

**Wellesley Historical Commission**

Town Hall • 525 Washington Street • Wellesley, MA 02482-5992

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August 19, 2015

BY EMAIL

Deborah Carpenter, Chair
Town of Wellesley Planning Board
525 Washington Street
Wellesley, MA 02482

Re: Comment on Definitive Subdivision Application for 135 Great Plain Avenue

Dear Ms. Carpenter:

The Wellesley Historical Commission is pleased to submit this comment on the proposed Definitive Subdivision Application (the "Plan") for 135 Great Plain Avenue (the "Property"), prepared by CHA for Northland Residential Corporation (the "Developer") in connection with the Developer's proposed subdivision of the Property. The Wellesley Historical Commission ("WHC") is tasked by Article 17 of the Bylaws of the Town of Wellesley (the "Town"), as authorized by G.L. c. 40, § 8D, with the preservation and protection of the tangible evidence of the architectural, aesthetic, cultural, economic, political and social history of the Town.

The WHC observes that this is the first time Section XVIF of the Town Bylaws, also known as the Natural Resource Protection Development bylaw (the "NRPD Bylaw"), will be applied by the Planning Board. Because the proceedings in this matter will thus establish a measure of precedent for future projects, the WHC comments on the Plan offer a greater level of detail than is often found in such comments. The WHC has done so in order to provide the Planning Board with sufficient context regarding the WHC's position on the appropriate interpretation and application of the NRPD Bylaw going forward.

As a preliminary matter, the Commission notes that it has been actively engaged on the issue of the development of the Property for nearly a year, from the first indication that the Property was being sold. In late 2014, the WHC provided five targeted preservation recommendations in a letter to the Planning Board and Natural Resources Commission, with a copy to the Developer (Attachment A). The WHC was pleased to learn that the Plan appears to address two of those recommendations: the preservation of the historically-significant stone gate piers on Great Plain Avenue, and the preservation of the stone "playhouse" on the interior of the locus (Attachment A photographs). The WHC commends the Developer for its decisions in this regard, and encourages the Planning Board to condition any approval of the Plan on the continued preservation of these historic elements.

However, while the Plan makes a promising start in this regard, the WHC has serious and substantive concerns regarding the Plan as a whole in its present form. The WHC believes that the Plan fails to comply with various objective requirements of the NRPD Bylaw. For the reasons articulated below, the WHC respectfully requests that the Planning Board refrain from approving the Plan unless and until the Plan complies with the NRPD Bylaw, particularly with respect to its sensitivity to the historic natural landscape of the Property and the minimization of impact on the historic 1905 House. The WHC is confident, however, that the Plan can be modified in a manner that achieves both compliance with the NRPD Bylaw and the interests of the Developer.

This comment letter proceeds in three parts. First, the letter provides a brief history of the Property and the basis on which the WHC has determined that the Property is a historically significant asset of the Town. Second, the letter identifies the key requirements of the new NRPD Bylaw, which materially heighten the legal obligations that any plan must meet (in sharp contrast to the more lenient Town requirements governing smaller subdivisions). Third, the letter provides an analysis of the specific ways in which the Plan at present fails to comport with the NRPD Bylaw.

I. The Property is Historically Significant to the Town

In order to appreciate the WHC's concerns, a brief history of the Property is warranted. The ownership of the Property can be traced to the 1600s, and for much of the first two centuries of that period was owned by the prominent Fuller family. The Property — located first in what was known as Dedham, then as Needham, and now as Wellesley — existed, to the best of the WHC's knowledge, as a natural rustic woodland throughout this period.

The first record of the Property being used for residential purposes was in 1904, when a portion was sold to Dr. Michael J. Fenton, a well-known Boston dentist. The following year, in 1905, the existing main house was constructed (Attachment A photographs). As is evident from the photographs, the main house was built in a style befitting of, and conforming to, the natural topography of the Property, with a rustic, mountain-home ambiance. It was also around this time that the stone gates on Great Plain Avenue and the stone playhouse were constructed, both in the same rustic style and using the same historic masonry techniques that are common to other large, historic estates in the Town, such as those along Linden and Worcester Streets.

Dr. Fenton also gained significant renown for his successful efforts to preserve the purebred Newfoundland dog in the United States. The president of the North American Newfoundland Club, Dr. Fenton was identified as being "largely responsible for the return to favor of the Newfoundland dog." (Attachment B). The WHC also believes that a Newfoundland dog cemetery may continue to exist on a portion of the Property today.

Following Dr. Fenton's death in 1937, the Property was acquired by Dr. Donald Gregg and his wife Barbara (Channing) Gregg. Dr. Gregg was the head physician at the Channing Sanitarium, located on what is now the Babson College campus. Since then, although portions of the original Property were sold for single family residential development, the Property as it exists today has retained its historic, rustic, densely-wooded atmosphere. Importantly for the purposes of the NRPD Bylaw, these topography characteristics — although common in the

1600s — are incredibly rare for large, privately-owned plots of land in the Town today. Unlike many parts of the Town that were clear-cut, levelled, and farmed well into the 1920s, the Property’s landscape has retained its natural characteristics for over three centuries, complemented by the main house for the past 110 years.

For each of the above reasons — the unique preservation of a significant natural landscape, the prominence of the previous owners in Wellesley history, the age of the main structure and its ancillary structures, and the architectural merit of the main structure and its ancillary structures (both as prime representative examples of their period and because of their sensitive integration into the existing natural topography) — and certainly when taken in combination, the WHC has determined that the Property is historically significant to the Town.

II. The NRPD Bylaw Mandates Creativity and the Preservation of Historically-Significant Areas and Natural Features

The NRPD Bylaw requires that any development that would yield five or more residential lots must meet certain requirements, among which are provisions intended to preserve the historical and natural aspects of the parcel and encourage creativity in the design of new subdivisions.

Section A declares that the purpose of the NRPD Bylaw is to “allow innovative, context sensitive design of large subdivisions . . . where such design shall achieve” five enumerated requirements (emphasis added). The five enumerated requirements include (a) allowing “greater flexibility and creativity in the design of residential developments,” (b) minimizing “the destruction of, and [encouraging] the permanent preservation of . . . historical, cultural and scenic areas,” and (c) promoting development that “consumes less open land and conforms to existing topography and natural features.” (Sections A(1), (2) and (3)).

Further, Town Meeting established specific design standards that “shall apply to all plans for NRP Development” and “shall govern the development and design process.” Section D (emphases supplied). Section D(2) requires that “streets shall be designed and located in such a manner as to maintain and preserve natural topography, significant landmarks, and trees . . .” (emphasis supplied). Section D(4) requires that the “landscape shall be preserved in its natural state, insofar as practicable, by minimizing tree and soil removal” (emphasis supplied). And most important for the WHC’s purposes, “[t]he removal or disruption of historic, traditional or significant uses, structures, or architectural elements shall be minimized insofar as practicable . . .” (emphasis supplied).

In each of the relevant provisions cited above, Town Meeting has instructed that the provisions “shall” be met before a subdivision plan may be approved. As the Planning Board is aware, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court (“SJC”) has repeatedly held that when interpreting a statute or a bylaw, “[t]he word ‘shall’ is ordinarily interpreted as having a mandatory or imperative obligation.” *Hashimi v. Kalil*, 388 Mass 607, 609 (1983). The requirements of the NRPD Bylaw are thus not merely aspirational — they are mandatory. As such, where a subdivision plan seeking approval under the NRPD bylaw does not comport with these requirements, such a plan runs contrary to the intent of Town Meeting and, as a matter of law, cannot be granted approval by the Planning Board to proceed by-right.

While certain obligations in the NRPD Bylaw are mandated without condition, others — notably Section D(7) are mandated “insofar as practicable.” Thus, the question of when a developer has met its obligation to “minimize insofar as practicable” a particular disruption proscribed by a town bylaw is an important one. In Caruso v. Planning Board of Revere, 354 Mass. 569, 571 (1968), the SJC held that a Planning Board was justified in waiving a subdivision requirement that “all proposed streets shall be continuous and in alignment with existing streets as far as practicable” where

it appeared that extending preexisting streets across the subdivision ‘would serve no useful purpose, as these streets would be dead-ended at the [subdivision property line]’ where it abuts a second subdivision of land and that ‘no provision for the extension of these streets’ was made in the plan of the second subdivision.

Caruso thus indicates that in the subdivision context the standard is a stringent one, more akin to physical or legal impossibility than to mere inconvenience. Such an interpretation is well-supported by SJC decisions on the interpretation of the requirement of “practicable” in other contexts. For instance, in Petition of Gally, 239 Mass. 143, 148, (1952), the SJC held specifically that “[p]racticable” is not synonymous with convenient. Legere v. Tatro, 315 Mass. 141, 147. ‘Practicable’ means feasible — capable of being put into useful practice.”

Finally, the question of whether financial costs are sufficient to demonstrate that a particular action is not “practicable” has not, to the knowledge of the WHC, been directly addressed by the courts in the specific context of a subdivision approval. However, the most reasonable analogy is the situation of whether an owner has demonstrated a “substantial hardship” entitling him to a variance, an issue on which the SJC has ruled repeatedly.¹ The SJC has held that in that context a substantial hardship does not exist merely because the owner would not be able to realize the desired level of profits unless the petition proposed by the owner was granted. Bruzzese v. Board of Appeals of Hingham, 343 Mass. 421, 424 (1962); Abbott v. Appleton Nursing Home, Inc., 355 Mass. 271, 221 (1969) (“[t]hat Appleton will not be able to continue a nursing home economically, unless it has thirty-four beds instead of twenty-two beds, does not create a hardship of the type to justify a variance.”) Indeed, in the variance context, economic unfeasibility constitutes a substantial hardship in the limited circumstance where it is “not economically feasible or likely that the locus would be developed in the future for a use permitted by the zoning ordinance or by-law.” Cavanaugh v. DiFlumera, 9 Mass. App. Ct. 396, 402 (1980).²

If a proposed subdivision plan does not conform to the development requirements of the NRPD Bylaw and thus cannot proceed as a matter of right, a Special Permit application to the

¹ The WHC recognizes fully that G.L. c. 40A, § 15, which governs the approval of variances, does not govern the approval of subdivisions. However, the WHC believes that such cases, as the closest analogy in the absence of case law on point, offer persuasive insight into the thinking of the Court on whether and when added financial expense justifies a finding in the land use context that an applicant’s efforts satisfy a “practicability” standard.

² The WHC observes that the NRPD Bylaw was passed by Town Meeting in 2012, and the Property was acquired in 2014. The courts have repeatedly held that it is a “well-established principle in our cases prohibiting self-imposed hardships as a basis for obtaining a variance.” Adams v. Brolly, 46 Mass. App. Ct. 1, 4 (1998).

Planning Board is required. (NRPD Bylaw, Section C(3)). However, a Special Permit may be granted under such circumstances only if the Planning Board finds “that the proposed alternative plan advances the purposes of the NRP Development bylaw as well or better than a plan that conforms to this Section [XVIF]” (emphasis supplied).

III. The Plan Fails To Comply with Certain Mandatory Requirements of the NRPD Bylaw

The Plan is subject to the requirements of the NRPD Bylaw because the Property yields more than five residential lots; indeed, the Plan proposes a subdivision of twelve buildable lots. Therefore, the Plan must at minimum comply with a variety of fundamental requirements of the NRPD Bylaw, including (1) promoting an innovative, creative and context-sensitive design, (2) minimizing the destruction of open space and historical areas, and (3) preserving the landscape in its natural state by having a design that conforms to the topography and features of the land.

For the following reasons, the WHC believes that the Plan’s current proposed residential layout is at odds with not only the intent of the NRPD Bylaw, but the mandatory requirements of creativity, preservation, and the incorporation of the historical and natural features of the Property.

A. The Plan Fails to Demonstrate Context-Sensitive Design, Particularly with Respect to the Natural Setting and Topography of the Property

Simple “lollipop” subdivision designs,³ such as that proposed in the Plan, have been employed for decades by developers because they allow for standardized lot sizing and are inexpensive to construct. However, such subdivision designs show little — if any — creativity within the context of a property’s natural setting, contrary to the express purpose of the NRPD Bylaw articulated in Section A(1). Rather than destroying the historic nature of the land (the significant loss can be seen on the Existing Conditions Plan dated July 1, 2015 prepared by CHA for the Developer), the Developer is affirmatively required by the NRPD Bylaw to submit a design that “conforms to existing topography and natural features” (Section A(3) (emphasis supplied)), whose street design and location “shall be designed and located in such a manner as to maintain and preserve natural topography, significant landmarks, and trees,” (Section D(2) (emphasis supplied)), and where “[d]wellings shall be oriented and placed on lots in such a manner so as to promote visual interest.” (Section D(3) (emphasis supplied)).

For any NRPD-governed subdivision — but particularly in one where the Property is historically significant because its natural topography has been maintained for over three centuries — the Plan proposed is context-insensitive. Indeed, it could be developed without difficulty on any flat, open parcel of land in any community in the country. Yet the NRPD Bylaw — in sharp contrast even to the subdivision requirements for smaller parcels in Wellesley (most notably, the *Rules and Regulations Governing the Subdivision of Land*) — is an affirmative statement by Town Meeting that for developments in excess of five lots, such cookie-cutter

³ These designs are known as “lollipop” designs due to the configuration of their roads, which run perpendicular to the existing trunk road and terminate in a cul-de-sac, giving the road the appearance — when viewed aerially — of a lollipop.

subdivisions are at minimum expressly disfavored, and arguably precluded outright. Instead, the NRPD Bylaw mandates that to obtain Planning Board approval, a developer must propose a plan that is context-specific. In this instance, that means a Plan that is sensitive to the rustic topography and historic natural setting of the Property.

The Plan's current lollipop design, with the proposed street running essentially perpendicular to Great Plain Avenue and down the center of the Property, will not only require significant clear-cutting, but significant re-grading of the vast majority of the naturally-rustic topography, forever altering its historic natural state. Instead of conforming to the topography by preserving and incorporating as much of the landscape as possible into the new residential neighborhood, as is required by Section D(2), the Plan appears to propose bulldozing most of such topography. In keeping with the requirements of the NRPD Bylaw, a new design should be considered that minimizes the destructive clear-cutting of these historically-significant features. The WHC reiterates that this is not a subjective suggestion, but an objective, mandatory requirement contained in the first sentence of the NRPD Bylaw and with detailed specificity throughout: that the subdivision shall, among other requirements, minimize the destruction of historical areas and conform to existing topography.

B. The Plan Fails to “Minimize Insofar as Practicable” the Removal or Disruption of Historic Structures

Second, the NRPD Bylaw expressly mandates that “[t]he removal or disruption of historic, traditional or significant uses, structures, or architectural elements shall be minimized insofar as practicable” (Section D(7) (emphasis supplied)). The Plan currently proposes that the main 1905 House located on the Property be demolished. As detailed above, the WHC has determined that the 1905 House is a historically-significant structure in the Town. The 1905 House thus is entitled to the protections regarding removal or disruption afforded by Town Meeting per Section D(7).

The WHC also reminds the Planning Board that, as explained above, it is insufficient as a matter of law to interpret the phrase “insofar as practicable” as having been satisfied upon a mere showing that retaining the 1905 House as part of an NRDP-governed subdivision is inconvenient, or even that retaining the 1905 House will require the Developer to incur an additional expense. The relevant legal inquiry is instead whether any solution to protect the 1905 House is unfeasible, and arguably whether any such solution would render any development of the Property — not merely the specific development scheme that the Developer may ideally prefer — uneconomic. The WHC has seen no evidence that this would be the case.

The WHC of course recognizes that the present location of the 1905 House on the Property may be incompatible with the ultimate subdivision layout, and thus has no objection to moving the 1905 House to one of the new lots to be created on the Property. House moving, particularly when done on the same parcel of land, is a procedure that is relatively common in the context of historical homes, and for which there are a number of qualified professional firms located in the greater Boston area. The International Association of Structural Movers (IASM), a trade organization for the industry, provides extensive resources for those interested in engaging a house-moving professional, and the WHC would be pleased to provide advice in this regard.

Apart from the legal obligations under the NRPD Bylaw pertaining to historic structures, incorporating an existing historic structure into the subdivision of its original lot is a well-established practice in the Town, and we believe that doing so in this instance would ultimately be to the significant economic advantage of the Developer. Indeed, even prior to the adoption of the NRPD Bylaw, several developments have incorporated the existing, historic residence into a subdivision of the property, resulting in a successful blend of the historic with modern development. Examples include the Niles Estate (c. 1903) at 87 Hundreds Road in 1929, the Reynolds House (c. 1908) at 26 Lehigh Road in 1959, and the Haffermehl Farmhouse (c. 1910) at 18 Louis Drive in 1980. The WHC believes there is no reason why the 1905 Fenton House should not be the next such successful partnership in this regard.

IV. Conclusion

In Hamilton v. Department of Public Utilities, 346 Mass. 130, 144 (1963), a case involving the construction of a new overhead transmission line, the SJC recognized that

It is appropriate for municipalities, even in the absence of guiding or controlling legislation, to plan to improve and beautify their central areas and public ways and to maintain the natural beauties of villages and rural areas. That overhead wires have been tolerated in many of the towns, cities, and countrysides of the United States (as they are not in all parts of the world) does not mean that the increased costs of accommodating a line to such planning may not be justified.

This is precisely the balance that Town Meeting sought to strike when establishing the NRPD Bylaw, and precisely the balance that the WHC supports: maintaining the natural beauty of more rural areas of the Town of Wellesley while creating an appropriate mechanism for owners to develop their property. The NRPD Bylaw is intentionally designed to provide significant benefits to developers — most notably, the right to construct larger houses on smaller lots than would otherwise be permitted under the existing Zoning Bylaw. In return for this significant benefit, Town Meeting — through the NRPD Bylaw — has required that developers forego certain of the more common and perhaps more convenient practices to which they may have become accustomed.

The WHC respectfully requests that the Planning Board apply the NRPD Bylaw as passed by Town Meeting, and require a Plan that conforms with the mandatory requirements of the NRPD Bylaw, including but not limited to requirements regarding sensitivity to the historic natural landscape of the Property and the minimization of impact on the historic 1905 House.

Finally, the WHC cannot emphasize strongly enough that we sincerely believe that such a Plan is not only possible, but would be a win-win outcome for the Developer and Wellesley alike. Indeed, the Developer's current proposal to preserve the stone gates and playhouse marks an exceptionally promising start to a plan that would successfully incorporate all the elements required under the NRPD Bylaw. Although we believe that the Plan does not yet do so, we are encouraged by these initial steps, and look forward to collaborating with the Developer on a revised Plan that would fully meet the NRPD Bylaw requirements.

We thank the Planning Board for its time and attention to our concerns, and are pleased to make representatives of the WHC available to discuss them. Please contact me directly at tad@wellesleyhistoricalcommission.org should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tad Heuer', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tad Heuer, Chairman

Cc (by Email): Michael Zehner, Planning Director
David L. Murphy, Chair, Board of Selectmen
Heidi Kost-Gross, Chair, Natural Resources Commission
Tom Harrington, Esq., Town Counsel
Hans Larsen, Executive Director of General Government Services
Meghan Jop, Deputy Director of General Governmental Services
Michael Grant, Inspector of Buildings
Northland Residential Corporation, c/o David J. Himmelberger, Esq.

Attachment A

**Wellesley Historical Commission**

Town Hall • 525 Washington Street • Wellesley, MA 02482-5992

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October 14, 2014

Ms. Sara Preston, Chair, Planning Board
Ms. Janet Hartke Bowser, Director, Natural Resources Commission
Ms. Heidi Gross, Chair, Natural Resources Commission
via email

RE: Historical considerations in the development of 135 Great Plain Avenue

Dear Mmes. Preston, Bowser, and Gross:

As you are aware, the property located in the Town of Wellesley known and numbered as 135 Great Plain Avenue, consisting of approximately 12 acres of natural land and three structures (the "Property"), has recently come under agreement for private purchase and sale. The Wellesley Historical Commission ("WHC" or "we") believes that the Property will be built out into a residential development consisting of multiple homes. In anticipation of this, WHC wishes to draw your attention to the historical value of the Property, and how it can enhance the design of the expected development. For your benefit, we have enclosed various pictures of the Property.

In support for consideration of a property's historical value, the Natural Resource Protection Development bylaw, a/k/a the 'Cluster Zoning' bylaw¹ (the "Bylaw") provides that, when considering the design of large subdivisions, it is of paramount importance to "minimize the destruction of, and to encourage the permanent preservation of . . . historical . . . areas." After having toured the Property and considered its history, WHC believes that any destruction to the Property should be minimized and the overall natural character preserved.

A brief description of the history of the Property is important to understanding WHC's position. The Property was first used for residential purposes in

¹ Town of Wellesley Zoning Bylaw, Section XVIG(A)(2).

November 1904², when it, originally consisting of 25 acres, was sold by the Fuller family (who had owned it since the 1600s) to Michael J. Fenton, a prominent Boston dentist. Following Fenton's death in 1938, the Property was acquired by Dr. Donald Gregg and his wife, Barbara (Channing) Gregg. (Dr. Gregg was the head physician at the Channing Sanatorium on what is now the Babson College campus; Barbara Gregg was the daughter of the Sanatorium's founder, Walter Channing.) In 1951, the Property was subdivided with Joseph & Margaret Knowles acquiring the present 12 acre parcel. The remaining portion of the original 25 acre plot was further divided into 20,000 square foot lots and developed into residential housing. The current owner of the Property is the widower of the daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Knowles.

Taken together, the buildings, topography, and vegetation of the Property, which have remained virtually unchanged for over 100 years, represent a spacious, harmonious way of life that has all but vanished from Wellesley today.

Given the historical nature of the Property in connection with the Bylaw's charge, WHC believes that the proposed development is an opportunity to establish a subdivision with distinctive character while preserving and promoting valuable historical and natural elements of the Property. Members of WHC were able to tour the Property in September 2014, and after deliberating on the matter, we put forth five recommendations for the proposed development of the Property:

1. **that the main house be preserved as a single-family residence.** If possible, the guesthouse should also be preserved as a separate single-family residence. Additions and remodelling where necessary are encouraged.³
2. **that the fieldstone playhouse – a one-of-a-kind feature – be preserved and readapted for communal or personal use.**
3. **that the fieldstone gates at the entrance to the Property on Great Plain Avenue be preserved.** They are a distinctive feature that recalls other historic masonry in Wellesley, such as the stone gate pillars from several large estates along Linden and Worcester Streets. Although the

² It is believed that the main house on the Property was constructed in 1905.

³ Even prior to the adoption of the Bylaw, several residential developments in Wellesley incorporated the existing residence into a subdivision of the property, resulting in a successful blend of the old with the new. Examples include:

- The Niles Estate (c. 1903) at 87 Hundreds Road in 1929
- The Reynolds House (c. 1908) at 26 Lehigh Road in 1959
- The Haffermehl Farmhouse (c. 1910) at 18 Louis Drive in 1980

gate is not wide enough to accommodate the required 40-foot roadway into the proposed development, it could be used as a pedestrian entrance or widened to accommodate vehicle traffic.

4. **that the natural topography of the land and as many large trees as possible, be preserved.** Throughout its 110-year residential history, the Property has enjoyed a wooded, mountain-home ambiance. With the possible construction of up to a dozen new homes, we recommend that the developer retain this natural setting as much as possible. Possible ways to accomplish this might include using woods-like landscaping rather than more commonly used grass and shrubbery, as now seen on the adjoining lots that were subdivided in the 1950s. New homes can be designed to harmonize with the Victorian-cottage character of the present house.
5. **that the street name(s) for the development be in keeping with historical street-naming conventions in Wellesley.** Throughout much of the history of the Town, roads in Wellesley were often named after important citizens or natural features, as a way of commemorating Wellesley's human and natural history. We would therefore recommend that the Town choose street names associated with the Property, such as Knowles Lane, Channing Road, or Fieldstone Way.

WHC believes that these recommendations enhance a sense of historical identity and would greatly benefit not just this particular development, but also the entire Town of Wellesley.

Because WHC was established by Town Meeting pursuant to G.L. c. 40, §8D and tasked with the statutory obligation to ensure "the preservation, protection and development of the historical or archaeological assets" of the Town, we respectfully request to be notified and consulted prior to the issuance by the Town of any permits required in the potential development of the Property.

We look forward to discussing the proposed development with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Wright". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

David Wright, Chairman
Wellesley Historical Commission

Enclosures.

cc: Barbara Searle, Chair, Board of Selectmen
Hans Larsen, Executive Director of General Government Services
Meghan Jop, Deputy Director of General Government Services
Michael Zehner, Planning Director
Michael Grant, Inspector of Buildings
Northland Residential Corporation

Photographs of 135 Great Plain Avenue



Main House



Guest House



Play house (front)



Play house (rear)



Stone gates along Great Plain Avenue

Attachment B

BIG NEWFOUNDLAND WON HONOR AT SHOW



CHIEFTAIN.
A Giant Prize Winning Newfoundland.

Newfoundlands are not largely represented at the dog shows in these days. Indeed they are scarce. There was one at Eastern Dog Club Show in Boston the past week, which attracted much attention. He was Chieftain, said to be the largest Newfoundland in the

world. Chieftain is owned by Dr M. J. Fenton of Wellesley and was the winner of the first prize in his class.

Chieftain stands 36½ inches high and the accompanying cut shows what a fine looking dog he is. He is an imported dog and was bred in England.

Boston Sunday Globe
February 27, 1921

GAIN IN POPULARITY

A very interesting article by Albert Mason in last Sunday's *Boston Herald* discloses the fact that one of Wellesley's own citizens, Dr. M. J. Fenton of Great Plain avenue, former president of the North American Newfoundland Club and prominent Boston dentist, is largely responsible for the return to favor of the Newfoundland dog.

During the winter of 1920, Dr. Fenton became interested in the breeding of Newfoundlands and set out to look for a thoroughbred dog. After having visited most of the dog dealers, he accidentally wandered into a store on Canal street, Boston, and inquired about the breed. He was shown a Newfoundland dog who was very ill. Dr. Fenton discovered the dog had a diseased foot. It was the ideal Newfoundland and Dr. Fenton purchased him. Removing him to his kennels in Wellesley, he completely cured the dog, which later became the great Champion Chieftain.

Chieftain is great-granddaddy to most of the Newfoundland dogs that are found in these environs today. In the Eastern Dog Club show of 1920, Dr. Fenton was the only exhibitor of the breed, showing his bitch, Champion Buzz. There is now an organization, the North American Newfoundland Club, whose sole purpose is to foster and encourage the breeding of the Newfoundland to a faultless standard and to have the canine recognized by judges during show competitions.

Wellesley Townsman
August 24, 1934

NEWFOUNDLANDS

Finest Newfoundland dogs in the world.
Championship blood. Puppies
and grown dogs for sale.

DR. M. J. FENTON

Wellesley - - - Massachusetts

American Kennel Gazette and Stud Book
July 31, 1922

Dr. Michael Fenton Died September 25

Dr. Michael J. Fenton of Great Plain avenue, Wellesley, a prominent Boston dentist, died at his home on September 25 following a short illness. He is survived by his wife, Genevieve Moffett Fenton.

Many years ago Dr. Fenton began to preserve the pure strain of the Newfoundland dog. He made a hobby of the breeding and raising of this kind of dog, and was known to dog fanciers all over the country as the owner of many very valuable ones, some of them being worth several thousand dollars apiece. To further express his love for the dogs, he had a cemetery established where he buried his departed canine friends and placed a cross at the head of each grave.

Dr. Fenton was one of Wellesley's old-time residents and made his home on his large estate near the Wellesley-Needham line.

Funeral services were held on Monday, September 27, at the Wellesley Funeral Home at 9:30 a. m. with a high mass of requiem at St. Paul's Church at 10 o'clock. Burial was in St. Joseph's Cemetery, West Roxbury.

Wellesley Townsman
October 1, 1937