

WELLESLEY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

The Wellesley Historical Commission is the body of Town government that serves as the guardian of Wellesley's past. WHC is responsible for preserving and protecting local 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, and a small number of advisory members, who are invited by the Commission to contribute their expertise. For most of the twelve-month period ending June 30, 2011, our seven voting members were Helen Robertson, Chair; David Wright, Vice-Chair; Kara Cicchetti Anderson; Peter Fergusson; Erin Hester; Dwight Lueth and Lawrence McNally. Our advisory members were Robert McConnell, Joel Slocum and, as of March 7, 2011, Vicki Schauffler. In April 2011, Ms. Anderson resigned and Ms. Schauffler was appointed a voting member. Each member took on individual assignments and made significant contributions to meeting the Commission's goals.

Projects that advanced in fiscal year 2010-11 included the following:

- WHC used verbal description and photographs to report to the state Historical Commission on the potential impact on historic properties of a proposed cell phone tower, to be erected in Natick, near the Wellesley border and the Hunnewell Estates Historic District.
- To celebrate the listing of the Wellesley Hills Branch Library on the National Register of Historic Places, which WHC had worked for six years to bring about, WHC co-hosted a ceremony on October 22, 2010, to unveil a bronze plaque by the building's front entrance commemorating the listing.
- WHC advised the Board of Selectmen and town officials on restoration and re-use of the nearly 100-year-old electrical substation, a Greek Revival brick building in the municipal complex at the intersection of Worcester and Washington Streets.
- Throughout this period, WHC was closely involved with the project to preserve and rehabilitate Fuller Brook Park and the Brook Path. In September, WHC responded in writing to questions about the historic character of the park from Pressley Associates, the landscape design firm serving as consultant on the initial design phase, and met with the firm's team leader on the project. In October, WHC reported the discovery, in the files of the Town's Planning Department, of plans for the western end of the park by the noted architect Warren Manning. In November and December, WHC members attended three public presentations by the Fuller Brook Park Coordinating Committee (FBPCC) and its consultant. WHC responded to these presentations with an op-ed article in the Wellesley Townsman of January 27, 2011, expressing support for the project and advising how to preserve the park's historic character. On March 9, Commission members attended a meeting of the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) at which landscape historian Shary Page Berg presented WHC's case for listing Fuller Brook Park on the National Register of Historic Places, and MHC voted unanimously to

approve the nomination. During 2011, WHC continued to advise on plans for the next phase of the park project through its members Peter Fergusson and Dwight Lueth, who represented the Commission on FBPCC and on the Community Preservation Committee (CPC), respectively. Beginning in April 2011, David Wright substituted on FBPCC for Peter Fergusson, who was out of town for several months.

- In January, WHC heard a presentation by residents of the Brookside Road area seeking recognition and protection of their neighborhood as a historic place. WHC ordered a historical study that documented the many uses of that area over several centuries by Native Americans, farmers, light industries, the Town Farm, and the Wellesley Country Club. WHC sponsored an article, approved by Annual Town Meeting, designating Brookside Road a Scenic Road under the town's scenic road by-law; it was the seventh road in the town to be so honored.
- At the request of the properties' owners, WHC sponsored an article, approved by Annual Town Meeting, that designated two residences in Wellesley as Historic Districts. State law provides for individual structures to be so designated, and WHC formed a Single Building Historic District Study Committee to consider the merits of these two properties. The two new Historic Districts are the Methodist Meeting House, built 1798, now located at 377 Weston Road, which has a long history as a religious gathering place, farmhouse, and residence; and the Nathaniel P. Tufts House, 38 Lowell Road, designed and built 1930 by its architect/owner Nathaniel Tufts, the first associate of Royal Barry Wills, and an outstanding early example of the Colonial Revival residential style that the Wills firm popularized throughout the United States.
- In accordance with the 2009 Memorandum of Agreement between state and town boards regarding documentation of the 1938 building of Wellesley High School, WHC oversaw the production of still photographs, laser-drawn building plans, and an audio-video recordation of the historic structure. WHC prepared a video script, derived from a description and narrative written in 2009 by historical consultant Kathleen Kelly Broomer; shooting took place on February 22 and 25, 2011, during a school vacation. Editing and corrections of the video continued for the rest of this time period, with the eventual goal of a public showing of the video on November 20, 2011, during a series of town-wide celebrations of the 1938 building.
- The same 2009 Memorandum of Agreement called for the Town to work with WHC in developing a 1938 Room in the new high school building, commemorating the history of the earlier building. During this period, WHC continued to work on the details of that room, particularly the text and design of a bronze plaque to be mounted there.

On September 17, 2010, WHC members attended the dedication of the restored David H. Locke Bridge carrying Route 16 over Route 9 at their intersection in Wellesley Hills. Although repairs to the bridge had been delayed for years by many factors, WHC is pleased to have removed at least one obstacle to completion, by approving the use of plain concrete facing on the bridge instead of quasi-historical simulated stone.

On May 25, 2011, WHC members attended a luncheon in Boston honoring historic buildings including Alumnae Hall at Wellesley College, which received a 2011 Award for Distinction in Historic Preservation from the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

On May 22, 2011, WHC members put on old-fashioned hats and participated in the Wellesley Veterans Parade, riding in a bright blue 1928 Ford Phaeton that once belonged to the famous golfer Gene Littler.

At its meeting on June 21, 2011, WHC elected David Wright to serve as chairman and Lawrence McNally as vice chairman from July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012.

Respectfully submitted,

David Wright, Chairman