

**Meeting of the
Wellesley Historical Commission
15 April 19:00**

**Meeting Convened via Zoom Video Conference In Accordance with the
Emergency Orders of the Governor of the Commonwealth in Response to
The COVID-19 Pandemic**

1. Call to Order:

Chairman Brown called the meeting to order at approximately 19:03.

Members Present: Brown, Lilley, McNally, Shepsle, Greco, and Racette (sitting for Schauffler by designation of the Chair); Shlala.

Alternate Members Present: Fergusson, Carley, Maitin

Advisory Member Present: Dorin

2. Citizen Speak

No speakers called into the conference line for the purpose of Citizen Speak.

3. Public Hearings on Applications for Demolition

3a. DR-2020-09: 11 Wildon Road

Mr. Sobell, Owner, introduced and made his case for not finding the property preferably preserved.

Ms. Dana Marks, Planner for the Wellesley Planning Department delivered the report of the Department, which recommended a finding that the building not be preferably preserved.

Mr. Dorin reminded the Commission that there have been four other demolition applications from this neighborhood. He also provided some additional history of the neighborhood, including that it was Ralph Porter's first fully-fledged subdivision in town and incorporated more architectural variety than his subsequent subdivisions.

A neighbor, Anthony Munchak of 16 Wildon Road, called into the conference line to indicate that he did not object to the rehabilitation or demolition of the home.

Mr. Sobell indicated that he does not intend to demolish the house for his own use; he seeks to improve the marketability of the home itself.

Mr. Lilley spoke about the pattern of development on the street. He noted the smaller widths of the lots (smaller frontages) led to a pattern of single car garages. He opined that each house on the street has a very similar feel, which he believed was a product of the aforementioned dimensional concerns.

Chairman Brown echoed Mr. Lilley's comments and emphasized how well-preserved the neighborhood at large was.

Mr. Racette echoed the sentiments of Mr. Lilley and Chairman Brown.

Mr. Greco also agreed with the comments of the previous members.

Mr. Charney spoke a bit about the market conditions.

There was a brief discussion of the current moratorium on building activity in the town because of the COVID-19 pandemic and Declaration of Emergency and other Emergency Orders issued by the governor of the Commonwealth.

Mr. Sobell reiterated that his intent was to get over the Historic Preservation Demolition Review Bylaw. "speed bump" as he tried to market the property.

Ms. Kelly Uller, 3 Wildon Road, called in. She asked about opportunities to preserve the neighborhood in general.

Chairman Brown discussed some of the tools available to neighborhoods under state law and the Town by-laws to preserve neighborhoods.

Mr. Lilley added some commentary about opportunities to review design under the Town bylaws.

There was some discussion about the other development review processes in Town.

McNally moved that the building be preferably preserved based on the building being historically or architecturally important by reason of period, style, method of building construction or association with a particular architect or builder, either by itself or in the context of a group of Buildings. Lilley Seconded. Roll-call vote because of remote participation under applicable law and the emergency orders: McNally: Yes; Racette: Yes; Greco: Yes; Lilley: Yes; Brown: yes (Unanimous in favor). Delay was imposed.

3b. DR-2020-10: 2 Jackson Road

Neither the Owners, nor their representatives appeared on the videoconference line for the hearing. Owners/Applicants notified Ms. Marks that they did not plan to attend, but wished for the hearing to go forward.

Ms. Dana Marks delivered the report of the Planning Department, which recommended a finding that the building not be preferably preserved.

Mr. Dorin indicated that he thought that the historical significance of the structure was better viewed in light of criterion (ii) rather than criterion (i) of the Historic Preservation and Demolition Review Bylaw. He indicated that the home's architecture individually, and with respect to its immediately surrounding properties, is historically significant and indicated that he thought it should be preferably preserved.

Ms. Shepsle indicated that she agreed with Mr. Dorin, in particular with respect to its fit into this end of Jackson Road.

Mr. Racette also agreed with Mr. Dorin's comments.

Mr. Brown commented on the difference between different sections of Jackson Road, the "other" side of Jackson Road having undergone significant relatively recent redevelopment. He talked about the houses of similar style, massing, setback, etc. He also highlighted that the house is in a very visible location, and in an area important to the history of the town, adjacent Longfellow Pond and one of the oldest houses in town.

Mr. Lilley echoed the previously made comments and also talked about a successful renovation in the neighborhood.

Mr. Greco indicated that he also believes the home should be deemed preferably preserved.

McNally moved that the building be preferably preserved based on the building being historically or architecturally important by reason of period, style, method of building construction or association with a particular architect or builder, either by itself or in the context of a group of Buildings. Lilley Seconded. Roll-call vote because of remote participation under applicable law and the emergency orders: McNally: Yes; Racette: Yes; Shlala: Yes; Greco: Yes; Lilley: Yes; Brown: yes (Unanimous in favor). Delay was imposed.

4. Waiver Hearings

4a. DR-2020-02: 9 Durant Road

Attorney Himmelberger, on behalf of the Trustee Owner of the Property (Ms. Anita Spigulis-DeSnyder who also appeared), appeared and argued in favor of granting the waiver. He indicated in particular that the pyramidal structure of the proposed home was intended to evoke the architectural features of some of the surrounding homes.

Ms. Marks reviewed the terms of the bylaw applicable to this waiver application.

Atty. Himmelberger added that 1) a number of neighbors have entered letters of support into the record; and 2) indicated that the project has to go to the ZBA for a Special Permit, and requested that the hearing be left open if the Commission did not grant a waiver.

Chairman Brown discussed the context of the neighborhood with visual aids (street level views screen-shared with other members during the videoconference). He also expressed concerns about the massing of the proposed structure with respect to the other homes on the street, indicating that the proposed home would be considerably more massive than the existing home.

There was a discussion about a discrepancy in the plans w/r/t the height of the proposed structure.

Ms. Spigulis-DeSnyder pointed out that the street view that was shown on the screen share during the videoconference was a bit dated as the house across the way was no longer a bungalow, but was now a 2-story home.

Mr. Lilley asked whether the Petitioner had explored a side facing garage. Mr. Himmelberger indicated that a side garage could have presented side setback issues.

Mr. Dorin reviewed the purpose of the waiver process. He then proceeded to discuss some of the other architectural features of the proposed home, and how they did not really comport with the other historical architectural features of the neighborhood.

Chairman Brown provided some examples of homes considered in other waiver hearings around town and highlighted how those had adopted some of the features of some of the surrounding homes in the neighborhood. He indicated that the proposed home did not seem to take into account any of the surrounding homes.

There was an extended discussion of the neighborhood context, and of several specific homes in the neighborhood.

Mr. Lilley made some comments on the architectural and stylistic considerations of the home as they compare to more traditional New England architectural styles. He added several comments about massing and the siting of the house and garage on the lot.

Atty. Himmelberger suggested that a continuance might be in order to take some of the comments raised by the Commission into consideration.

Mr. Fergusson made some additional comments about the placement of the garage. He also talked about the large expanse of the roof.

McNally moved to continue the hearing until May 11, 2020. Seconded Shlala. Roll-call vote because of remote participation under applicable law and the emergency orders: McNally: Yes; Racette: Yes; Shlala: Yes; Greco: Yes; Lilley: Yes; Brown: yes (Unanimous in favor)

5. Approval of Minutes

February minutes were considered. Several edits were requested, which Chairman Brown made.

McNally moved to approve minutes of the February 10, 2020 meeting of the Commission. Seconded Greco. Roll-call vote because of remote participation under applicable law and the emergency orders: McNally: Yes; Racette: Yes; Shlala: Yes; Greco: Yes; Lilley: Yes; Brown: yes (Unanimous in favor).

6. Approval of FY 21 Meeting Calendar

September 14 meeting was moved to September 15, 2020. Other calendar considerations were discussed

Racette moved to approve the calendar as presented with the change of September 14 to September 15. Seconded McNally. Roll-call vote because of remote participation under applicable law and the emergency orders: McNally: Yes; Racette: Yes; Shlala: Yes; Greco: Yes; Lilley: Yes; Brown: yes (Unanimous in favor).

7. New Business

Chairman Brown inquired about personnel to fill the open positions on the Commission. Ms. Maitin indicated that there might be some folks who had expressed interest in the Historic District Commission who might also be interested in the Historical Commission.

Beebe Plaque update – folks in association seem to be onboard but there are financial issues to resolve. There was a discussion of potential nominees for awards for historically sensitive renovation awards.

8. Adjournment

Chairman Brown adjourned the meeting at 21:25.