



Winchester Historical Commission

Report to Fall 2015 Town Meeting

Nov. 2, 2015

With regard to town planning and historical architecture, Winchester is not typical. Our town is filled with eclectic, diverse, and rare historical architecture, all of which combine to create cohesive streets, neighborhoods, and a town that is vibrant, distinctive, and absolutely exquisite. Consider the six homes pictured on the next two pages...



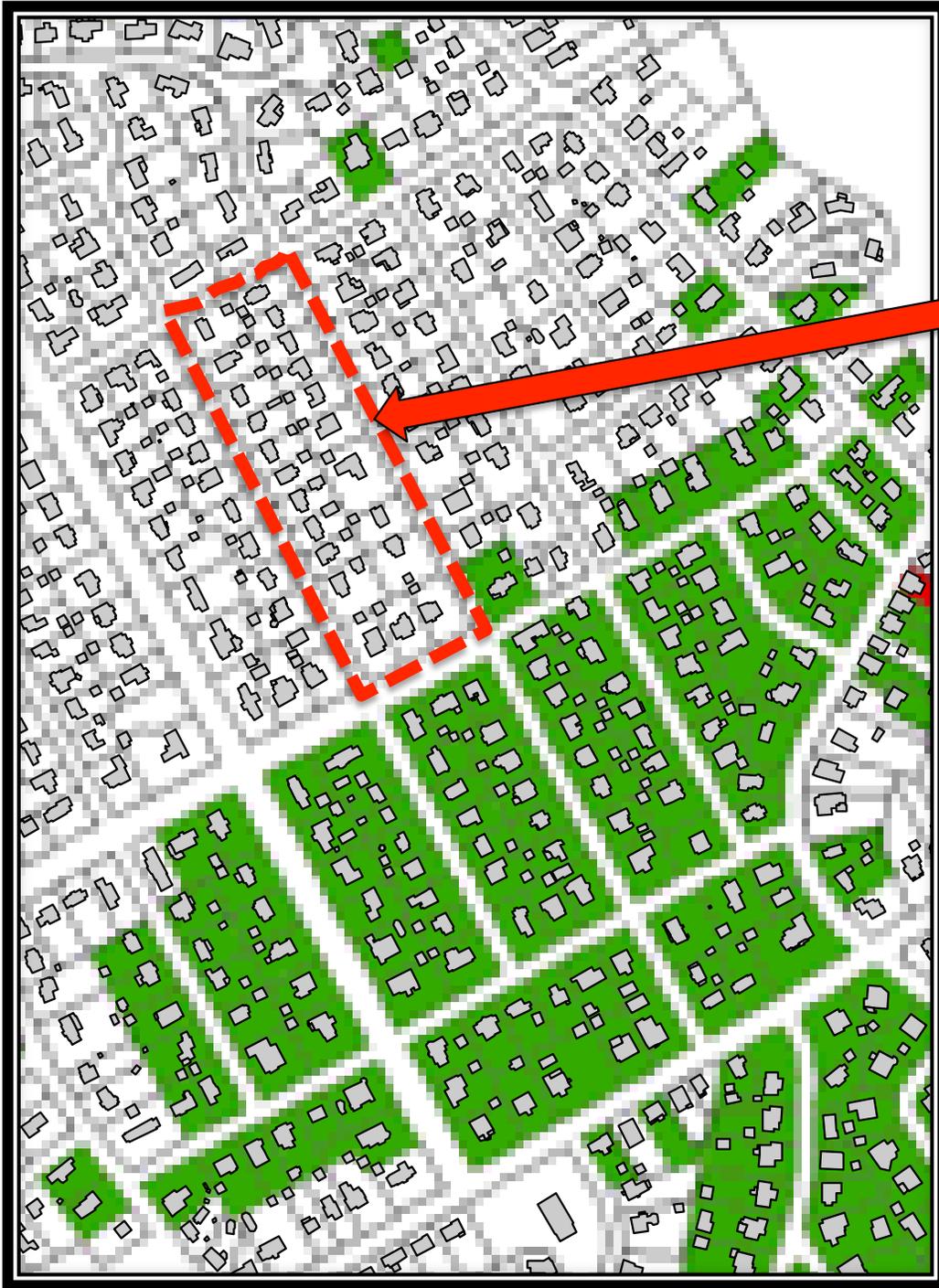
The last time the Winchester Historical Commission came before Town Meeting was 2012 when we requested changes to Chapter 14 of the town bylaws to provide clarifications to the so-called Demolition Delay Bylaw. We introduced a very critical component that now guides the Commission in its mission of determining whether a property is historically significant, based on a lot of research regarding the property's historical, architectural, and geographic information. This approach parallels State and Federal review standards. With this addition to our bylaw, we now have very clear boundaries to determine whether a building is contributing to our Town's historical character. I want to thank Town Meeting for making this change.



We have also started a Facebook page, [Winchester Historical Commission](#). We welcome you to “like” us (even if you don’t) and follow us so that you can stay informed. We post every time a demolition permit is pulled, along with the street address. We will also continue to provide updates on the situations we are working on.

But we are increasingly concerned about the rapid increase in the number of historic homes being demolished to make way for larger, more modern houses.

The image is a screenshot of the Winchester Historical Commission's Facebook page. At the top, the cover photo features a circular stone plaque in a brick-paved square, inscribed with "JOHN T. JAKE HORN SQUARE 1918 — 1984 DISTINGUISHED AND BELOVED CITIZEN AND VETERAN OF WINCHESTER DEDICATED MAY 1986". The page header includes the profile picture, name "Winchester Historical Commission", and location "Historical Place". Navigation tabs for "Timeline", "About", "Photos", "Reviews", and "More" are visible. The left sidebar shows 51 likes, 21 post reach, and a "100 Likes" milestone. The main content area features a post from October 29, 2015, about a demolition permit at 87 Hemingway Street, and a post from October 21, 2015, about a discussion on a historic residence at 7 Grove Street. The "ABOUT" section includes a map of Winchester, MA, and contact information.



25 properties have been demolished in town so far this year.

Consider what that number means: 22 homes are located in this block in the Flats bounded by Oxford, Yale, Foxcroft and Wildwood streets.

Many more await the actual wrecking balls' arrival as we received five more permits just last week. Many historically significant properties, that are not on our protected "list" but are historical contributions to the Town nevertheless, have caught the attention of developers. What we are starting to see is the unraveling of what gives Winchester its unique, appealing character.



7 Grove Street

These past few weeks, we have been focused specifically on these four historical properties, none of which are on the protected list. In fact, every home in this presentation is not on the "list." Which means they could be demolished without any review of the impact of their loss.



45 Calumet



81 Bacon Street / 1 Harrington Avenue

The pendulum has swung, and our Town Bylaws have not kept up. One reason is that the list of properties we review prior to demolition do not reflect the true historical character of the town. We would like to change that.



Historic barn at 416 Cambridge Street

Why an update? It really begins in 1978. The town surveyed approximately 2,000 parcels that predated 1918. That list was submitted to the Massachusetts Historical Commission, which came back to Winchester and asked that the list be reduced to 450. MHC was understaffed and could not handle our pre-computer era, typewritten black-and-white submissions. It was a staffing decision, not one based on historical merit. Thirty-seven years later, we are still playing catch-up.

Many homes on streets like **Yale, Wedgemere, Washington, Salisbury, Rangeley, Main, Highland, Lawson, Foxcroft, Church, Bacon, and Cabot** – to name just a few – were not among those original 2,000 properties because they were built between 1919 to 1940. To go back and update our records to electronic files, add the knowledge and details that computers have made available, add current photographs, and meet today's revised standards for the State's Cultural Resource List would cost the town **\$955,200**. Do you think that is in our budget? We don't think so either.

The next page features a preliminary map of the properties (in green) on our current subject to review prior to demolition "list." A few specific historical areas to note of high concern for risk of historic demolition are the Flats north of Foxcroft/Warren, Myopia Hill, Symms Corner, the area surrounding the Winchester Country Club, and the neighborhood between Winter and Summer ponds.



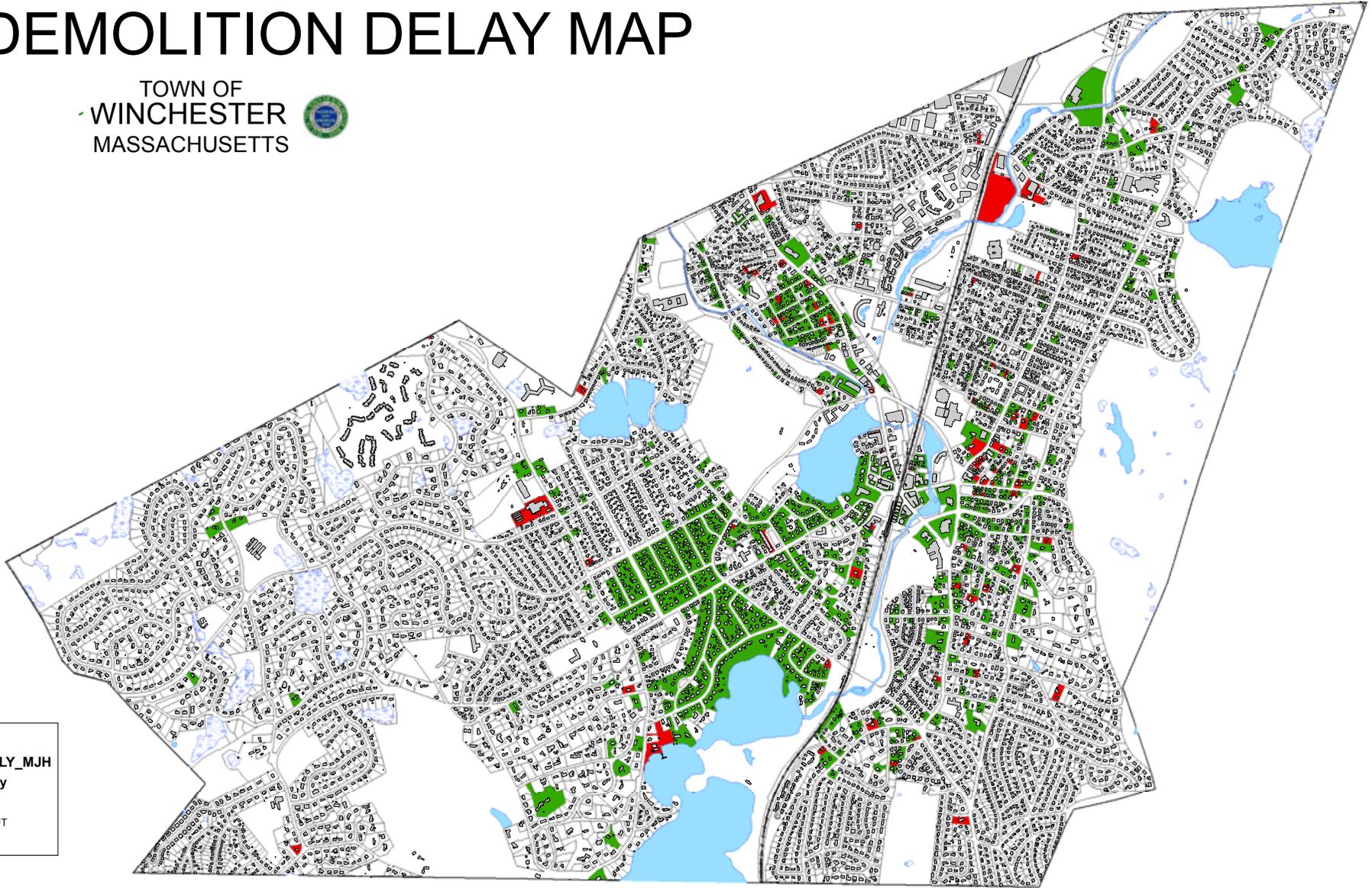
DEMOLITION DELAY MAP

TOWN OF
WINCHESTER
MASSACHUSETTS



Legend
Parcel_POLY_MJH
Demo_Delay

	YES
	OPTOUT
	NO



0 350 700 1,400 2,100 2,800 Feet

1 inch = 700 feet

The Winchester Historical Commission is working diligently to make necessary and appropriate changes, to bring the pendulum back to the center.

We have a meeting on **November 16th** with the Planning Board and Board of Selectmen to explore options and consider ways to address this worsening situation. We hope to come before the Spring 2016 Town Meeting with a solid recommendation, for which we will seek your support and approval.

Please note that we are approaching this realistically, without blinders. We acknowledge there are a range of opinions, ideas and concerns with respect to the topic of historical preservation, and we want to take them into account in our deliberations and recommendations.

To that end, we have engaged and will continue to engage town **Boards, Commissions, Organizations**, members of the general public and you, the members of **Town Meeting**, regarding our responsibilities to Winchester. Hopefully, in the next year, we can correct an issue that has been outstanding for at least 37 years and do the job of protecting Winchester's unique historical character for all generations.

Thank you.