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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**  
William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

May 14, 2009

Michael Eby  
Chairman  
Permanent Building Committee  
Town of Wellesley, Massachusetts  
Town Hall  
525 Washington Street  
Wellesley, MA 02482-5992

RE: New Wellesley High School, Demolition of Existing High School; 50 Rice Street; Wellesley, MA;  
MHC# RC.45031

Dear Mr. Eby:

After consultation with the Town of Wellesley (Town), the Wellesley Historical Commission (LHC, the Wellesley High School Preservation Committee, and other interested members of the public, the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) offers the following comments in compliance with MEPA (301 CMR 11.03(10)).

The MHC has reviewed additional information submitted from the Wellesley Historical Commission (WHC), received February 5, 2009, and the additional information submitted by the Town of Wellesley and the Wellesley High School Preservation Committee. As you are aware, the subject property at 50 Rice Street (MHC# WEL.401), historically known as the Gamaliel Bradford Senior High School, is located within the High School Area – Rice, Paine and Forest Streets area (MHC# WEL.S), and is included in MHC's Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth. The Gabaliel Bradford Senior High School is not listed in the State Register of Historic Places.

The MHC understands from the April 29, 2009, consultation meeting at the MHC that the project also involves the property at 57 Seaver Street (MHC# WEL.84), which is included in MHC's Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth (Inventory). Review of the Inventory, including information from the Wellesley Historical Commission, indicates that this building is no longer extant.

The proposed project involves the demolition of the existing high school, the demolition of three properties at 53, 55, and 57 Seaver Street, and the construction of a new 280,000-square-foot high school. Because the proposed project involves the demolition of the historic high school, which is included in MHC's Inventory, the MHC offers the following comments in compliance with MEPA (301 CMR 11.03(10)) and M.G.L. Chapter 9 Section 26.

The Town of Wellesley (Town) and professionals retained by the Town, including Symmes Maini & McKee Associates (SMMA), provided information at the April 29, 2009, meeting, along with other information presented before and after the meeting, indicating that as part of the planning process, the Town of Wellesley (Town) and professionals retained by the Town, including SMMA, conducted approximately sixty public meetings in Wellesley, examined over two dozen high school building options, approximately fifteen of which involved reuse of all or portions of the high school. The Town indicated that it had also looked at numerous other locations for the school in the Town, but no other locations were available. The Town indicated that three different architectural firms were retained to explore various options for the development of a new school that incorporated, in many cases, retention and renovation of one or more portions of the existing high school.

The Town indicated that the considerable site constraints on the property, especially wetlands, but also the size of the parcel even with the acquisition of the three contiguous parcels, the location of the existing high school at one corner of the overall site, the spatial requirements for existing and forecasted student enrollments, the additional number of phases that would have been created by renovation and rehabilitation of the existing high school, and the current condition of the high school due to deferred maintenance created considerable challenges in the development of a new high school that would have incorporated sections of the existing high school.

After a review of the information submitted, the MHC has determined to accept, with mitigation, the adverse effect on the Wellesley High School due to the lack of prudent and feasible alternatives. The MHC is in receipt of a draft Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), which was received on April 29, 2009. The MHC has the following comments on the draft MOA.

The title of the MOA should be amended by adding the following phrase of the end of the title: "IN COMPLIANCE WITH MEPA (301 CMR 11.03(10))"

Stipulation 2 HABS/HAER Documentation should be deleted entirely. It has been MHC's experience that the National Park Service, who administers the HABS/HAER program, is only interested in HABS/HAER documentation of nationally significant historic resources.


The MHC recommends that a new stipulation be added, called "Design Review" with the following sentence: "Any newly proposed changes to the design of the exterior facades on the south and east elevations of the proposed new high school, as viewable from Seaver Street, be submitted to the MHC and WHC for review and comment."

The section titled "Effect of Agreement" should be revised to state that the MSBA and the Town have consulted with MHC and satisfied the requirements of MEPA (310 CMR 11.03(10)) and M.G.L. Chapter 9 Section 26.

The MHC looks forward to receiving and reviewing comments from the MSBA, the Town, the LHC, and other interested members of the public concerning the draft MOA.

These comments are offered to assist in compliance with MEPA (301 CMR 11.10(03)(10)). Please do not hesitate to contact Ryan Maciej of my staff if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

  
Brona Simon  
State Historic Preservation Officer  
Executive Director  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

xc: Wayne Keefner, PE; Symmes Maini & McKee Associates  
Katherine Craven, MSBA  
George Driscoll, MSBA  
Secretary Ian A. Bowles, EOEEA; ATTN: MEPA Unit  
Wellesley Historical Commission  
Wellesley High School Preservation Committee  
Dorr Fox, Preservation Massachusetts / National Trust for Historic Preservation  
Cynthia Westerman