



# Town of Duxbury

## Massachusetts

### Planning Board

Date: November 8, 2022

To: Massachusetts Historical Commission

From: Planning Department

Re: Revised Preliminary Study Report – November 2022

Attached is the revised Preliminary Study Report for the addition to the existing Winsor District in Duxbury. The addition to this district is expected to be brought to the Spring Annual Town Meeting 2023 on Saturday, March 11, 2023.

On behalf of the Local Historic District Commission, we kindly request approval of the proposed addition to the Winsor District from the Massachusetts Historical Commission. We also request that the Duxbury Planning Board provide a recommendation to Town Meeting on the proposed addition to the Winsor District.

Please contact the Local Historic District Commission if you have any questions. Contact information can be found on Page 1 of the attached Report.

Thanks!

cc: Planning Board  
Local Historic District Commission  
Town Manager

878 Tremont Street, Duxbury, MA 02332; Telephone: 781-934-1100 x 5476; [www.town.duxbury.ma.us/planning](http://www.town.duxbury.ma.us/planning)

---

The mission of the Town of Duxbury is to deliver excellent services to the community in the most fiscally responsible and innovative manner while endeavoring to broaden our sense of community and preserve the unique character of our town.

# **PRELIMINARY STUDY REPORT**

**Proposed Expansion to the Winsor District**

**BY:**

**The Duxbury Local Historic District Commission**

**November 2022**



# Preliminary Study Report

**Proposed Addition to the Winsor Historic District:**

The Bluefish River Fire Station (1906)

645 Washington Street

Duxbury, MA 02332

By: The Duxbury Local Historic District Commission

November 2022

## Table of Contents

<b>Summary Sheet</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Bluefish River Fire House Introduction</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Methodology</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Significance</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Justification of the Boundaries</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Maps</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<b>Property Index</b> .....	<b>8</b>
<b>Options and Recommendations for the Bylaw</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Ordinance and Recommendations for the Ordinance or Bylaw</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Photographs</b> .....	<b>11</b>

## Summary Sheet

### The contact person for this Local Historic District Submission is:

Pamela Campbell Smith, AIA  
Chair of the Duxbury Local Historic District Commission  
243 Saint George Street  
Duxbury, MA 02332  
C: (339)832-1879

### Commission Members:

Pamela Campbell Smith, AIA, Chair  
Georgia Taft Pye, Board of Realtors, Duxbury Rural and Historical Society Representative  
Janet Ritch, Duxbury Resident from a Local Historic District  
Robert C. (Terry)Vose III, Duxbury Resident from a Local Historic District  
Phil Tuck, Alternate  
Evelyn Walker, Alternate

### Study Committee Members:

Pamela Campbell Smith  
Evelyn Walker  
Janet Ritch  
Georgia Taft Pye

### Important Dates:

This Preliminary Study proposes that the Bluefish River Fire House be added to the Winsor Local Historic District Station.

The expected date of the Public Hearing for this proposed addition to the Winsor Local Historic District in Duxbury is January 9, 2023.

The expected date of the Annual Town Meeting is March 11, 2023.

## **Introduction:**

In Duxbury, Massachusetts, a small coastal community with a long and significant agricultural and shipbuilding history dating back to its settlement by a number of original Mayflower families, a By-Law has been enacted by Annual Town Meeting to protect the homes and structures that make the town remarkable. The By-Law, created by the Local Historic District Commission (LHDC) after a two-year study, is used to determine which structures are believed to have historical value and subsequently place those structures under protection from demolition and building alterations that would significantly change their appearance and character.

Duxbury structures under protection of the By-Law are established as part of a number of Local Historic Districts (LHD). A number of LHD properties exist in the town today and many more property owners are considering designating their homes as well. Properties are volunteered by their owners and then added to LHD's by warrants proposed and then voted on at the Annual Town Meeting. The work of the LHDC to add properties to LHD's is crucial for encouraging the protection of historical buildings that lend the Town of Duxbury its unique charm. Some community benefits of LHD's include:

*Preserving the character and aesthetic of Duxbury*

*Protecting the rich history and beauty of Duxbury*

*Fostering a sense of pride within the community*

*Providing educational opportunities for generations to come*

*Connecting Duxbury residents to the history of their town*

In Duxbury to date, there are thirteen LHD's:

<u>Name of District</u>	<u>Year Established</u>	<u>Number of Properties so far</u>
Bradford District	2011	15
Bay Road District	2016	1
Bay View District	2016	1
First Parish District	2011	1
King Caesar District	2018	1
Keenes Brook District	2022	1
Millbrook District	2016	1

Powder Point District	2016	2
Surplus Street District	2017	3
Tarkiln District	2022	1
Temple Street District	2022	1
Washington Street District	2018	2
Winsor District	2011	9

Each of these properties in the above LHD's was volunteered by their owners. Subsequently they were presented as warrants and voted on at the Annual Town Meeting. Currently, there are four properties to be proposed as LHD structures for the Spring 2023 Annual Town Meeting. The Duxbury LHDC is proposing that this property, the Bluefish Fire House, be added to the Winsor LHD, based on its location closest to the other nine properties in this district. It is not contiguous as properties are added to LHD's in Duxbury when they are volunteered by their owners. This is a Town-owned structure that was restored a few years ago and currently serves as a storage facility for the Duxbury Harbormaster. The Town would like to have this property covered by the LHD protections. Although it is located in the National Register of Historic Places Old Shipbuilders District, the Bluefish Fire House has no future protections of the structure under that designation.

## **EXPANSION OF THE WINSOR LHD**

### **The Bluefish River Fire House**

#### **Introduction:**

The Duxbury Local Historic District Commission is recommending the Bluefish River Fire House for inclusion in the Winsor LHD. It is the only early firehouse remaining in town. In 1986 Betsy Friedberg and the Duxbury Historical Commission nominated this building for acceptance into the National Register of Historic Places. It was accepted for that inclusion and has become a contributing structure to the National Registry Old Shipbuilders Historic District. The fire house is located on Washington Street close to other properties that are currently part of the existing Winsor Historic District. It is also included in MACRIS as Dux.267.

#### **Methodology:**

In recommending the Bluefish Fire House for inclusion in the Winsor Historic District, the Duxbury LHDC conducted further research to substantiate the history of the building. Town Historian Tony Kelso did a detailed study of the fire house, originally known as Engine Company #1, in 2005 which was published in the Duxbury Clipper on April 13 of that year. A copy of that history is included herewith. The LHDC supports the inclusion of the Bluefish River Fire House in the Winsor Historic District.



**Significance:**

The Bluefish River Fire House served the Town of Duxbury as Engine Company #1 until at least 1954. Since being retired as a firehouse, the building has been used by the Harbor Master for equipment and as a boat house, which is appropriate as it abuts the Bluefish River, a site for frequent recreational swimming and boating. The two-story building was designed in the Craftsman style with half-timbering in the gable end. There is one chimney and double-leafed, vertical board doors where the fire truck entered and exited. The windows are 6/6 sash with simple casings flush with the shingle cladding. In keeping with the Craftsman style, there are decorative rake boards that flare at the eaves and a slight overhand of shingles at the base of the first and second stories.

The Fire House was originally built in 1906 on land the Wright family had donated to the town. The builder was J. Dexter Randall. The relocation of the Fire House was a result of a town controversy over the Saint George Street location which next to the town Library. The Wright family was proposing to build a new larger library building for the town on that site and was concerned and upset that the Firehouse was so close to where the new library would be located. The new Wright Building for the library was already under construction when the Town voted at the Annual Town Meeting in 1908 to purchase a lot for \$450 and to move the Firehouse to its current location on Washington Street.

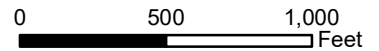
**Justification of the Boundaries:**

Engine Company #1 Fire House was moved in 1908 to its present Washington Street location from its initial position on Saint George Street, next to the original town library. It is now located at 645 Washington Street, a scenic location abutting the Town Landing at the Bluefish River Bridge. The move to that location followed a vote taken at the 1908 Annual Town Meeting to remove the restrictions on having buildings on Town Landings. After voters approved that change, the Town then voted to purchase the Killian lot where the Fire House currently is located. One week after those Town Meeting votes, the Fire House was moved to that lot abutting the Town Landing where it is still located today. Duxbury's LHDC would like to add this property to the existing Winsor LHD as it is located near to the other nine properties currently in this district. It is the policy of the Duxbury LHDC to only pursue local historic district designation when property owners approach us. No other properties are being considered for addition to the district at this time.

Although this property does not abut other properties in the Winsor LHD, it is the LHDC's hope that in coming years additional properties close to the Bluefish Fire House will be added to the Winsor LHD as the owners decide to commit to doing that. The current property boundaries are the same as they were in 1908 and as shown on the Duxbury Town Assessors maps.

**Legend**

-  Proposed Addition
-  Existing Winsor LHD



**PROPOSED ADDITION TO WINSOR  
LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT -  
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 2023**

Proposed District	Address	Parcel ID	Owner
Winsor LHD	Bluefish River Fire House - 645 Washington St.	117-503-149	Town of Duxbury

## PROPERTY INDEX:

Street Address	Parcel ID	Historic Name	Date of Construction	Architectural Style	MHC ID
645 Washington Street	117-508-149	Blue Siskiwun Fine House	1906 - moved 1908	Craftsman	Dux. 267

## Other Properties in the Winsor LHD:

Street Address	Parcel ID	Historic Name	Date of Construction	Architectural Style	MHC ID
397 Washington Street	119-147-405	Edgar Road House	c. 1900	Colonial Revival	Dux. 208

Street Address	Parcel ID	Historic Name	Date of Construction	Architectural Style	MHC ID
405 Washington Street	119-146-405	Nathaniel Winsor First House	1800	Federal	Dux. 212

Street Address	Parcel ID	Historic Name	Date of Construction	Architectural Style	MHC ID
476 Washington Street	118-200-054	Seth Sprague Jr. House	1813	Federal	Dux. 231

Street Address	Parcel ID	Historic Name	Date of Construction	Architectural Style	MHC ID
479 Washington Street	118-139-000	Nathaniel Winsor Jr. House	1807	Federal	Dux. 1

**Options and Recommendations for the By Law:**

In adding this property to the existing Winsor Historic District, there is not a need for options or recommended changes to the Bylaw.

**Ordinance and recommendations for the Ordinance or By Law:**

There is no need for any recommendations to the ByLaw with adding this property to the Winsor Historic District.

## The Little Engine House that Could

By TONY KIELSO

The Bluefish River Fire Station is approaching its one hundred year anniversary in 2006. This diminutive Duxbury firehouse was originally known as Engine Company #1, and its history is a glimpse into early fire fighting and the town politics that swirled around the need to help residents prevent devastating fires.

The March 1906 Annual Town Meeting voted into existence the board of fire engineers, a group of men who were to create fire companies in various parts of Duxbury and gave them \$1,500 and the authority to organize and find ways to house the town fire engines. Frederick Knapp, head of the Powder Point School, was the main organizer and chief proponent of the Fire Engineers. His interest in fire protection was sparked, so to speak, by the loss of the original Weston house, which had stood next to the King Caesar house and which burned soon after

his purchase of the property in 1886.

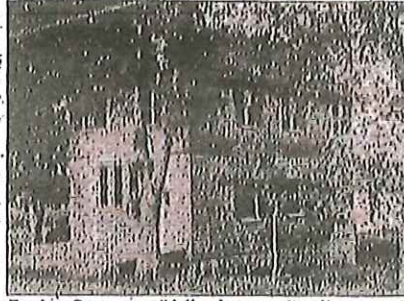
The Fire Engineers quickly organized two companies of 20 men, each company with a captain who was responsible

for the two fire engines. Fifty feet of hose was bought as well as a harness and traces for the horses, since in 1906 the fire engines were still horse drawn. These engines had been bought the year before for about \$600 each, but the town then belatedly realized that no board had jurisdiction over them.

In 1906, the Wright family gave the town extra land on St. George Street next to the original wooden town library, which stood on the same site as the Wright building does today. It was there Engine Company #1 firehouse was built in the summer of 1906 for \$400 by J. Dexter Raudall, a builder from West Duxbury, according to town report records.

Six months later in November, controversy erupted over the location of the new engine house and why the Fire Engineers put it next to the town library. A special town meeting was called, a vote was taken to rescind the original March vote to give the Fire Engineers full authority in locating fire houses, point of order was demanded because this issue was not on the warrant, and the meeting ended with finger pointing and bruised feelings.

Reading between the lines and having the ability to see what happened later, it is probably the case that the Wright family were unhappily surprised to see the new engine house built on the land they recently donated. They were clearly finalizing their plans to offer to Duxbury a substantial new library building (the Wright building). The firehouse built by the town was a roadblock to these plans.



Engine Company #1 fire house after its move to the Bluefish River area.

Photo courtesy of DR&HS

The fiery tempers cooled down enough by April 1907 when the Wright family formally made their generous gift to the town of a new library building as well as the offer to move the wooden library building off the site to a new location for town offices. That left little Engine House #1 out standing in a field by itself.

But the boys of Engine Company #1 were not idle in 1907. The records show they fought 10 fires in 1907: 3 house fires, 3 grass fires threatening buildings and 4 forest fires. Equally important were the social events of Engine Company #1. Record books recently donated to the Duxbury Room of the Duxbury Library by the fire department show a swirl of social occasions organized by the firemen. The entertainment committee had clam chowder suppers with Engine Company #2 in Hall's Corner, Mr. Flood and his "talking machine" offering a pleasant evening, Poverty Balls and minstrel shows held, and a "play out" competition of hoses against Engine #2 held in the stream bed of Millbrook. This was puzzling until you realize there was no town water as of yet in 1907.

The brick walls of the Wright building were beginning to rise up over little Engine House #1 in March 1908 when the Annual Town Meeting agreed to pay to move the fire house to the Bluefish River. First a vote had to be taken to remove the restriction on buildings on town landings and then \$450 was spent to purchase the "Killian lot" that the building was to sit on.

Eden Soule and Henry Delano for \$228.25 moved the building a week after town meeting. Although building-moving was common in 1908, it must have been a sight to see the horse teams on that early March day with little Engine House #1 riding high, making their slow progress down St. George Street around the Cable house and assorted buildings that cluttered the Liberty flagpole corner over the Bluefish River bridge to its new home. Engine House #1 settled in to begin a new life as a focal point for the Bluefish River neighborhood.

The Friends of the Bluefish River Fire House is ready to begin fund raising to restore the fire house. Donations may be sent to: Friends of the Bluefish River Firehouse PO Box 1180 Duxbury, MA 02331





West



South

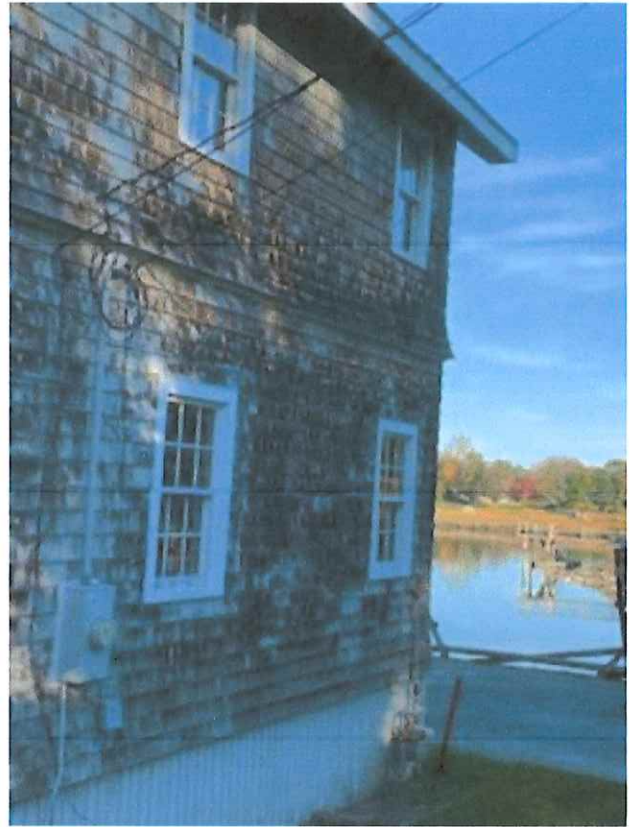


East

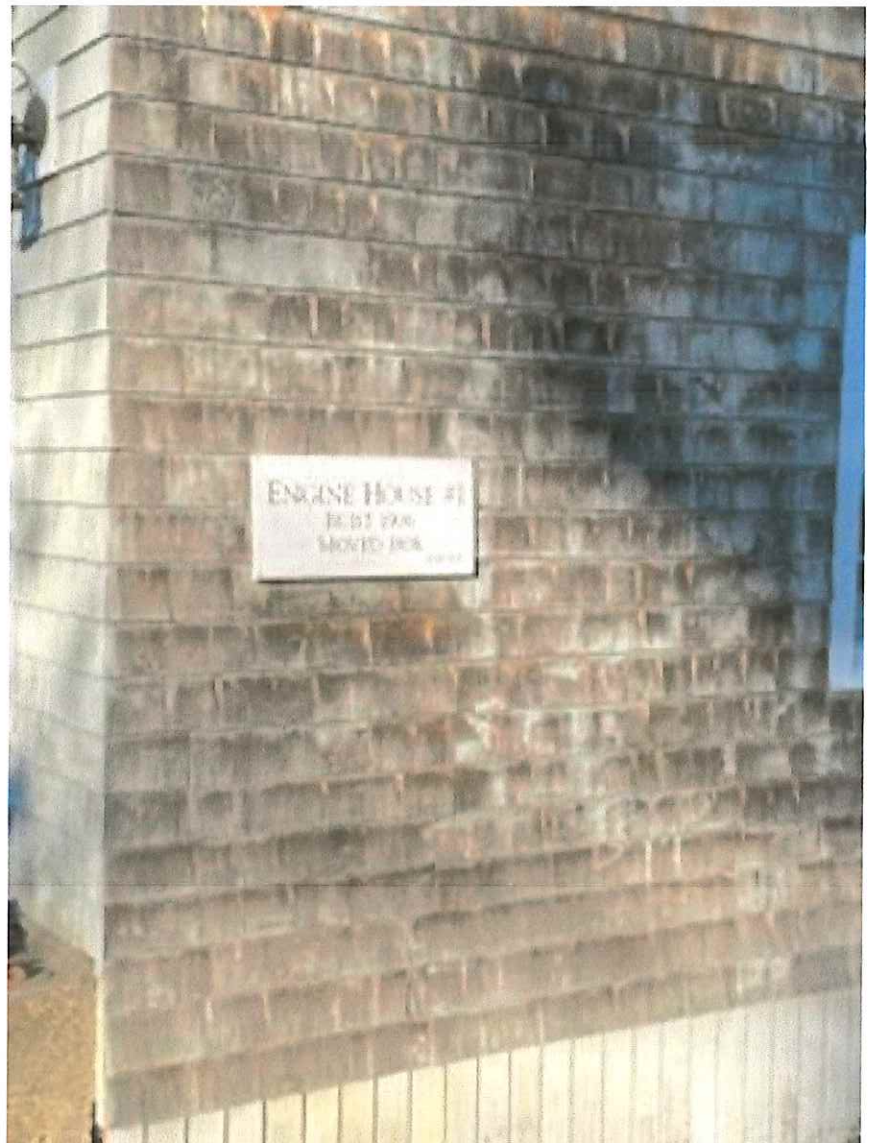


North

# Bluefish River Fire Station



Engine House #1  
Built 1906  
Moved 1908





# Bluefish River Fire Station

