

**WELLESLEY HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
CALLED MEETING & PUBLIC HEARING
JUNE 11, 2019, 6:30 PM
GREAT HALL - WELLESLEY TOWN HALL**

Members Present: Chair David Smith, Vice Chair Lisa Abeles, Eric Cohen, Amy Griffin, Emily Maitin, Edwina McCarthy, Tom Paine

Staff: Victor Panak, Senior Planner

Others Present: Brian Menna, Catherine Johnson, Peter Litman, Devin O'Reilly, Richard Blond, several additional members of the public who did not identify themselves or sign-in.

Call to Order. David Smith called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm.

Public Hearing HDC 19-02 – 30 Cottage Street – Certificate of Appropriateness. Mr. Smith introduced the Continuation of the Public Hearing for the Certificate of Appropriateness for changes to 30 Cottage Street and asked that Brian Menna, the owner of the property, join the Commission at the table.

Mr. Menna distributed revised drawings to the Commission members and said that the scope of the work had not changed but that some details have been added since the last hearing in March [April 4, 2019 and May 7, 2019]. He said that the front door did not change, but that some details for the porch enclosure did.

Mr. Smith reflected that the Commission had questions about what windows would be used in specific locations; Mr. Menna said that the windows on the core structure on the front elevation would be wooden, as would the windows on the main body of the house on the driveway side. Other windows for the house would be the Marvin Integrity Series.

Ms. Abeles, who said that she had asked for the additional detail drawings at the March meeting, said that these had been provided, and reviewed each with Mr. Menna, suggesting a few adjustments:

- Sheet A-10. Jam detail #2: Thicken the corner board so it protrudes in front of the window jam by about ½ inch.
- Sheet A-10. Detail #1-C: Clarify the all sill profiles are 2” and that the note “EX” means “Exterior” rather than “Existing” and applies to all windows.
- Sheet A-10. Detail #1 (and #2): Dimension for the corner board needs to be given; Ms. Abeles made the suggestion that it be a standard 5-1/2 inches.

Mr. Cohen asked if these adjustments would be incorporated in the Conditions for the Certificate of Appropriateness.

Ms. Abeles and Mr. Menna discussed with Mr. Cohen whether the original corner boards that might be under the siding were in any way visible and that the appropriate course of action would be to match what was original, using a standard 5-1/2” measure if no original corner board could be found.

Ms. Abeles continued to review the detail drawings:

- Sheet A-11. Detail #5 vs. #1. Two types of eave details are shown. Ms. Abeles asked whether it was the architect's intent to build in a soffit or leave the rafter tails exposed. Mr. Menna indicated that the plan was to leave the rafter tails exposed.

Mr. Cohen noted this revision and reiterated that "EX" needs to be clarified here as well so that it is clear than the abbreviation means "Exterior" not "Existing".

Ms. Abeles and Mr. Menna agreed that the rafter detail should follow Detail #5 and that the original detail on the house, which would be visible once the siding is removed, should drive the decision. Mr. Menna reiterated that it was his intent to keep the integrity of the house and that, when the aluminum siding is removed, he will replicate the original throughout.

Ms. Abeles said that there was one additional adjustment:

- Sheets A-11, A-3.1, and A-3.2. Rev. Porch Encl. Typ. There should be one additional batten added under the center of each window. Mr. Menna agreed.

Mr. Smith asked if anyone else on the Commission had any other concerns. There was a short discussion to verify that the windows were to be as described above.

Mr. Smith moved to grant the Certificate of Appropriateness noting that the alterations that Ms. Abeles suggested would be incorporated as conditions. Ms. Abeles seconded the motion. The Commission voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion.

Discuss Belvedere Estates Historic District Study Committee. Mr. Smith introduced this as a brief working committee session for the continuation of the study of the Belvedere Estates as a potential historic district. He noted that there were a number of residents in the audience and asked them to hold their comments until the end of the discussion. Mr. Smith turned the meeting over to Ms. Griffin, Chair of the Study Committee.

Ms. Griffin suggested that what should be discussed was setting a time for a specific working session at a public meeting to review what is needed for the report and the next steps for the Study Committee. She noted that she had tried to schedule a session on-line, but felt the response wasn't forthcoming.

Members of the Study Committee expressed concerns about their availability to meet during the summer and discussed a potential date of Tuesday, June 25 for a working session. Preferences were for a start time of 6:45 or 7:00 to allow for commutes from Boston.

Mr. Panak indicated that perhaps one meeting this summer would be adequate. He explained his suggestion to Ms. Griffin that the Study Committee needed to spend a meeting making sure that all members were knowledgeable about the Study Committee process before they could begin to answer resident questions about the scope, the timeline and the steps of the process, etc.. He explained that as the Study Committee made progress, perhaps after 6 months of work, there would need to be more frequent meetings, which expanded on what Ms. Griffin had said.

Mr. Smith brought up a related business item. He said that Meghan Jop [Wellesley's Executive Director of General Government Services] had indicated that the Wellesley Historical Society wanted to make their headquarters on Washington Street [323 Washington Street] a Single Building Historic District and that she wanted to know if the Historic District Commission wanted to serve as the Study Committee for that.

Ms. Maitin clarified that 323 Washington Street is the Stanwood House. She also asked Catherine Johnson [Chair, Planning Board], who was in the audience, to explain what she had said at the most recent Wellesley Historical Commission meeting [June 10, 2019].

Ms. Johnson joined the table and explained the process of forming a Study Committee for any proposed historic district. Ms. Johnson said that the Historic District Commission frequently serves this function, but that if the Commission declines, an alternate process is for the Board of Selection to appoint a study committee; further, that membership on the Study Committee would include people with suggested pre-requisites, such as an architect, a Realtor, etc.

Mr. Smith wanted the Historic District Commission to discuss this. Ms. Griffin indicated that the Stanwood House is located near the Belvedere Estates, but that it should be its own historic district. Ms. Abeles reminded the Commission that they had another year, year-and-a-half, or more of work on the Belvedere Estates and that they might not be able to take on another project.

Ms. Griffin said she felt that this study should have a more representative group of people from the entire town working, but volunteered to be on this Study Committee. Mr. Paine, who said that he was on the Board of the Historical Society, also volunteered to be on this Study Committee. He said that as a board member, he understood the dire time crunch the Society is in, in order to undertake fund raising and get the necessary permits for renovations. Becoming a Single Building Historic District would benefit both goals.

After further discussion, Mr. Smith suggested that Ms. Griffin and Mr. Paine be volunteer representatives from the Historic District Commission to the proposed Study Committee and indicated that he would send an email with this suggestion to Ms. Jop.

The Commission returned to a discussion of when to schedule a working session for the proposed Belvedere Estates Study Committee. The Commission decided that they would meet on Tuesday, June 25, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. in Town Hall.

Ms. Griffin suggested that she could distribute some research material to the Study Committee so they could review it prior to that meeting and discuss whether it would be advantageous to put articles on the Study Committee's portion of the Town website.

Ms. Abeles felt that if a draft of the guidelines was far enough along, it would be good to publish that in order for the residents, who might be interested in being within a historic district, would know what to expect. Ms. Griffin agreed, but said that the consultant who is producing the guidelines has only one more meeting that can be scheduled with the Commission; and that meeting should be used to approve the guidelines.

The Commission briefly discussed the status of the draft and if a placeholder should be posted to the website. No decision was made.

Consider FY20 Meeting Agenda. Mr. Panak said that he had added an item to the agenda, that the Commission approve the FY20 meeting agenda. Ms. Abeles made a motion to approve; Ms. Maitin seconded it. The commission voted unanimously to approve the schedule, with a caveat that they could always change a specific date for another.

Comments from the Floor. Mr. Smith asked if there were any comments or questions from the floor.

Peter Litman asked about the consultant report and wanted to know what it was. Mr. Panak answered by saying that approximately a year ago the Historic District Commission hired a consultant to produce guidelines that could be used by any applicant within an historic district to understand what might be considered acceptable or recommend for architectural design.

Mr. Litman then asked about timing and whether the Study Committee could give any sense of the timing for their study' of when their report will be in draft form so that it would be distributable to people. Ms. Abeles said that it would be a long process, that the Historic District Commission was a volunteer board, and that they had other business that they needed to take care of. She surmised that it would not be ready to go to Town Meeting this next spring [2020]. She added that there was a lot of work to be done, including research and multiple surveys. Ms. Griffin agreed that it would be a long process and offered that, if anyone was interested, they could read the Massachusetts Historical Commission's 1990 area study of the Belvedere Estates, which is available on line and which will be updated as part of the study. Mr. Panak echoed Ms. Abeles' statement that this would not be ready for the 2020 Annual Town Meeting, but potentially the one after that.

Mr. Litman said that one of the things that is confusing is the parameters of the study. He acknowledged that he understood that the Commission was struggling with the size of the district, but asked if there was any sense of what the boundaries would be. Ms. Abeles said that they proposed to start by looking at the area bounded by Abbott and Clovelly Roads rather than the whole big neighborhood.

Mr. Litman asked if it was the map that the proponents of the proposed district handed out last fall. Ms. Abeles said that it was only a small portion of that map. Ms. Griffin clarified that the map the proponents handed out was from the 1990 area study and that this Study Committee did not know what the boundaries would be. Mr. Panak said that he believed the Study Committee intended – but had not decided – to use the boundaries of the 1990 area study as a draft and that as they did the research and had answers to surveys, they would refine the boundaries of the district. Ms. Griffin clarified that there are two distinct areas of study. One is the land that was owned and developed by the Abbott family while the other was what would make sense logistically to become an Historic District.

Mr. Litman asked if the surveys would be sent to people who live in the whole area within the area study map. Ms. Griffin said that the surveys would only be sent to people who would be living in the proposed district.

Mr. Litman asked if the upcoming June 25, 2019 meeting would be public, noticed and everything. Ms. Abeles replied in the affirmative.

Devin O'Reilly, who stated that he lived in the Belvedere Estates, asked for a clarification of an earlier discussion concerning the formation of a study committee for a Single Building Historic District at 323 Washington Street and its relation to this Study Committee for the Belvedere Estates. Ms. Abeles said that they were two separate study committees. She added that the Historical Society wanted to make 323 Washington Street a Single Building Historic District; and that because the Historic District Commission had more than a full plate of work, the Board of Selectmen would form a separate study committee. Further, Ms. Abeles said that last summer a group of property owners from the Belvedere Estates and Wellesley's Historical Commission asked the Historic District Commission to under a study of Belvedere as the Study Committee.

Mr. O'Reilly said that he felt that the process was biased in that a group of neighborhood proponents were asking a group that favored the formation of historic districts to serve as the Study Committee. Mr. Panak explained that the process, as defined by the Massachusetts Historical Commission, included not only the research, which has not yet been done, but also surveys of the residents of the proposed district. If the surveys indicated widespread objections, the Study Committee could pull out of the process or recommend that no district be formed. He added that there is a belief that now that this process has started, it will move forward through the creation of a district; that is not a given at this time.

Ms. Griffin explained that state law says that if a Historic District Commission already exists, they are the ones to undertake another study. If there is no Historic District Commission, then the Board of Selectmen appoint a study committee. She added that this was their job.

Ms. Abeles added that she understood Mr. O'Reilly's concerns about bias, but said that no historic board would want to administer a district where 75% of the residents didn't want to be part of the district. She stated that the Study Committee is going through this process and that, in the end, it might be that the Study Committee would recommend some other way of preventing demolitions and preserving the character of the neighborhood.

Mr. Smith said that this process is the one prescribed by the Commonwealth and that an early step is for the Historic District Commission to undertake a study. He added that it might also be possible for the Belvedere Estates, should there be a historic district created, to have their own District Commission so residents would not have to come before this board. Mr. Cohen said that the Study Committee was learning, surveying the houses and then the people; that they needed to get smarter before making the next steps.

Mr. Richard Blond introduced himself as another resident of the Belvedere Estates and said that he wanted to follow up on what Mr. O'Reilly discussed. He said that he wanted to know how the Study Committee would determine what number or percentage of the Belvedere residents who supported or didn't support the formation of a district was appropriate. He offered that the survey would produce a yea or nay vote. Mr. Panak said that the Study Committee didn't know; that no one on the Study Committee had been part of the formation of Wellesley's one historic district, the Cottage Street Historic District and that he didn't believe that it was appropriate for the Commission to set a support threshold at this time.

Mr. Blond asked if the Study Committee would determine the threshold prior to sending out the survey. Ms. Griffin explained that the survey would give information about whether the residents supported this or not. Ms. Abeles clarified that there would be more than one survey and that the first one might educate the Study Committee on what they might need to research. Mr. Cohen added that the survey is not a vote; that it is to gather information. Ms. Griffin reminded Mr. Blond that there would be many opportunities during the process for the residents to make their feelings known. Mr. Cohen asked the public to be open to learning what it means to be in a district and restated that the Study Committee has no agenda, mission, or goal on this matter.

Mr. Blond expressed his hope that the Study Committee would produce a number of options for preservation besides an historic district and that the residents of that proposed area be allowed to vote on what option each preferred; then the majority wish would be known. Mr. Panak said that that simplifies a very complex problem. Ms. Abeles said that the Study Committee was just beginning its work and that they didn't know what direction this would take. She reminded everyone that there are certain bylaws that needed to be followed. Mr. Cohen said that the Study

Committee was not tasked with providing options, but with studying the Belvedere area as a potential historic district.

Mr. Blond thanked the Study Committee and said that all he wanted was to make sure that there would be a transparent survey asking residents of the proposed district whether they wanted the district or something else such as self-determination.

Adjourn. Mr. Smith, ascertaining that there were no further questions, made a motion to adjourn. Ms. Abeles seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous to adjourn the meeting at 7:58 p.m.

Minutes Approved: July 10, 2019

Minutes compiled by
Catherine Johnson, Planning Board Chair