



STAFF REPORT

Town of Wellesley - Planning Department

Application: DR-2020-12 – 97 Russell Road – Preservation Determination
Subject Property: 97 Russell Road (Assessor's Parcel ID # 183-5)
Applicant: Edward & Michelle Jacobs
Property Owner: Edward & Michelle Jacobs
Date: Report prepared 5/7/2020 for 5/15/2020 Historical Commission Meeting
Staff Contact: Dana Marks, Planner
Staff Recommendation: **Not Preferably Preserved**

APPLICATION OVERVIEW

The Applicants originally submitted applications for Eligibility Notice and Preservation Determination indicating the intent to demolish, in its entirety, a building located on the property and used as a dwelling on December 27, 2017. An Eligibility Notice was issued on January 5, 2018 determining the subject building to be an Eligible Building. The Historical Commission held a public hearing on the application on February 12, 2018, and voted unanimously (7-0) that the building be deemed not Preferably Preserved (DR-2017-41). That determination was valid through February 12, 2020, during which time the Applicants did not secure a demolition permit from the Building Department.

On April 21, 2020, the Applicant submitted new applications for Eligibility Notice and Preservation Determination indicating the intent to demolish, in its entirety, a building located on the property and used as a dwelling. An Eligibility Notice was issued on April 24, 2020 determining the subject building to be an Eligible Building. The Historical Commission will hold a public hearing on the application for a Preservation Determination on May 11, 2020.

DESCRIPTION

In consideration of the application for a full/complete demolition and in determining whether or not the dwelling should be deemed Preferably Preserved, it was determined that the original dwelling was constructed no later than 1935, when a building under the ownership of James P. Delahanty was documented in the 1935 Town of Wellesley Plan at the current address. This source proves that the dwelling at 97 Russell Road is indeed Eligible and subject to a Preservation Determination pursuant to Article 46C of the Wellesley Town Bylaws.

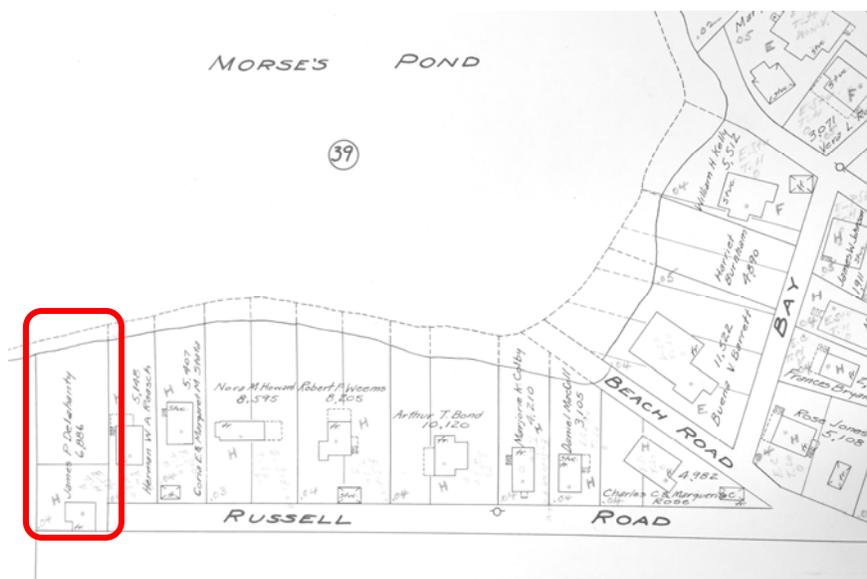
The dwelling at 97 Russell Road is located at the end of Russell Road, with the property abutting Morses Pond. It is a one-story wood frame house built in a vernacular cottage style and clad in wood shingles. The Assessor's Property Record Card lists the house as being in "Very Poor" condition.



Image via Assessor's Property Record Card.

The following historical information is taken from the Staff Report for DR-2017-41 – 97 Russell Road, dated February 6, 2018:

“The property was originally purchased by James Delahanty in 1915. A building was first documented to exist at the site in 1916. The 1935 Town Atlas documents the subject building under the ownership of James Delahanty. It was later sold to Solomon Bluhm in 1945. Not too late after, it was sold to Frederick Mittelmeyer in 1947. According to records from Zoning Board of Appeals, Frederick Mittelmeyer built an addition to the subject dwelling on the Town's property in 1947. The property was then sold to Leon D. Glass in 1976. He intended to build two additions but was not granted a variance due to the encroachment on the Town's property and the proximity to a water main. The house was then sold to Carole Shaffer in 1983. It was then sold to the current owners Edward and Michelle Jacobs in 2012.”



Detail of 1935 Town Atlas, with 97 Russell Road highlighted in red.

PRESERVATION DETERMINATION STANDARDS

In consideration of a Preservation Determination for the building, the Historical Commission is to determine whether or not the building should be Preferably Preserved, a term defined as when a building, “the demolition of which that is proposed...would be detrimental to the historical or architectural heritage of the Town because such Building is (i) importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the Town, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts or the United States of America, (ii) 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, or (iii) located within one hundred fifty (150) feet of the boundary line of any federal or local historic district and contextually similar to the Buildings located in the adjacent federal or local historic district.”

If the Commission determines that the Building should be Preferably Preserved, then no Demolition Permit with respect to such Building shall be issued until twelve (12) months after the date of the Preservation Determination. Following such a determination, the Applicant may request a reduction in the length of the delay period through the Waiver Process.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff is of the opinion that the subject building at 97 Russell Road **is not** (i) importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the Town, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts or the United States of America, **is not** (ii) 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, and **is not** (iii) located within one hundred fifty (150) feet of the boundary line of any federal or local historic district and contextually similar to the Buildings located in the adjacent federal or local historic district.

With respect to standard (ii), while much of the dwelling is believed to be in its original form, the surrounding neighborhood has undergone extensive changes in appearance with alterations to existing dwellings and new construction.

Therefore, based upon the above, **Staff is of the opinion that the demolition of the subject building would not be detrimental to the historical or architectural heritage of the Town and thus Staff recommends that the building should not be deemed Preferably Preserved.**