

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

October 6, 2016

1615 Beacon LLC
P.O. Box 620757
Needham, MA 02492

RE: Waban Development, 1615 Beacon Street, Newton, MA; MHC# RC. 60314

Dear Sir or Madam:

Staff of the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) have reviewed the Project Notification Form (PNF) submitted by Epsilon Associates, which was received at this office on September 13, 2016. The staff of the have the following comments.

The proposed project consists of the construction of a 24-unit apartment building behind the existing property at 1615 Beacon Street in Newton. The proposed L-shaped apartment building is to be constructed at the rear of the lot along the northwest and northeast bounds of the lot. The proposed project also includes the rehabilitation of Staples-Craft-Wiswall Farmhouse, located at 1615 Beacon Street, including the demolition of the farmhouse's ca. 1983 addition. The proposed rehabilitation includes the restoration of the exterior siding and the replacement of existing windows. The information provided indicates that the project will use funding from the Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP).

Review of the MHC's *Inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth* indicates that the Staples-Craft-Wiswall Farmhouse (NWT.3740) is individually listed on the State Register of Historic Places. The Staples-Craft-Wiswall Farmhouse is a Local Landmark, and as such the proponent must seek the approval of the Newton Historical Commission for the proposed work.


The Staples-Craft-Wiswall Farmhouse is significant as an important visual link to Waban's 18th-century agricultural past. The Farmhouse was originally constructed on a 93-acre plot by the Deacon John Staples in the 18th century. In 1822 it was passed to William Wiswall II as a house and associated 76 acres. In 1875, William Strong purchased the property, and it was under his ownership that the property was broken up into individual house lots. It follows that the Staples-Craft-Wiswall Farmhouse has been on its current sized lot since 1875. Lots in the area are of similar size and contain houses of similar massing.

The project proposes construction of a three-story residential building consisting of 24 units directly behind the Staples-Craft-Wiswall Farmhouse. This proposed residential apartment building would constitute an "adverse effect" (950 CMR 71.05(c)) on the Staples-Craft-Wiswall Farmhouse through the introduction of visual elements that are out of character with and would alter the setting of this State Register property. The proposed new construction size and massing is overwhelming in relation to the historic farmhouse. The new construction encroaches on the historic farmhouse and detracts from its historic landscape and setting.

Pursuant to 950 CMR 71.07(3), the MHC looks forward to consulting with 1615 Beacon LLC, the Newton Historical Commission, and other interested parties to explore alternatives that would eliminate, minimize, or mitigate the adverse effect of the proposed project. The MHC hereby initiates its consultation process (950 CMR71.07(3)).

These comments are offered to assist in compliance with M.G.L. Chapter 9, sections 26-27C, (950 CMR 71.00). Please do not hesitate to contact Elizabeth Sherva or Linda Santoro of my staff if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Brona Simon
State Historic Preservation Officer
Executive Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

xc: David Hanifin, Massachusetts Housing Partnership (MHP)
Newton Historical Commission
Newton Planning Department
Newton Urban Design Commission
Newton Zoning Board of Appeals
Dennis Murphy, Hill Law
Brian Lever, Epsilon Associates