

WELLFLEET HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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Frequently Asked Questions about Applications to the Wellfleet Historical Commission

1) What is the role of the Wellfleet Historical Commission (WHC)?

The WHC was established by Town Meeting Vote in 1986 “*for the preservation, protection, and development of the historical or archeological assets of the Town of Wellfleet*”. Members are appointed by the Selectboard of the Town of Wellfleet.

We are a Town Commission, and not the Wellfleet Historical Society and Museum.

2) How does the WHC carry out its responsibilities?

The WHC is responsible for reviewing plans for substantial alteration or demolition of *historically significant buildings* in the town of Wellfleet. The WHC is also charged with researching and preparing inventory forms on historic structures in Wellfleet.

3) How do I know if my property or the property I am buying is subject to WHC review?

Historically significant buildings subject to WHC review are defined as:

- * More than 75 years old,
- * Listed in the National Register of Historic Places, or
- * Designated by the WHC after public hearing(s) as being historically or architecturally significant in terms of period, style, and method of construction or association with historic persons or events

4) Would an addition to my historic structure be subject to WHC review?

Yes, because, at a minimum, there is demolition involved to provide an opening from the old to the new part of the structure

5) If my property is determined to be historic, what renovations are not subject to WHC review?

- * Interior demolition and renovation
- * Paint colors
- * Roofing, decking, and siding: if replacement is in kind, like for like, the project does not require review

6) How does the WHC review historic structures for demolition, renovation, or expansion?

Proposals are reviewed by the WHC to determine if the proposed work diminishes historic value of the building, based on the amount of demolition and the loss of historic material.

In making our determination, the WHC considers the proposed plans, the historic property inventory form (Form B), and other historical information about the building. We may also consult with local historians, preservation specialists, architects and designers who are knowledgeable about historic structures, through organizations such as the Wellfleet Historical Society & Museum (WHSM), the Cape Cod Commission (CCC), and the Cape Cod Modern House Trust.

When making recommendations, we make use of the “Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation” <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/rehabilitation.htm>, which is the national standard to guide rehabilitation work on historic resources.

7) What is the application process for demolition, renovation, or expansion?

Property owners seeking partial or complete demolition approval must apply for a demolition permit at the Wellfleet Building Department. The Building Department will refer historically significant buildings (as defined above) to the WHC.

8) How do I get on the agenda for a WHC Meeting?

The one-page Project Review Application is available at the Wellfleet Building Department and on the Town of Wellfleet website wellfleetma.org. Applicants can submit the application to the WHC via email. Please submit the application well in advance of the meeting so that Commissioners can visit the project site on their own prior to the meeting. One paper copy is required for the permanent record, and should be mailed or dropped off at the Wellfleet Building Department.

Proposals are reviewed by the WHC at its monthly public meetings, which occur on the first Wednesday of the month at 5:00 PM via Zoom. To access the agenda and Zoom link, visit the Town of Wellfleet website and click on the calendar day. WHC posts each meeting agenda on the Town website at least two business days before the meeting, as required by Massachusetts Open Meeting Law.

If the project is approved, the WHC sends a memo to the Building Inspector and the work permit can be signed. If a project revision is requested, the WHC sends a memo to the Building Inspector, and the project review will be continued to a future meeting.

9) Do I have to be present at the WHC Meeting, or can I send a representative?

You may represent yourself, or have a representative present the project for you.

10) What is a demolition delay?

If the WHC determines that a building should be “preferably preserved” — that the proposed work would destroy or substantially diminish its historic value— it is

required to hold a public hearing and notify abutters. The WHC is empowered to impose a demolition delay of up to 18 months from the date of the hearing.

The purpose of delaying demolition is to provide time to seek alternative preservation solutions for buildings or features that are architecturally or historically significant. The WHC aims to limit the amount of demolition and the effect of changes to the streetscape.

Complete demolition of historic structures is an irreversible action that alters the character of the property, the streetscape, and the area. Demolition could represent a lost educational resource for the community, whether the building is an example of past construction techniques or has associations with a significant individual or event in our history. As a result, complete demolition of historically or architecturally significant buildings and structures is rarely considered to be an appropriate option.

10) If the WHC imposes a demolition delay, can the delay be lifted prior to the end of the delay period?

A waiver of delay may be granted if the applicant has:

- * accepted specific conditions from the WHC,
- * presented plans for redevelopment which have been approved by the WHC,
- * demonstrated a reasonable and unsuccessful effort to locate a purchaser who would preserve the building, or
- * the WHC has approved a proposal to relocate the building.

11) When is a property subject to review by the Cape Cod Commission?

The Cape Cod Commission (CCC) has the authority to review demolition or substantial alteration of properties listed on the National Register, with the goal of protecting the region's significant historic buildings. A proposal to completely demolish a historic structure automatically triggers referral to the CCC for review. Proposals for partial demolition or alterations on National Register buildings are first considered by the WHC to determine whether the proposed work threatens the

historic building's significance enough to warrant CCC review. If the WHC determines that the proposed project is a "substantial alteration" (would change key character-defining features of the historic structure), they inform the Building Inspector in writing of their determination and the Building Inspector refers the project to the CCC.