

WELLESLEY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

The Wellesley Historical Commission consists of five members appointed by the Board of Selectmen to serve three-year terms. The members of the Commission for the period of this report were Joel Slocum, Helen Robertson, Pierre Laurent, Deborah Bates and Linda Buffum, Chairman. There were two “advisory”, non-voting, members, David Wright and Robert McConnell.

The Commission continues to follow the progress of the Farms Station. We sought approval from the Community Preservation Committee of the expenditure of \$300 for power washing of the Farms Station in preparation for further work. Re-pointing took place and plans are under way to have the building pigeon-proofed inside and to have beadboard installed in the entryway and painted.

The status of the Wellesley Country Club is constantly being monitored. The Club members did finally vote for a new building. Several members of the Commission were given a tour in December 2005 of the clubhouse. We have attended meetings of the Board of Selectmen, Design Review Board and Planning Board on every aspect of this building. Plans are in the works for a good-sized commemorative monument at the site of the present clubhouse. Two dedicated parking spaces will be available for visitors to the monument. The Commission has worked with Town Historian Beth Hinchliffe on the wording to be placed on the monument.

The Wellesley Inn has been a major topic on the Commission’s agenda. Sadly, this building was torn down on April 6, 2006, ironically the Town’s Anniversary. The developer continues to work on the plans and the Commission has attended the majority of these to monitor the progress. The Commission took a tour of the building in early November and saw to it that most of the items that needed to be preserved were given to the Historical Society. The Gruby tiles and the mantel from a fireplace were saved.

The renovation of the Walnut Street firehouse has been proceeding on the basis of plans by Finegold, Alexander and Associates. The Zoning Board of Appeals agreed to retain the “3 hose 3 sign” from the firehouse. Plans have been finalized and contain the specifications set forth by the Commission.

A member of the Commission is on the Committee to study the future use of the Kepes panels from the previous main library which are stored in the Hills Branch Library basement.

Input was given on the Town’s Comprehensive Plan as it pertained to the Commission’s mission.

The process to place the Fuller Brook Path on the National Register of Historic Places was advanced by the Commission’s inviting the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) to come and visit the site. Members of the Commission walked the Path with representatives of the MHC and the Natural Resources Commission. The decision was made that the nomination of the Path to the Register can go forward.

Starting with a request through the Board of Selectmen, the Commission put forward a warrant at Town Meeting to allow the addition of two permanent members, for a total of seven. The motion passed. There is a waiting period; the new members can be added in late August 2006.

The Katharine Lee Bates House and Clock Tower nominations to the National Register of Historic Places are in the works. The Katherine Lee Bates home was put on the market and the Commission contacted the real estate firm to educate them about the listing. Approval from the new owners will be necessary to continue the nomination process.

The Wellesley Hills Branch Library is to be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places using Community Preservation Committee funds. The contract for the nomination was signed with consultant Kathy Broomer.

The Wellesley High School project became a Commission agenda item. The Facilities Advisory Committee was contacted and our recommendation to preserve the original 1938 building was the essence of their recommendation to the School Committee. An article was also written by the Commission for the Townsman advocating the preservation of this special building. The next step will be a functionality study of the building to help determine space usage.

Our town web site information has been updated and more accurately depicts what we do. It contains some links to local resources. The owners of the oldest home in Wellesley at 126 Brook Street agreed to have a picture of their home placed on our website.

For the Town's 125th anniversary, the Commission organized an historical "scavenger hunt" for elementary school-age children for the weekend of the event in April. An essay contest was held for high school students, with a \$1,000 donation made by Roche Brothers as the prize. The winner was a junior from the high school.. An art contest is planned for the Fall of 2006 for middle school-age students.

The Commission members attended two seminars presented by Preservation Mass about inventories and preservation techniques. A "portfolio" system was set up for next year to distribute the workload more evenly among the members and to make more effective use of members' particular kinds of expertise.

Respectfully submitted,
Linda Buffum
Chairman

August, 2006