

Wellesley Historical Commission
Zoom Meeting – January 12, 2026
Meeting Minutes

Call to Order/Confirmation of Participants

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 PM. Chair Michael Racette confirmed the presence of five commission members: Michael Racette (Chair), Alex Gavis (Vice Chair), Larry McNally (Secretary), Tom Paine, and Michael Greco. It was noted that Liz Cahill was absent. Alannah Rivera from the Planning Department was also in attendance.

Citizen Speak

There were no citizens who wished to speak on matters not on the agenda.

Public Hearings – Preservation Determinations

DR-2025-60 202 Cedar Street (Continued from 12/8/25)

Ms. Rivera presented the staff report for 202 Cedar Street, noting that the house was built around 1903 by William J. Pendergast, a carpenter and builder. She described the home as eclectic with elements of colonial revival and shingle style. The exterior has remained largely unchanged since construction. The staff report indicated that the house did not meet the criteria for preferably preserved status.

Attorney David Himmelberger, representing the current owner 202 Cedar LLC (John Anderson, Manager), stated that the building was not historically significant and noted that it had numerous additions, creating an odd mix of architectural styles when viewed from all sides. He mentioned that there was only one other home nearby from the same era.

Several commission members expressed their opinion that the property should be preserved due to its age (over 120 years) and the character it adds to the town. Mr. McNally noted that any additions could always be removed, and Mr. Racette mentioned that the house fits well with the neighborhood despite the surrounding homes being of different styles.

Motion: Mr. Gavis moved to determine that the building located at 202 Cedar Street should be preferably preserved and therefore imposing a 12-month delay from today's date on the issuance of a demolition permit for the building. Seconded by: Mr. McNally.

Vote: 5-0 in favor

DR-2025-61 45 Mayo Road

Ms. Rivera presented the staff report for 45 Mayo Road, explaining that this property had previously come before the commission under previous ownership. The house, a colonial revival "Porter Colonial," was built around 1947 by Ralph and Ethel Porter. The facade has retained its traditional colonial revival style since it was built, though there was a rear addition in 1990. The neighborhood, known as the Fells, was once part of the Mayo Family Farm, and contains several Porter Colonials, many of which have been renovated or reconstructed.

The current owner, Mr. Barton Prives, stated his desire to build a new house on the property. When asked by Mr. Racette about his response to the staff recommendation for preservation, Mr. Prives noted that several houses nearby have already been rebuilt or redone.

Commission members agreed with the staff recommendation that the home should be preserved as a good example of a Porter Colonial that fits with the neighborhood character.

Motion: Mr. Gavis moved to determine that the building located at 45 Mayo Road should be preferably preserved, therefore imposing a 12-month delay from today's date on the issuance of a demolition permit for the building. Seconded by: Mr. Paine.

Vote: 5-0 in favor

DR-2025-63 25 Sheridan Road

Ms. Rivera presented the staff report for 25 Sheridan Road, noting that this property had also been before the commission recently under different ownership. The colonial revival cape-style home was built around 1940 by the Housing Corporation and designed by architect Gustav A. Hagen. It features a steep gambrel roof, saltbox style in the rear, and prominent central chimney. The neighborhood, Sheridan Estates, historically had deed restrictions requiring homes to be in harmony with existing structures, resulting in a cohesive neighborhood despite various home styles.

Attorney Himmelberger, representing the current owner, 25 Sheridan Road LLC (David Silverstein), acknowledged that the property was previously determined to be preferably preserved and stated he did not have a basis to ask the commission to change its decision.

Mr. Racette noted that the Sheridan Estates neighborhood has had successful renovations and preservation of homes and agreed with the Planning Department's assessment that the home fits well with the area despite being different from surrounding houses.

Motion: Mr. Gavis moved to determine that the building located at 25 Sheridan Road should be preferably preserved and therefore imposing a 12-month delay from today's date on the issuance of a demolition permit for the building. Seconded by: Mr. Greco.

Vote: 5-0 in favor

DR-2025-65 7 Woodcliff Road

Ms. Rivera presented the staff report for 7 Woodcliff Road, describing the colonial revival style home built around 1933, presumably by Wallace Temple, a notable builder in the Cliff Estates and Wellesley Farms area. The house features a symmetrical facade, centered entry with triangular pediment, and Corinthian pilasters. The attached garage and sunroom are original to the home, with a family room and dining room addition constructed in 1984. The property is located in the Cliff Estates, which was developed by Haynes and Hernandez in the late 1920s, and many surrounding homes were designed by prominent local architects.

The property owners, Paul and Phyllis Schnitman, who have owned the home since 1982, were present but did not offer extensive comments.

A neighbor, Ms. Leif-Ann Tuohey from 15 Woodcliff Road, spoke in favor of preserving the house, stating that it "positively adds to the wonderful character of our neighborhood."

Commission members praised the house's beauty and historical significance. Mr. Racette noted that the home has had few owners and minimal renovations, which he felt spoke to how

well it was built and how well it functions. Mr. McNally expressed hope that the owners could find a way to renovate and expand while preserving the core structure.

Motion: Mr. Gavis moved to determine that the building located at 7 Woodcliff Road should be preferably preserved and therefore imposing a 12-month delay from today's date on the issuance of a demolition permit for the building. Seconded by: Mr. Paine.

Vote: 5-0 in favor

Public Hearings - Waivers

DR-2025-55 10 Alba Road (Continued from 12/8/25)

Attorney Himmelberger, representing the owner, explained that this matter was continued from the previous meeting because Ms. Cahill, the commission's architect member, was not present. He noted that the design presented was virtually identical to another home at 32 Wall Street that had previously received favorable waiver approval.

Mr. Ethan Eckstrom, the architectural designer, presented three design options, all of which incorporated changes requested at the previous meeting, including:

- Adding a fourth column to the farmer's porch
- Modified dormer designs over the garage
- Dropping window heights to be proportional
- Adding flared eaves to emphasize the main facade

The commission discussed the three options, with Mr. Paine expressing a preference for Option C due to its simpler roofline. Mr. Gavis and others were concerned about drainage from the flat roof area in front of the windows in Option C, which Mr. Eckstrom assured would have proper pitch and detailing to prevent issues.

Mr. McNally expressed concerns about the garage being six inches wider than the residential portion of the house and questioned whether the garage could be pushed back further to subordinate it visually.

Motion: Mr. Gavis moved for the Wellesley Historical Commission to approve the waiver of a preferably preserved determination for the building located at 10 Alba Road with the approval of Option C in the plans presented to the commission at this meeting.

Seconded by: Mr. Greco. Vote: 4-1 in favor (Mr. McNally opposed)

DR-2025-57 45 Windsor Road (Continued from 12/8/25)

Attorney Himmelberger, representing the record owner, noted this was the third time the project had come before the commission. After the first meeting, the project was redesigned with the driveway flipped to the right side. The team had committed to ensuring stormwater runoff would be reduced by 5% in rate and volume.

Ms. Katya Podsiadlo, landscape architect, presented the landscape plan which would preserve 95% of existing trees, with only two trees over 6 inches in diameter being removed. She detailed the permeable walkway, terraced bluestone patios, and native plantings planned for the property.

Mr. Mark Iacocca, designer, presented three alternative designs for the front facade, focusing on different dormer and roof options. He explained the changes made based on previous commission feedback, including reducing the size of windows and lowering lanterns flanking the front door.

Several neighbors expressed concerns:

- Ms. Marla Robinson (33 Windsor Road) was concerned about two driveways being placed next to each other, which would be anomalous for the neighborhood, and questioned the structural integrity of the neighbor's driveway.
- Ms. Nancy Westenberg (50 Windsor Road) raised concerns about lighting, requesting dark-sky compliant fixtures to protect wildlife corridors, and expressed concern about the amount of pavement replacing grass and trees.
- Dr. Michael Raizman (49 Windsor Road), the downhill abutter, expressed concerns about groundwater mounding and potential basement flooding due to the new construction and positioning of the house closer to his property line.

Mr. Stanley Brooks, the attorney representing the Raizmans, explained that the design of the house directly affects surface runoff, and therefore stormwater is something that the commission should consider in their discussion of the design of the house.

Mr. Scott Horsley, a hydrologist representing the Raizmans, clarified that his concern was not surface runoff but rather groundwater mounding and infiltration that could cause basement flooding.

Mr. Paul Beaulieu, representing the applicant, explained that professional engineers would analyze both stormwater runoff and groundwater mounding as part of the Natural Resource Commission process, though typically mounding analysis would not be required.

After extensive discussion, the commission determined that while water management was a legitimate concern, it was not within their primary purview as a historical commission. They focused instead on the design elements of the house.

Motion: Mr. Gavis moved for the approval of a waiver of preferably preserved determination for the building located at 45 Windsor Road by the Wellesley Historical Commission with the approval based on: 1) all lighting being dark sky compliant, 2) that the applicant work with the town to obtain approval from the town engineer that the groundwater rate, flow, mounding, and ground infiltration does not run afoul of any town or state rules, regulations, or ordinances, and 3) that the commission designate Liz Cahill to work with the applicant on the final design elements, including the pediment, the doorway, and roofline, with the commission representative having final approval over the roofline, and if Ms. Cahill is unable to serve, then Mr. Racette will serve in that capacity. Seconded by: Mr. Greco. Vote: 5-0 in favor

DR-2025-58 31 Old Farm Road

Attorney Himmelberger introduced Mr. Christopher Russ, the project architect, who presented plans for a new colonial revival style house to replace the existing structure at 31 Old Farm Road.

Mr. Russ showed site plans, elevations, and renderings of the proposed house, which features a symmetrical front facade, dormers, clapboard siding, and exterior red brick chimneys. He

noted that the neighborhood contained a variety of architectural styles and that the existing non-conforming structure would be replaced with a conforming building.

The commission had few concerns about the design. Mr. Gavis inquired about the lack of windows on the rear wall of an accessory dwelling unit/recreation space, suggesting some design element be added to break up the blank wall. Mr. Russ indicated they had considered adding decorative panels to address this issue.

No neighbors or members of the public spoke regarding this application.

Motion: Mr. Gavis moved to approve the waiver of a preferably preserved determination for the building at 31 Old Farm Road by the Wellesley Historical Commission as discussed at this meeting. Seconded by: Mr. McNally. Vote: 5-0 in favor

Stanwood House Preservation Restriction Discussion

This item was tabled to the next meeting.

Maugus Hill Historical Significance Discussion

This item was tabled to the next meeting.

592 Washington Street Discussion

This item was tabled to the next meeting.

Review/Approve Minutes – 11/10/25 & 12/8/25

This item was tabled to the next meeting when more members would be present who attended those meetings.

Review Next Meeting Date

The next meeting was confirmed for February 9, 2026.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 10:20 PM.