

MINUTES OF WELLESLEY HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING OF OCTOBER 23, 2017.

Present: Members: Grant Brown (Chair), Lawrence McNally (Vice Chair), Jan Gleysteen, Neal Goins, Jacob Lilley, Vicki Schaufler, and Rise Shepsle.

Alternate Members: Robert Carley, Peter Fergusson, Vin Loccisano, Michael Racette, Elizabeth Shlala;

Advisory Member: Joshua Dorin

1. Brown called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. in the Great Hall, Wellesley Town Hall.
2. Citizen Speak: No citizens present chose to speak on matters not on the agenda.
3. Public Hearing – Demolition Review Bylaw :  
40 Beechwood Road (Application DR-2017-14)

Owners, John Bruno and Steve Petru, of Needham Miller LLC, 92 Millbrook Avenue, Walpole, MA, addressed the WHC. The house has been abandoned for five years. A prior owner had cut down all of the trees. The structure has considerable damage given its empty status for so long and the owners claimed that it would be difficult to remodel given the damage, though no outside expertise was provided.

Michael Zehner, Town of Wellesley Planning Director, provided a brief overview of the Planning Department review of the application. The house is American National Pyramidal Folk-type architecture. Based on town records, it has remained largely unchanged since its construction in 1928. Because of its period style and method of construction, especially in the context of buildings of similar style in the immediate surrounding neighborhood, the Planning Department recommends that the WHC deem the structure Preferably Preserved.

Brown invited comments from any neighbors present. Several neighbors addressed the WHC.

Trish Bradley, 32 Lexington Road, Wellesley, lives directly across the street. She described the structure and property as an “eyesore,” which is embarrassing to see, as a neighbor. She mentioned that the damage from the elements and wildlife are obvious.

Barbara Searle, 118 Parker Road, Wellesley, stated her agreement with Ms. Bradley’s comments, and added, that “everyone” in the neighborhood believes that the house is beyond repair. She pointed out, that there are at least 2 teardowns in the neighborhood, as well as several nearby houses that have had substantial additions.

Helen Evans, 18 Lexington Road, Wellesley, lives immediately adjacent to the Subject Property. She described the existing house as a “blight” on the neighborhood, and as being totally incompatible with the neighborhood.

Margaret Petrovich, 74 Beechwood Road, Wellesley, stated her agreement with the prior comments regarding the extent of the structure’s disrepair.

Stephen Aschettino, 40 Shirley Road, Wellesley, stated that the Subject Property is “the running joke of the neighborhood.”

WHC members had a general discussion regarding the Planning Department recommendation as well as the elements related to whether or not the structure should be deemed preferably preserved. While the five years of neglect by a prior owner are terribly unfortunate, the structure is a nice house. The strong and obviously sincere opinions of the neighbors are understandable, but relate more to its current appearance as a result of maintenance neglect, rather than how the structure fits into the neighborhood and also the potential that the structure could potentially be rehabilitated. If the structure truly is beyond repair and a threat to public health and safety per the Inspector of Buildings, then the preferably preserved process may be delayed.

Motion (Goins) to determine that the structure be deemed Preferably Preserved (Gleysteen seconded), based, in part, on it being a large corner lot and lynchpin of the surrounding neighborhood. Vote: 5 - 2 in favor.

In favor: Brown, Gleysteen, Goins, Lilley, and McNally.  
Opposed: Schaffler and Shepsle.

The Public Hearing for Application DR-2017-14 was closed.

4. Public Hearing – Demolition Review Bylaw:  
68 Beechwood Road (Application DR-2017-17)

Owners (as of October 30, 2017), Pamela and David Maltz, addressed the WHC. They are under contract to purchase the Subject Property on October 30, 2017. They plan to replace the existing structure with a small house that has a first floor master bedroom.

Michael Zehner, Town of Wellesley Planning Director, provided a brief overview of the Planning Department review of the application. The house was constructed in 1947. Although there are several other nearby houses built in a similar style, the Planning Department believes that the existing structure is of marginal historical architectural value to the town. The Planning Department recommends that the WHC deem the structure not Preferably Preserved.

Dorin provided historical information about the subject building and property. Neither the property nor the existing structure nor the prior owners have any particular historical significance to the Town of Wellesley.

Brown invited comments from any neighbors present. Several neighbors addressed the WHC.

Edward Petrovich, 74 Beechwood Road, Wellesley, lives directly adjacent to the Subject Property. He stated that he would “100% welcome” an improved house on the Subject Property.

Elyse Fishkin, 67 Beechwood Road, Wellesley, stated that she believes that the existing house is not of historical importance, and she would welcome a teardown.

Barbara Searle, 118 Parker Road, Wellesley, described the existing house as “tired,” and opined that a new house would be an improvement to the neighborhood.

Trish Bradley, 32 Lexington Road, Wellesley, wondered why this house should be allowed to be torn down when the prior applicant—whose house was in far worse structural shape--could not do the same.

Margaret Petrovich, 74 Beechwood Road, Wellesley, stated that the house might look “kept up” on the outside, but inside, it does not.

WHC members had a general discussion regarding the Planning Department recommendation as well as the elements related to whether or not the structure should be deemed preferably preserved. The existing house is of a common design style, and does not have particular architectural significance. A contrast was drawn between this house and the house located at 40 Beechwood Road, which is architecturally unique.

Motion (Goins) to determine that the structure be deemed not Preferably Preserved (Lilley seconded). Vote: 7 - 0 in favor:

The Public Hearing for Application DR-2017-17 was closed.

5. Public Hearing – Demolition Review Bylaw:  
42 Brook Street (Application DR-2017-19)

David Himmelberger, attorney for the owner, Katheryn Bowry, addressed the WHC. Attorney Himmelberger stated that the existing house was constructed in 1921. Over the years, various additions and bump outs have been added.

Michael Zehner, Town of Wellesley Planning Director, provided a brief overview of the Planning Department review of the application. The house is American Folk of “indeterminate” sub-type, because no one can tell what style it is. It was constructed in 1923, after a fire destroyed the prior structure. The Planning Department recommends that the WHC deem the structure not Preferably Preserved.

Brown invited comments from any neighbors present.

William Fulton, 46 Brook Street (abutter) stated that the house is a “cute little house,” which makes a positive contribution to the neighborhood. A very large portion of the rear yard is currently forested.

Dorin provided historical information about the subject building and property. The neighborhood is wedged in between two subdivisions (Marvin/Amherst Roads subdivision, developed in the 1930’s, and the Brook Street/Radcliffe Road subdivision, developed in the 1950’s and 1960’s). But, the Subject Property does not really fit in with either adjacent subdivision. Many of the houses in the neighborhood were built in the early 1900’s. Neither the property nor the existing structure nor the prior owners have any particular historical significance to the Town of Wellesley.

WHC members had a general discussion regarding the Planning Department recommendation as well as the elements related to whether or not the structure should be deemed preferably preserved. The house has no discernable features and is of no architectural distinction. It has been remodeled beyond any architectural recognition, except for a doorway arch.

Motion (Shepsle) to determine that the structure be deemed not Preferably Preserved (Lilley seconded). Vote: 7 - 0 in favor:

The Public Hearing for Application DR-2017-19 was closed.

6. Public Hearing – Waiver Review:  
5 Claflin Road (Application DR-2017-03)

The owner’s attorney, Laurence Shind, and architect, Henry Armato, addressed the Commission. Attorney Shind stated that the new design fits in well with the existing neighborhood, which is transitioning from small outdated houses to larger but still affordable homes. There are two large houses in the immediate area, located at 4 Claflin Road and 1 Durant Road, as well as a new larger house currently under construction located at 9 Claflin Road. Additionally, two large houses located in the adjacent neighborhood are visible from the Subject Property. The applicant submitted numerous letters from neighbors in support of the design of the proposed replacement house. Mr.

Armato described the fact that this project has already gone through two rounds of discussion with the town's Planning Board. The design features a Greek Revival motif and care was taken to break up the mass. Ken Lapper, a representative of the owner, stated that they did not feel that a renovation of the existing structure would be feasible. The owner notified neighbors of the proposed new structure and asked for their input, and received no negative feedback. The proposed house is set back ten feet farther from the street than the existing home. The proposed plan included a design plan elevation "A" and one labelled as "B". The applicant has chosen elevation "B," as suggested by the Planning Board

Brown invited comments from any neighbors present. No neighbors asked to speak.

WHC members had a general discussion regarding the waiver application. Members noted the inclusion of elements found in a neighboring house. Commission members discussed how the proposed new structure would fit into the neighborhood, taking into account its siting on the property, mass, front elevation, scale, and design elements. Some members expressed concern about the size (including the proposed house having 3 stories in height) of the proposed house, despite the design effort to reduce its mass. Unfortunately no effort was made to attempt a renovation design for the existing house. It was noted that the proposed plans were also concurrently under review by the town's Design Review Board and the Planning Board, and that the Commission's purview is relatively limited, and focuses more on its compatibility with the existing neighborhood.

Motion (Gleysteen) to approve the waiver application and reducing the delay, using the design plan elevation "B" drawings, as submitted, and subject to review by the town's Design Review Board and the Planning Board's Large House Review (Goins seconded).  
Vote: 7 - 0 in favor. The Planning Department will draft the required language for review and signature by the owner and the Historical Commission.

The Public Hearing for Application DR-2017-03 was closed.

7. Public Hearing – Demolition Review Bylaw:  
7 Wildon Street (Application DR-2017-04)

Owner, DNH Homes LLC's representative, Stanley Hargus addressed the Commission. Mr. Hargus stated that they attempted to design a house that approximately 3,600 square feet, and consistent with their conception of Wellesley's real estate market interest. Their engineer believes that a substantial portion of the existing structure would not support a second story, because it has a slab foundation. Also, the ceiling height on the second story is relatively low, further complicating any attempt at renovating it by addition. The owner produced drawings of a proposed house.

Brown invited comments from any neighbors present.

Kelly Uller, 3 Wildon Road, addressed the Commission. Ms. Uller stated that she was disappointed to see the plans for the proposed new house, and expressed dismay at how difficult it was to actually find the proposed plans. She believes that the planned house does not fit the character of the neighborhood.

WHC members had a general discussion regarding the waiver application. Members expressed concern that the planned new house did not fit the character of the neighborhood on many levels. The applicant agreed, and sought guidance from the Commission on what factors would be appropriate considerations for a revised proposal. The Commission members emphasized the importance of the appearance of the structure from the street vantage point and echoing the classic and common features and scale of the houses in the neighborhood.

Motion (Gleysteen) to continue the waiver application to the November 13, 2017 Commission hearing (Shepsle seconded). Vote: 7 - 0 in favor:

The Public Hearing for Application DR-2017-04 was continued, to the November 13, 2017 Commission hearing.

8. Minutes: At the suggestion of a Commission member, future minutes will incorporate by reference as an attachment to the minutes any written summary of Supplemental Information about subject properties prepared by Dorin and distributed at the meetings.

After discussion and review of the draft minutes of the WHC meeting of October 11, 2017, it was moved by Shepsle, seconded by Goins, and passed unanimously to approve the minutes as amended of the WHC meeting of October 11, 2017.

9. House Plaque Approvals: Discussion was deferred to the next WHC meeting.
10. CPC Projects: Historic House Research: Brown reported that contract has not yet been signed. Discussion was deferred to the next WHC meeting.
11. CPC Projects: Villages Project: Brown reported that the proposal is still being refined, but he hopes to have an update to the Commission members at the next WHC meeting. If completed, the Commission will discuss whether the project is ready to begin.
12. CPC Projects: Fells Branch Library Roof: Shepsle, Slocum and Lilley have begun discussions with the Facilities Maintenance Department related to CPC funds and that the exact amount was still under consideration. A Commission member suggested that the application mention that although cedar roof shingles initially cost more, they end up costing less in the long term, because they have a longer life expectancy than “less expensive” alternatives. Builder grade asphalt shingles (which have been approved by the

Concord Historic District) could be a possible alternative suggestion if the historically-accurate cedar shingles are ultimately rejected.

13. Project Updates: Beebe Plaque: Goins and McNally will obtain information from former WHC member, Dwight Lueth, regarding the status of his past efforts, and will follow up, as appropriate. Brown will distribute to Commission members pictures of historic plaques that he took on a recent visit to Charleston, SC.

14. Project Updates: Single Historic Districts: Planning Board liaison, Catherine Johnson addressed the Commission, and pointed out the logistics and the impending time deadline (mid-to late November) associated with submitting a proposal for a warrant for vote at the Spring 2018 Town Meeting.

Schauffler will attempt to contact the owners of 4 Oakland Street within the next week regarding their interest in this designation for their property.

Fergusson will attempt to contact a member of the Murray family regarding their possible interest in this designation for their property.

15. Project Updates: Historic Articles and/or Awards:

Goins and Gleysteen will draft potential articles describing the work of the Commission, for possible publication in The Wellesley Townsman.

16. Miscellaneous: Alternative Member Slocum has determined to move to an Advisory Member of the Commission. Schauffler and Shepsle will explore and report to the Commission names for consideration as his replacement.

Lilley suggested that the Commission draft a document providing some guidance to the community and potential applicants regarding what the Commission takes into account when deciding whether a house should or should not be Preferably Preserved.

17. Upcoming Meeting: November 13, 2017 at 7 p.m. in the Great Hall, Wellesley Town Hall.

18. It was moved by Shepsle, and seconded by Lilley, and passed unanimously, to adjourn the meeting at 10:41 p.m.