

STANDISH ROAD NCD STUDY COMMITTEE
MEETING
WEDNESDAY APRIL 15, 2015, 4:00 P.M.
WELLESLEY TOWN HALL – JULIANI ROOM

MINUTES

Study Committee present: Naomi Cameron, Catherine Johnson, Helen Robertson

Also present: Assistant Planning Director Imaikalani Aiu

1. Call to Order

Ms. Johnson called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m.

2. Consideration of Minutes

The minutes for the 4/8/2015 meeting were approved with corrections made for typographic errors by a unanimous vote of the Study Committee members present.

The chair stated that, following the recommendations by Town Counsel (refer to 4/8/2015 minutes), an email request has been sent to Tad Heuer, Chair of Historical Commission, that members of the Standish Road NCD Study Committee receive formal letters of appointment, so that the Town Clerk can swear them in officially.

Also, at a future meeting, the study group will review past minutes to ensure that they conform with voting notation requirements.

The Public Information Session has been scheduled for April 29, 2015 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. and has been posted.

The triggers for NCD review were not readily found on the website. They are attached to prior minutes, but will be posted separately in the general information section of the website.

3. Inventory of Properties

The inventory of properties – all those houses in the neighborhood that signed to establish a Study Committee – is complete. Each home has its own page. This will be an appendix to the final report. This is the largest collection of Royal Barry Wills designed homes (21) and homes probably designed by him (25) in Wellesley, and possibly nationally.

4. Design Guideline Discussion

Imaikalani Aiu, Assistant Planning Director for Wellesley, has the job of administering Design Review for the Historic District Commission, the Design Review Board and Zoning Board of Appeals' cases. In addition, he works with the Denton Road NCD and should the Standish Road area become an NCD, he would work with this neighborhood.

Imai discussed the preference for guidance that is prescriptive rather than prohibitive, suggestions of how to achieve goals of maintaining neighborhood character/quality. This can include pitch of roofs, materials, height, mass, carry over eave-lines/ridge-lines etc. Guidelines should convey the intent as well as the style. A question has to be resolved: is the goal to have compatibility with existing homes (and the original part of the home in case of an addition). Should it be “of its own time” or make it appear as if the new has always been there.

The Standish neighborhood has significant variation in house heights, due to several styles (ranch, cape, colonial) and the natural slope of the land. We could prescribe a maximum height from the starting grade, but raw numbers don't necessarily convey suitability. There is a Town discussion (by ZBA and Planning) of changing zoning so that lower heights would become the standard for districts with smaller lot sizes, keeping 36 feet for 30,000 or 40,000 sq ft zones, but this is early in the discussion framework.

The NCD emphasis likely is to be on scale, mass, detailing, “appropriateness” for the neighborhood. Style issues would pertain more to the streetscape vs. having more contemporary (or of “this time”) in rear additions not visible from the street.

Role of Commission: It would be a resource for residents when proposing a triggered project so that the applicant can do “fact finding” to discuss what is valuable in the original house and how it relates to the neighborhood.

The Commission would meet in open meeting. Later in the process, there would be a more formal public hearing with 2 weeks posted notice, where plans are submitted as if applying for a building permit (elevations, site plans, etc.)

If our NCD included streets that have non-conforming lots and hence are under the purview of the ZBA, working within the NCD is likely to help the process of applying for a special permit. The ZBA asks threshold questions: 1. Is the house or lot non-conforming? 2. Does the proposal increase the non-conformity, the 3. Is the proposal more detrimental to the neighborhood?

The hope would be that there is a social contract in a dense neighborhood that neighbors should work together. The situation exists, however, that speculative building is outside of this contract. Hence the desire for protective process.

Our report needs a preamble to explain the intent of the guidelines and standards of review. Having some continuity between NCDs would be helpful, although some of Denton Road guidelines are more detailed than appropriate for the Standish Road area. This is not an historic district so the intention is not to freeze it in time.

5. Deed Restriction Discussion

The discussion was postponed.

6. Public Comments

No members of the public, other than Committee members, were present to comment. Ms. Johnson said that there has been correspondence between Meghan Jop (Deputy Director for the Town) and the Friends Committee, with reference to the 2/4/15 email from the Friends to the Board of Selectmen. As Ms Johnson was cc'd, the email will be entered into the NCD Study Group files.

7. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:07 p.m.

Documents:

2/4/15 email with response 4/6/15 and reply 4/8/15.