unsuccessful.

The WHC was successful in its request for additional funding for 2008-2009 and now has an annual budget of \$525.00.

A summer intern has been hired to help identify the structures in Town that are eligible for WHC plaques (structures must pre-date 1881 to be eligible for a plaque) and perform other tasks the WHC is hoping to accomplish this summer.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda D. Buffum

Chairman

August, 2008