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November 4, 2021

Town of Wellesley Planning Board
c/o Mr. Don McCauley, Planning Director
525 Washington Street
Wellesley, MA 02482

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Summary

Wellesley Friendly Aid Association (WFA) is a Massachusetts not-for-profit corporation located at 219 Washington St., Wellesley, Massachusetts. Our mission and our programs are set forth in the enclosed brochure. Our IRS tax status is that of a Section 501(c)(3) organization.

WFA owns the land and buildings located at 219 Washington Street. (WFA also owns the land at 229 Washington Street, on which is located a house owned by the Wellesley Historical Society pursuant to a 100-year ground lease entered into in 1975. Because of WFA's limited ownership interest in the 229 parcel, this letter does not discuss rezoning the 229 parcel.)

The 219 Washington Street parcel is located in an area currently designated as a Single Residence District pursuant to Section 2 of Wellesley's Zoning Bylaw. (The 229 parcel is also located in the single residence district.)

WFA respectfully requests that:

- (i) The Town of Wellesley amend the Zoning Bylaw relating to General Residence Districts, Section 4 of the Zoning Bylaw, to permit, in addition to the current permitted uses, the use of land and buildings located in a General Residence District (a GRD) by organizations as described below, and
- (ii) Upon such amendment, Town Meeting, with the Planning Board's support, rezone the 219 Washington Street parcel as property located in a GRD.

Specifically, WFA requests that buildings located in a GRD may be used for (x) offices and meeting spaces of organizations of a business or social character, whether they are for-profit or not-for-profit organizations, including of a

professional character such as law firms, accounting firms, investment advisory firms and counseling firms and for (y) offices, classrooms and other facilities of organizations of an educational character, whether they are for-profit or not-for-profit organizations, including after-school and supplemental subject-matter organizations for children.

WFA's Current Situation

The 219 Washington St. property has not been used for residential purposes in many decades. None of this property's abutters are residential. On the east lies the Wellesley Hills Congregational Church. On the north lies the Town Public Works Department and Municipal Light Plant. On the south lies Washington Street and the Hills Branch Library. On the west lies the 229 Washington Street parcel, occupied by the Wellesley Historical Society, and further west, lie a Town fire station and the intersection of Route 9 and Washington Street.

WFA House: For decades the first floor of WFA's house at 219 Washington St. has been used as the office and meeting space of WFA. In addition, for decades the second floor of the house has been leased by WFA to a for-profit family counseling service, Crossroads Counseling, which periodically would apply for a Town permit allowing it to conduct its business notwithstanding its for-profit status. However, recently, Crossroads Counseling terminated its lease and its business, leaving the second floor vacant.

WFA has retained a local real estate agent to attempt to lease the second floor space, which would be suitable for organizations of the type described in our proposal in the third preceding paragraph above. However, because of the limitations of the Single Residence District zoning bylaw and the need for any for-profit organization to attempt to obtain periodic Town permits to continue its business in the second-floor space, it is unattractive to businesses and it remains vacant.

WFA Annex: In 1977 WFA entered into a fifty-year ground lease with the Wellesley Community Center, a separate not-for-profit organization, which constructed the two-story brick building physically attached to the WFA house. In September 2020, the Community Center terminated the ground lease and relinquished its building (which we now refer to as the WFA Annex) to WFA for no consideration pursuant to the terms of the ground lease.

Since then WFA has entered into new leases with the Wellesley Theatre Project (a not-for-profit organization) and the Town School Department for its Launch Program for intellectually challenged young adults.

However, a portion of the Annex remains unoccupied, owing both to COVID-19 and the limitations of the provisions of the Single Residence District zoning bylaw.

Both because the 219 parcel is inappropriate for single-family housing and because the General Residence District permitted uses (as proposed to be amended as described above) would enable uses of this property which are compatible with existing adjacent uses, such rezoning of the 219 parcel seems appropriate.

Next Steps

WFA understands there will be a meeting of the Planning Board on Monday, November 15, 2021. WFA requests the opportunity to attend that meeting and to speak in respect of our suggested Bylaw amendment and to respond to any questions the Planning Board may have.

In the interim, please contact WFA if the Planning Board or its officials have questions or request additional information which they would like WFA to respond to or provide prior to the November 15 meeting.

Very truly yours,

WELLESLEY FRIENDLY AID ASSOCIATION

BY: 
Peter G. Johannsen, Vice President

cc: Wellesley Hills Congregational Church
Wellesley Historical Society
Deborah Cogill, WFA President

Brochure Enclosure