

**DRAFT
CITY OF BEVERLY
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

COMMISSION: Historic District Commission

DATE: April 14, 2022

LOCATION: Google Meet (Virtual)

MEMBERS PRESENT: William Finch (Chair), Suzanne LaMont (Vice Chair),
Wendy Pearl, Caroline Baird Mason, John Leahy

MEMBERS ABSENT: Gregory Howard

STAFF PRESENT: Emily Hutchings

OTHERS PRESENT: Jenn Doherty, MHC; Estelle Rand, Ward 2 Councilor

RECORDER: Sharlyne Woodbury

Call to Order

Chair Finch calls the meeting to order at 7:04 pm.

1. Approval of minutes

a. March 30, 2022

Minutes will be approved at the May 2022 meeting.

2. CPA Plan Update – review of proposed edits and discussion on priorities

Hutchings provided members with changes to the plan update. Mason discusses open spaces and expresses her concerns that only 17% of Beverly are protected open spaces. Beverly currently ranks 231 out of all MA communities in terms of preservation of open space. Mason impresses upon members as they move forward with their projects the importance and focus of increasing open spaces. Leahy appreciates Hutchings edits and proposed changes. Finch agrees. Leahy asks is it proper to have any language referring to the NCD ordinance included. Finch does not think it is appropriate for CPA to take a stance on the ordinance, or include language in support of, since the ordinance is not yet approved.

Members discuss the list of priorities for projects and question if the full list should be included. Pearl interjects. The plan is not meant to name all the projects, simply to point out and provide a sense of the type of projects the commission has or is working on. These examples provide a depth and breadth of what CPA could support. Finch reads the language directly. Pearl maintains the properties are meant as examples not as a checklist. Members move on to discuss the other bullet points and target specific perseveration language when referencing climate change impact. Leahy cites Lynch Park as an example. Suggests, “to save Lynch Park, the grounds and the Carriage House”. Hutchings suggests adding a bullet point to establish the protection of those historic properties threatened by climate change.

3. Review of Historic Districts Commission roles and responsibilities

a. Fish Flake Hill Local Historic District

Hutchings provides the updates. In her tenure she did not receive many applications for FFH district. Hutchings received a total of 4 applications. Hutchings informs the members she possesses guidelines which are a work in progress. She strongly recommends to apply for a grant and hire a consultant to assist with finishing the work and implementing long lasting guidelines. Finch advocates for maintaining a list of new owners in the area in which they are notified of expectations and maintenance for properties in a local historic district. Finch places particular emphasis on following proper procedures. Hutchings informs members current trends include realtors reaching out to the city and the Planning Department seeking information on historic properties to relay it to the new property owners. An improvement to note, as the city migrated to the new permitting process the system automatically identifies all historic properties. As the system highlights these properties the initial review is caught at the administrative level prompting special attention.

b. Demolition Delay Ordinance

Hutchings reviews the current ordinance. The essentials include a review for any building over 50 years old is automatically flagged for review. If there is a certain level of historical significance it must be review by the HDC. Reviewing the property is a two-part determination: 1) is it historically significant and 2) is it determined to be preferably preserved. If the HDC further determines the property is to be preferably preserved they may place delay on the permit for demolition. During the delay it is ideal for the city and the commission to work with the property owner and find a suitable resolution for all stakeholders.

Hutchings provides the current trends. In recent years many demolition permits are for smaller garages and sheds that were built about 50-70 years ago. These are reviewed at the staff level. The other trend are for demolition permits of large estate homes. New property owners are razing the historic estates in favor of modern mansions. Hutchings and members discuss the master plan and the intention of the city to preserve these estates. The city prefers to see adaptive reuse of the estate as opposed to demolishing them in favor or slightly smaller but still large single-family homes. Mason further discusses the draft regulations for the “great estates” ordinance. Is this a priority for the city? Hutchings answers this is a priority ordinance but on hold. The city’s current priority is the Bass River overlay zoning. The cultural heritage properties ordinance would be one of the ordinances taken up upon completion of the Bass River overlay zoning. The Accessory Dwelling Unit ordinance is also top priority for the city. Pearl would like to see both ordinances reviewed simultaneously as they both impact the housing needs of the city. Hutchings notes the city will not lose sight of the great estates since the Cultural Heritage Ordinance is referred to in the master plan and the HDC plan. LaMont notes the great estate ordinance is already written. Hutchings replies the ordinance would need some revisits for edits, public engagement and a public process to complete updates. Mason expresses her concerns to losing historic properties to development and re-development. Mason does not feel great estate preservation is a major goal of the current administration. Does not see a great deal of emphasis on historic preservation by the city.

Members move onto discussing the ordinance particulars. Finch points out the provision within the ordinance instructing a delay may not occur until the owner has all the other permits. It is a legality. They must be approved and filed. Members want to strengthen the ordinance. Specifically focusing on not allowing the permit to transfer with the sale of the property and to

terminate if the work was not started in 12 months. Members want to strengthen the ordinance for those seeking to circumvent it. Doherty chimes in and provides examples for members to compare other communities with, Salem is used as an example. Members continue to discuss the ways owners and developers have and continue to circumvent the ordinance. Members would like to curb the use of extensions. Leahy asks if there is a recent example of a demo permit transferring with sale of property. Hutchings replies yes and will provide the information to members. Finch recalls several examples for discussion.

Hutchings reviews the responsibilities of the commission. They are essentially responsible for review of changes that impact the building from a visible for historic aspect. The most common applications are for certificates of appropriateness and for hardship. When applications are received they are reviewed by staff and shared with the chair. If a public hearing is needed the staff will go through the process. The HDC will review the application during a public hearing and decide. All the rules are listed and published in their rules of procedure. Hutchings will supply the updated version with members. The rules of procedure outline how officers are elected.

c. National Register Nominations

Hutchings provides the updates and discusses the funding opportunities. Encouraging members to continue to consider priorities of areas that qualify for funding and cites The Greenergy Park as an example.

d. Section 106 Review

Hutchings provides the update and discusses the recent training session provided by MHC. Citing the National Grid project as a recent example, Hutchings indicates the triggers for when and at what level prompts the state/local review for projects impacting ecological and historical resources. Finch adds that the final authority in the review of the project acceptance or rejection rests with the state commission. The local historic commission is only empowered to make comments. Doherty also notes it is important to note the state commission considers with consideration the local commission's advice. Hutchings informs members the MHC provides periodic trainings, encourages members to attend when possible.

4. Review of Beverly historic preservation projects and priorities

a. Historic resource survey work

These are priority projects currently in progress. The city received all the funding they asked for from MHC.

i. Cabot -Rantoul Residential Neighborhood Survey Project

Hutchings provides the updates. Phase I is funded by 50% from MHC and 50% from CPC. Denise Deschamps is coordinating the process and finalizing Phase I MOU with CPC. Planning staff will be assigned as appropriate. Phase I includes the procurement process to hire a consultant to complete the survey. Due to the large area, the survey will require additional work in order to review and determine the prioritization of properties, objects and buildings. LaMont asked for the perimeters of the area. The area includes all between Rantoul and Cabot Streets with Elliot Street as the northern border and the southern border concluding at the Cabot/Rantoul Streets apex. Finch interrupts requesting further clarification of funding percentages given by Hutchings and she responds. Finch is adamant that all properties are surveyed. Doherty chimes in

with perspective on how a large area is typically surveyed. It is through a layered process of review. Usually clusters of properties and neighborhoods are reviewed followed by determining the level of historical significance for each cluster or building. This approach is typical of Phase I and II where the consultant determines the where and the how properties are documented. Finch does not want a review process that lacks documentation and status for less prominent buildings or those that are not as historically significant. All buildings should be reviewed with reasons why they were not surveyed in depth and are part of a documented list.

ii. Central Cemetery

Hutchings provides the updates. The city is fully funding the project. The current draft survey is not usable. The consultant will need to start from beginning with a fresh survey. As a result, the survey will cost twice as much as anticipated. The city is in the process to determine the additional costs and funding approval. It is expected this project will move forward.

iii. Future priorities, including areas, landscapes, buildings/individual properties, objects, categorized resources, and others as relevant

Hutchings provides a brief overview for members and discusses Greenergy Park, the Nike Missile site (near the Beverly Airport). Wendy Frontiero led the project initiative confirming the site had an impact Beverly's military history.

b. National Register Nominations

i. Lynch Park

Hutchings provides the updates. The project is moving forward with funding from CPC and MHC as well as project coordination with MHC. New staff will be assigned to partner with the Planning and Grants directors and to ensure all contracts and MOUs are in order. They will select a consultant and complete the procurement process. HDC should continue to review draft materials and provide comments.

ii. Greenergy Park

Hutchings provides the updates and recommends the park requires a survey in order to qualify for National Register Nomination.

iii. Cabot Street Extension Area

Further discussed under agenda item 4-a-i. Hutchings updates include the extension was not approved for different reasons. Essentially there are three different projects underway simultaneously. Hutchings recommends members continue to advocate for the area to receive a National Register nomination. It would be beneficial for members create an outreach program. They can further coordinate to involve and inform property owners. The MHC aids members with these public outreach endeavors and information sessions.

iv. Qualifying historic cemeteries

Hutchings provides the updates and briefly lists all the notable cemeteries qualifying as historic. All of the proposed cemeteries for review have a completed survey except one. Hutchings informs members the city would like to include all cemeteries in one project to present to the CPC and MHC for grant funding rather than seek funding for each individual property. This approach is cost effective and efficient for the city to maintain ownership.

Pearl expresses concerns for the Abbott Street cemetery. Asks if the city can be involved to determine ownership and rebuke the encroachment by the fire station. There are immediate operational needs to determine boundaries and maintenance responsibilities. Hutchings notes the same issue with Dodges Row. Currently the city is in the process of completing a title examination for Dodges Row. This would need to be done with Abbott Street as well.

c. Dodges Row Cemetery preservation project: Update and review of next steps

Hutchings provides the updates. The National Register nomination is complete. The title examination is managed by the Veteran's Department. If the city does indeed own the property they would move forward and apply for MHC grant to complete for the cemetery. This grant will lead to maintenance and improvement. If the city does not own the cemetery upon review of title examination, there would be additional work to be done by the Solicitor's office and Mayor's office to figure out ownership of the property, if desired. Hutchings informs members this is going to be a longer process than anticipated.

d. Certified Local Government application and status

Hutchings provides the updates. The application requires information from one member whom Hutchings continues to coordinate with. The application may move forward once all components are complete and submitted. Doherty recommends finishing the application as soon as possible. Doherty notes after two rounds MHC will take a reprieve and concentrate funding requests to other communities. There is a rotation for review.

e. Neighborhood Conservation District Ordinance: Review of next steps

Hutchings reviews the subcommittee open meeting law requirements. Mason, Leahy, and Councilor Rand will continue to spearhead this initiative and suggests coordinating with the Planning Director, Darlene Wynne to assist with posting meetings. Mason and Leahy will coordinate for next subcommittee meeting. Leahy will draft the Bass River letter. Mason will coordinate with the Planning Department to post the next meeting and other resources needed.

5. New/Other Business

Leahy provides some reflective comments on the list of projects and interests the commission hopes to accomplish. Leahy is wondering if there is a list of top projects. If not, should the commission create a list to constantly review and prioritize it as time moves on. Hutchings notes the HDC list included in the HDC plan. Hutchings encourages the commission to keep a short priority list and engage with the Mayor's office as well as City Councilors to ensure projects through to completion and follow up with project updates. Members discuss best methodologies and approaches to managing and assigning a prioritized task list. Mason suggests the members continue to divvy up responsibilities and projects for individuals to work. This approach currently serves the Commission well. Pearl cautions members not to get lost in the details of prioritization and lists as they create a silo effect. Pearl encourages members that all projects presented ideally account for the protection of properties with historic value and preservation. Members continue to discuss best methods for developing an action plan with priorities applied to a time line and funding as well as prioritizing projects. Councilor Rand encourages members to continue being a presence to the City Council ensuring their concerns and comments are known. Maintain involvement with City Council and the Planning Department.

Motion: Finch on behalf of the commission as a whole, formally thanks Hutchings for all her excellent work, dedication and coordination to the HDC values, goals and priorities. LaMont seconds. The motion carries 5-0.

Doherty offers her support and expertise to the group as a supplemental resource leaving her contact information with staff.

6. Adjournment

Motion: Leahy moves to adjourn. LaMont seconds. The motion carries 5-0.

Meeting adjourned 8:59 pm. Next meeting scheduled 5/26/22.