

# RE-PRECINCTING IN WELLESLEY

## State Standards for Re-Precincting

The MA Constitution requires that voting precincts must meet the following requirements:

- Each precinct must be “composed of compact and contiguous territory” without protruding fingers or long tails.
- Precincts must be bounded by the center-lines of streets or other well defined boundaries such as streams or other boundaries of water, railroad tracks, or other clearly visible geographic features that are also recognized as **block boundaries by the U.S. Census Bureau**.
- No precinct may contain more than 4000 residents.
- Every precinct’s population must be within 5% of the average precinct population for the Town.

## Wellesley’s 2011 Population

According to the 2010 US Census, Wellesley’s total population is 27,982 residents (this includes resident students at Wellesley and Babson Colleges). It is not mathematically possible to draw precinct lines using US Census block boundaries to maintain our 7 precincts.

This population number necessitates re-precincting of the town into 8 precincts. This is the first time Wellesley has added a precinct in since 1952. Each new precinct must average 3,498 residents (with no more than 5% variance). Each of our existing precincts must be modified to stay within the population target and to create the new precinct.

Addition of an 8<sup>th</sup> precinct will also alter the representation in Town Meeting. Each new precinct will be allocated 30 Town Meeting Members. All 240 Town Meeting Members will run from their new precincts in the March 2012 annual town election.

## Local Goals for Re-Districting

The Board of Selectmen have established the following local goals for new precincts:

1. **Continuity** – Disrupt as few residents as possible. This reduces the confusion of voters as to where they vote and respects existing constituent connections for Town Meeting Members to the extent possible.
2. Polling Place **Accessibility** – Polling places must be fully accessible to handicapped voters, available for all elections (state and local, regularly scheduled and special). Voting at an elementary school that serves a neighborhood is desirable but not required. Ideally, polling places should be located within the boundaries of the precincts they serve.
3. **Cohesiveness** – Wellesley’s neighborhoods often share common interests which should not be diluted by splitting them up into multiple voting precincts. Similarly, all neighborhoods within a precinct should share as many common interests as possible.

## Challenges

1. Route 9 – Having limited access and few high-volume crossing points, Route 9 essentially bisects the Town and hampers access to polling places.
2. College Campuses – With populations of 2113 and 1716 respectively, Wellesley College and Babson College are large neighborhoods unto themselves. Historically, the vast majority of on-campus students have not actively participated in Wellesley’s Town Meetings or voted in Wellesley during national, state, and/or local elections. Due to the frequent on campus moves among dormitories of the on campus residents it makes it hard to divide those campuses into usable blocks.
3. Large blocks / large neighborhoods – The U.S. Census Bureau boundaries include some large and awkwardly shaped blocks that cannot be divided. Moving these blocks from one precinct to another has a dramatic effect on the overall population distribution. There are also several large neighborhoods that present a similar problem (e.g. the “Hundreds” area between Cliff Road, Glen Road, and the railroad tracks).
4. Road centerlines as block boundaries – Since the U.S. Census Bureau only uses road centerlines and not property lines as block boundaries, the only way to preserve neighborhood integrity is to use major thoroughways as precinct boundaries.

## New Precinct Scenarios

A working group used block-level data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau and GIS tools to develop 3 scenarios for new precinct boundaries. The most likely polling places under these scenarios would be as follows:

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| A Bates School     | E Fiske School  |
| B Sprague School   | F Dana Hall, Shipley Center   |
| C Upham School     | G Wellesley Free Library  |
| D Schofield School | H Wellesley High School after 2013 (temp. location TBA until building is completed) |

The tables below summarize how each of the scenarios addresses the goals established by the Board of Selectmen.

<b>Scenario 1</b> – In this scenario, a new Precinct H is established between Wellesley Avenue, Forest / Abbott Roads, and Washington Street. It is comprised of parts of 2 existing precincts and includes Babson College.	
<i>Continuity</i>	Scenario 1 involves many changes for the residents of Precincts G, B, and F. In this scenario, the Cottage St. / Leighton Rd. area has been moved from G to F, while the “Generals” neighborhood (Turner / Halsey / MacArthur Roads) and areas immediately adjacent to Morses Pond are moved to G from B. These changes have great potential to impact the composition of Town Meeting as 22 of the existing Town Meeting members for Precinct G are moved out of the precinct and only 19 remain within its boundaries. Most of these displaced members would be concentrated in Precinct F, where 51 existing Town Meeting members would vie for 30 seats. This scenario allocates the fewest household units to precinct G making recruitment of TMM challenging.
<i>Cohesiveness</i>	Based on geography and neighborhood characteristics, Scenario 1 is the most cohesive. In this scenario the area between Abbot Rd. and Forest St. is moved to the new Precinct H where they are reunited with other neighborhoods near the center of town. All boundaries between precincts follow main roads / thoroughfares.
<i>Accessibility</i>	All polling locations are accessible to their constituents via major roads. Residents in Precinct E that are north of Route 9 can access the Fiske School from Cedar St. or Oakland St.

<b>Scenario 2</b> – In this scenario, a new Precinct H is established in the geographic center of town with parts from 4 existing precincts. It includes all of the Central Square area as well as Denton Rd. and the Wellesley Green Condominiums.	
<i>Continuity</i>	Scenario 2 lessens the potential impact on Precinct G by keeping the neighborhood bounded by Cottage St., Dover Rd., and Fuller Brook in G. 23 of the original 33 Precinct G Town Meeting members would be retained, however, 51 existing Town Meeting members (from B, E and F and G) would still be concentrated in one precinct --- this time, in the new Precinct H. Continuity is also preserved by keeping the “Generals” neighborhood and Morses Pond in Precinct B where they have traditionally resided. This scenario allocates more households to G helping the need to recruit TMMs.
<i>Cohesiveness</i>	As in Scenario 1, the area between Abbot Rd. and Forest St. is moved to the new Precinct H and all boundaries between precincts follow main roads / thoroughfares. Though geographically close, the 3 sections of Precinct H are somewhat disconnected --- the WHS / Abbott Rd. area, the Kingsbury / Linden / Rockland St. area, and the Central Square and Denton Rd. area.
<i>Accessibility</i>	All polling locations are accessible to their constituents via major roads. Residents in Precinct E that are north of Route 9 can access the Fiske School from Cedar St. or Oakland St. There is a little more separation between Precinct G and its likely polling place, the Wellesley Free Library.

<b>Scenario 3</b> – In this scenario, a new Precinct H includes the Washington St. / Wellesley Ave. / Forest St. triangle, the Kingsbury / Linden / Rockland St. area, and a section of old Precinct C between Worcester St. and Lowell Rd. It is comprised of parts from 5 existing precincts.	
<i>Continuity</i>	Scenario 3 presents the least potential impact to the composition of Town Meeting as the existing 240 Town Meeting members are more evenly distributed between the 8 new precincts. Precinct H still has the highest concentration of existing members with 41. In this scenario, the area between Abbott Rd. and Forest St. remains in Precinct E. This scenario retains the largest number of existing TMM in G and allocates a good number of households to this precinct to offset the Wellesley College population. It is the closest match to our existing boundaries in many precincts.
<i>Cohesiveness</i>	Scenario 3 changes the composition of Precinct H to include more distinct neighborhoods. Instead of expanding along Washington / Central Streets to the West, Precinct H now spans Worcester St. (Route 9) to include many residents that have traditionally been in Precinct C. This scenario creates a Precinct H with three fairly distinct neighborhoods grouped into a single precinct. Precinct E also contains several distinct neighborhoods, but most of these areas are combined in the existing map.
<i>Accessibility</i>	This scenario requires some residents in Precinct C to cross Route 9 via Cliff Rd. or the Kingsbury St. turnaround and travel through high-volume intersections along Washington St. to access the High School polling place.

<b>Scenario 4</b> – This scenario builds upon Scenario 2. Here, the Central Square and Denton Rd. / Wellesley Green Condominium areas are moved to Precinct B and the neighborhoods adjacent to Sprague Fields are moved to Precinct H.	
<i>Continuity</i>	Scenario 4 lessens the potential impact to the composition of Town Meeting (vs. Scenario 2) as an area with many existing Town Meeting members is moved out of Precinct H and replaced with an area with far fewer Town Meeting members. Precincts H and B now have the highest concentration of existing members with 37. Continuity is otherwise similar to Scenario 2.
<i>Cohesiveness</i>	As in Scenarios 1 and 2, the area between Abbot Rd. and Forest St. is moved to the new Precinct H and all boundaries between precincts follow main roads / thoroughfares. The new Precinct B is somewhat less geographically cohesive, but the Central Square neighborhood does share common interests with the Pleasant St. / Crown Ridge Rd. / Summit Rd. area as they are all in the Sprague School District.
<i>Accessibility</i>	All polling locations are accessible to their constituents via major roads. Residents in Precinct E that are north of Route 9 can access the Fiske School from Cedar St. or Oakland St. Given the proximity of the Dana Hall School to the voter base of Precinct G, it's likely that Precincts G and F would swap polling places in this scenario with G voting at Dana Hall and F voting at the Library.

<b>Scenario 5</b> – This scenario builds upon Scenario 3 but reinstates the break at Route 9 for Precinct C. Precincts D and E are virtually the same as Scenario 3. Precinct H is built from parts of B, E, F and G.	
<i>Continuity</i>	This map uses good continuity of lines of existing precincts where possible. Polling places assignments will be the same for most voters. The redistribution of TMM seats is minimized to be only 18 forced changes. There are 3 precincts that will have to recruit new members and 5 precincts where there are potential conflicts among incumbents. No precinct has more than 38 incumbents.
<i>Cohesiveness</i>	The area between Abbot Rd. and Forest St. is retained in E. Precinct D lines are close to existing as possible with only the area east of Cedar at Rosemary Brook moved into E. The streets moved from A to B are currently assigned to the Hardy School which is also the school for the majority of B. The neighborhood between Brook Street and Wellesley Ave moving to H is a relatively complete unit.
<i>Accessibility</i>	All polling locations are accessible to their constituents via major roads. Residents in Precinct E that are north of Route 9 can access the Fiske School from Cedar St. or Oakland St. The neighborhood at the west border of town has the most remote commute to the polling place at Sprague, however both Overbrook Rd. and Weston Rd have safe entry points to Route 9 East and Sprague is easily accessed from Route 9. Precinct B would vote at Sprague which is not in the precinct, but just across the precinct line on Oak St. Precinct G would still vote at the library which is not contained within the precinct, but very close. Precinct H would go to WHS when completed and needs a temporary location for one year.

<b>Scenario 6</b> – This scenario builds upon Scenario 5 and switches the west boundary neighborhood with the census blocks abutting the north side of Route 9 to be assigned to B. All other precincts are unchanged from 5.	
<i>Continuity</i>	This map uses good continuity of lines of existing precincts where possible. Polling places assignments will be the same for most voters. The redistribution of TMM seats is 20 forced changes.
<i>Cohesiveness</i>	The area between Abbot Rd. and Forest St. is retained in E. Precinct D lines are close to existing as possible with only the area east of Cedar at Rosemary Brook moved into E. The neighborhood between Brook Street and Wellesley Ave moving to H is a relatively complete unit. The Precinct A census blocks moved to be are separated from their local school district but move as a group.
<i>Accessibility</i>	All polling locations are accessible to their constituents via major roads. Residents in Precinct E that are north of Route 9 can access the Fiske School from Cedar St. or Oakland St. Precinct B would vote at Sprague which is not in the precinct, but just across the precinct line on Oak St. Precinct G would still vote at the library which is not contained within the precinct, but very close. Precinct H would go to WHS when completed and needs a temporary location for one year. The new group of A blocks moved to B can access Sprague via Weston Road to Route 9. The travel route for this group is shorter than what would be required in Scenario 5 and more congruent with regular travel patterns when leaving the neighborhood for local errands.