

FRIENDS OF WELLESLEY NORTH 40

September 9, 2014

OPEN LETTER TO:

H. Kim Bottomly, President
Laura Daignault Gates, Chairman, Board of Trustees
Wellesley College
106 Central Street
Wellesley, MA 02181

Dear President Bottomly and Chairman Gates:

We are encouraged by recent letters from you indicating Wellesley College's potential interest in offering the North 40 for sale to conservation organizations. On behalf of the citizens of Wellesley and its surrounding communities, we applaud your taking steps in this direction. Further, we urge the college to recognize the benefits of such a sale and the irreversible and detrimental consequences to the College, the Town, and the environment if this land is lost to development.

Wellesley College has a long tradition of environmentalism. Indeed, Henry Durant appreciated this when he donated land that became the North 40. In the College's recent *2025 A Plan for Campus Renewal*¹, the College itself lays out detailed strategies for sustainability and protecting the environment. Every little bit matters as we collectively strive to meet the challenge of climate change. As President Bottomly states:

"Wellesley College considers environmental sustainability to be an important component of its core mission. As part of this commitment, the college will consider sustainability as a factor in all institutional decisions. Members of the Wellesley community have individual and collective responsibility for environmental stewardship."²

The College has generously provided citizens the use of this open space in a densely populated area of town for many years, for passive recreation and gardening. This land also provides a valuable wildlife habitat. But the land is also a valuable asset to the College. Students use the beautiful nature trails, and the tall trees provide darkness for the Whitin Observatory. Most importantly, the undeveloped lands of the North 40 directly feed the College's water wells.

Wellesley College is incredibly fortunate to have its own water supply, not needing to purchase Town or costly MWRA water. In fact last year Wellesley College won a *Small Community Water Award* from Mass DEP³. The *2025 A Plan for Campus Renewal* has a section on protecting the campus water supply. It calls for following the recommendations in the *Mass DEP Source Water Assessment and Protection (SWAP) Report*⁴, which states (among a list of recommendations) that the *College should work with the Town and Planners to control new residential developments in the water supply protection area*. The North 40 is directly over the Zone II Water Supply Protection Area.

We see the North 40 as an undeveloped natural resource – a chance to protect the environment, enrich educational opportunities for the College’s students and local communities, protect our water supply and put into practice the commitment to sustainability the College proudly stands for.

We question the need for such speed on a decision of this magnitude. We ask for the process to be thorough and transparent. This land is a valuable and beloved resource.

We ask Wellesley College to follow the route of environmentally conscious institutions of higher education and sell the land into conservation to preserve this valuable habitat and ecosystem. Monies could still be raised and the College would uphold its long tradition of the ideals it so proudly, and rightly, espouses. The College would also benefit from making a very public and meaningful commitment to its goal of environmental stewardship.

Our group is ready, willing and able to assist the College in exploring conservation options. We ask you not to sell the North 40 on the open market, and to work with us to find a conservation solution beneficial to all.

Sincerely,

Friends of Wellesley North 40

Save the North 40
Friends of Brookside
Sustainable Wellesley
Wellesley High School Green Team
The Wellesley House and Garden Club
Hundreds of Concerned Citizens

Cc: Board of Trustees, Wellesley College
Wellesley College Alumnae
Print and Social Media
Concerned citizens

References:

1. <http://web.wellesley.edu/PublicAffairs/finalreport102213.pdf>
2. <http://web.wellesley.edu/sustainability/2012%20Sustainability%20Report%20Final.pdf>
3. http://patch.com/massachusetts/wellesley/wellesley-college-wins-drinking-water-award#.U_azRdq9KSO
4. <http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dep/water/drinking/swap/nero/3317001.pdf>