

**Meeting of the Wellesley Historical Commission  
20 March 2018  
Great Hall, Wellesley Town Hall  
Wellesley, Massachusetts**

Present: Members: Grant Brown (Chair), Vicki Schaffler, Rise Shepsle, Jan Gleysteen, Neil Goins, Jake Lilley and Robert Carley (by designation of Chair)

Alternate Members: Peter Fergusson, Michael Racette, Elizabeth Shlala

Advisory Member: Joshua Dorin

Chairman Brown called the meeting to order at 7:05

Carley designated by Chairman Brown as a voting member in McNally's stead.

**WAIVER HEARING**

**Waiver Hearing DR - 2018 – 20 (8 Old Farm Rd)**

Member Jan Gleysteen recused himself (family relationship with Owner's architect).

Present for petitioners: Owner Marcia Abbott, Attorney David Himmelberger representing Owner; Architect Gleysteen.

Owner's architect Gleysteen went through the plans for the proposed home.

Dorin asked about height and grading. Shepsle asked upon which criterion the preservation determination was made. Brown et al. answered second criteria and talked about how the fit into the neighborhood was relevant.

Shepsle asked Gleysteen to discuss the historical aspects of design for the new home. Gleysteen discussed historic scale and materials, Greek and Italianate influences and massing. Lilley commented on the architectural merits of the new home; noted that the waiver hearing needs take into account the discussion during the preservation determination hearing and reasons the vote to preferably preserve the structure was taken. Brown echoed that sentiment.

Claudia Zarazua (Planner, Town of Wellesley Planning Department) noted that there is a large house review coming and that it is a possibility that the Historical Commission's waiver hearing could remain open while the large house review process is undertaken.

**Goins Moved to continue the hearing; Shepsle seconded. Unanimous in favor [Member Gleysteen did not vote, as he had recused himself].**

## PRESERVATION DETERMINATION HEARINGS

### DR 2018-05 (7 Priscilla Road)

Present for Petitioner: Owner Joe Fanning, Atty. Himmelberger, Mr. Silverstein (Copper Leaf Development)

Catherine Johnson, 22 Standish Road, spoke about the history and present state of the neighborhood. She is chair of the Standish Road Neighborhood Conservation District Study Committee. She conveyed that the neighbors are concerned that the loss of the subject house would be detrimental to the neighborhood and would like to see it preserved.

Johnson provided a detailed history of the neighborhood and the initial subdivision. Historic Builder (Dunlavy) was the favorite builder of Royal Barry Wills. Standish neighborhood has the largest collection of Royal Barry Wills houses in Town. Subject house has all the most important characteristics of Wills design: center chimney, proportioned windows, doors, etc.

Shepsle asked about the proportions in the neighborhood. Johnson proceeded to discuss several homes in the neighborhood in detail, including newly constructed dwellings.

Himmelberger indicated that the house has to go before ZBA because lot is non-conforming. Also noted that the neighborhood is not as uniform as it might seem at first blush.

Owner indicated that he conducted a significant amount of research on the house and even talked with Royal Barry Wills's granddaughter. The granddaughter indicated that her Grandfather (Wills) had not designed or built this house. Owner indicated that the house was built by one Lind (Lindt?) and family. Owner also talked with Lind family. Owner also presented his view of the neighborhood.

Goins indicated that in view of the entire neighborhood, he believed that the Commission was almost duty-bound to vote to preserve the home.

Shepsle commented on the fit of the existing home within the neighborhood.

**Goins moved to preserve the home based on Criterion (ii) of the definition of "Preferably Preserved in the Historic Preservation Demolition Review Bylaw (Article 43 Wellesley Bylaws); Shepsle seconded. Unanimous vote to preserve.**

Brown encouraged Petitioners to return to the Commission with an application for a waiver.

Petitioner indicated that a new home is still being designed, and while it would likely not be a cape-style, he would take care to ensure that it fits within the neighborhood.

Lilley cautioned the Petitioner to be wary of vertical growth on account of setbacks (non-conforming lot) and to mind the roofline. He provided additional examples of particular things to consider.

Fergusson added that the landscape is a good example of New England vernacular. No fence, foundation plantings all are very appropriate topography is respected.

Shepsle indicated that she would like to see a waiver hearing begin with petitioner showing which characteristics of the neighborhood and the existing home have been considered in the new design.

### **DR 2018-09 (680 Worcester St.)**

Neither the owner, nor any representatives thereof appeared.

Dorin commented on the history of the home. It was built on part of a tract purchased by Albion Clapp. Albion Clapp, a well-known historical figure in Town, built the home. One of the owners over the years was Robert List, who was a pioneer of affordable housing in Wellesley and another prominent person in Town.

Carley asked Dorin to comment on the history of this portion of the Town and of the development of the public way now known as Worcester Street or Route 9.

Dorin gave a brief history beginning with the 1810 Worcester Turnpike, the later use of the median thereof by the Boston-Worcester Street Railway Company's street car, and the widening of the right of way by the Commonwealth approximately around the 1930s.

**Goins moved that the house NOT be deemed preferably preserved; Schaffler seconded. Unanimous vote that the house NOT be deemed preferably preserved.**

### **DR 2018-10 (12 Earle Rd)**

Owners Kevin and Laura Brady appeared and gave an overview of the current use of the home and their reasons for wishing to demolish the property. Owners presented a petition signed by several neighbors and owners of homes in the neighborhood tending to indicate that the signers would not oppose demolition.

Owners discussed what they might build. Owners also presented their findings of a survey of surrounding homes in the neighborhood in an effort to determine which changes have been made to the surrounding properties.

Carley clarifies that both documents (petition and the owners' surveys of improvements to the surrounding homes) are being entered into the record at the public hearing.

Brown encouraged all to stay focused on the existing structure during this preservation hearing.

Neighbor Margot Laksig, who lives at 11 Martin Rd., spoke. She was surprised to learn of the petition to demolish. She indicated that she expanded her home from 1,200-2,200 sq ft. without

demolishing it. She has expressed concerns about the neighborhood. She also conveyed her belief that young families cannot move into Town anymore, except perhaps into this neighborhood. Indicated that new construction at 43 Cleveland in her backyard is “not consistent” with the neighborhood.

Another neighbor (immediate backyard abutter, Barbara Waszczak – 9 Martin Rd.) also spoke before the Commission. She is concerned about losing her view and the solace of her backyard to a larger structure that might be built by Petitioner. She expressed concern about an imposing building coming closer to her property.

Neighbor Debra Classon (18 Earle Rd.) also appeared and indicated that she did a renovation of her home 25 years ago. Said that they were able to get the space that they needed, but were able to maintain their saltbox shape and other historical aspects of the home. She expressed appreciation that petitioners have approached the neighbors about their plans. She is hoping for architectural consistency going forward. She applauded Petitioners desire to stay within the neighborhood and their articulated desire to build something architecturally appropriate.

Zarazua (Planning Department) then articulated the findings of the Department.

Shlala asked about the other homes in the neighborhood – is this really the same style as the other houses?

Gleysteen said there is a consistency through the neighborhood with the size and scale of the neighborhood with many buildings having colonial elements.

Shepsle spoke about the history of the demo review bylaw and the goal of preserving the context of neighborhoods like this one.

Mr. Brady spoke about his affection for the neighborhood, but took issue with a characterization that the houses in the neighborhood are the same. He said they fit together, yet they are not all the same. Noted also that one way or another Petitioner’s house will come down because the economics are such that preservation/remodeling will not work.

Brown spoke on the character of the neighborhood and its consistent homes.

Goins spoke on the general characteristics of the neighborhood and its coherence. Talked about the constraints on what the Commission is allowed to consider at this juncture.

Dorin spoke on the history of the construction of the neighborhood. While the Fells area was [speculatively] built (including this neighborhood) many subdivisions were built by the same person (in this case Fred Martin and Son), who took care to ensure coherence within the subdivision.

**Goins moved to preserve the home based on Criterion (ii) of the definition of “Preferably Preserved in the Historic Preservation Demolition Review Bylaw (Article 43 Wellesley Bylaws); Shepsle seconded. Unanimous vote to preserve.**

Brown discussed what petitioners might do in the waiver process.

Lilley commented on the minding the scale of the house and its relationship to the site.

#### **Agenda Item 4. Approval of Minutes/New Business**

There was a discussion of an RFP for consulting assistance and whether it will work for both the Historical Commission and the Historical District Commission.

Commission architects (Lilley, Gleysteen) have noticed some things that they believe would help to give guidance to petitioners entering the waiver process.

Additional discussion followed concerning creating a guidelines-type document to give to petitioners and to encourage the Planning Department staff to play a more active role in counseling applicants/petitioners and in conveying the substance of the counseling to the Commission.

Fergusson expressed concern about what he perceived as a reliance on a home “fitting in”. He said he was looking forward to a hearing on something that doesn’t fit in, but which has a scale and massing that comports with the context of the neighborhood. Indicated that the Commission needed to leave the door open for innovation and expressed concern about living in a “colonial morass”.

Discussion followed.

Returning to the matter of the minutes of the 12 February 2018 meeting of the Commission, there were no requested edits.

**Goins moved to approve the minutes of the Commissions 12 February 2018 Meeting; seconded by Schaffler. Unanimous vote in favor.**

#### **Agenda Item 5. House Plaque Approvals**

Brown has randomly generated a list of properties to be presented to consultant to generate 5 samples of what they will do to create reports for the historic home database.

#### **Agenda Item 6. Project Updates**

Beebe Plaque – Neal reaching out to McNally about the plaque.

Architectural guidelines for demolition review waiver petitions were discussed.

Articles about historic properties – Neal and Jan submitted a draft, Brown reviewing.

Discussion of home renovations to be nominated for the historical preservation awards. Dorin also wants to submit nominations for historically accurate or respectful historical renovations.

Brown to create and submit list of nominees for a vote of the Commission.

Brown sent a letter regarding the preservation of the “Focus Stairs’ in the Wellesley College science center to the President of Wellesley College.

8 Lowell Road follow up: Brown has talked with Michael Zehner (Planning Director, Town of Wellesley) about inviting the owners back before the Commission discuss the future of the home. Dorin discussed procedures in other communities – use of subcommittees, etc.

Morses Pond Bath House: Brown has asked to participate with the Recreation Department’s efforts. Dorin suggested talking with Joe McDonough in the Facilities Maintenance Department. There are apparently few records or information concerning the historical aspect of the building.

Elm Bank Master Plan – Mass. Horticultural Society Gardens Director reached out to the Commission to see if Commission would like to participate on their advisory committee concerning the Gardens. Gleysteen and Goins both expressed interest. Catherine Johnson (in her role as the Planning Board’s liaison to the Commission) mentioned that bridge carrying Cheney Rd. over the Charles River is a Scenic Road, is historic and the Commission should pay particular attention to that.

Brown indicated that Shepsle suggested a retreat for the Commission to take stock of how the Commission is doing and what can be improved, etc.

Discussion of reference materials for Commission members.

**Brown moved to adjourn at 10:41; Carley seconded. Unanimous approval.**

Respectfully submitted,

Robert M. Carley