

**CITY OF BEVERLY
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

BOARD: Historic District Commission

DATE: April 22, 2021

LOCATION: Google Meet (Virtual)

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

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Emily Hutchings

RECORDER: Sharlyne Woodbury, via Google Meets recording

Vice-Chair LaMont chairs and opens the meeting at 7:00 p.m. LaMont takes a roll call and describes the meeting as a virtual public meeting as required to honor Governor Baker’s State of Emergency declared due to the national crisis of COVID-19.

Chair Finch joins the meeting at 7:20 p.m.

1. Review and Vote: Updated Rules of Procedure

Pearl and LaMont jointly review the updates citing notable revisions. Hutchings refers to the redlined document, clarifying elections will be held every two years; in the event of special elections for vacancies the appointee shall finish the remaining term and will not be granted a full two-year term. Hutchings confirms these are standard practices.

LaMont states she believes the language and phrasing is clear, with much work done in previous revisions. Pearl inquires if this document speaks to preparation of design guidelines or standards. Hutchings replies nothing is currently in the document, although language could be added about procedures for creating guidelines or standards as a regular responsibility of the Commission.

Pearl asks if any updates are needed surrounding virtual meetings versus in-person meetings, or if Open Meeting Law covers those requirements. Hutchings confirms that Open Meeting Law specifically speaks to participation requirements for commissioners, and those requirements don’t need to be reiterated in the HDC’s Rules of Procedure. Hutchings notes that discussion is occurring at the state level on whether to modify Open Meeting Law to allow additional remote participation. However, no changes have been proposed yet, outside of the Emergency Order.

LaMont asks about receiving the Mayor’s approval on specifying whether the Commission should have 5 *or* 7 members and 3 alternatives as part of the Rules of Procedure revision process. Hutchings states she has not had the opportunity to review that subject with the Mayor, and notes that the subject would be part of an Ordinance change, rather than having to do directly with the Rules of Procedures. Hutchings notes the possibility of amending the Ordinance itself, at which point the Commission would include a redline version for review. Ordinance revisions would

involve recommendations by the Commission and review by the City Staff, the City Council, and Mayor. Alternatively, the Rules of Procedure only require approval by the Commission.

There being no further comments.

Motion: Pearl moves to adopt the Rules of Procedure as amended. LaMont seconds. The motion carries 4-0.

2. Draft Annual Report

Item was continued to the next meeting.

3. Discussion: Extension of Center Business District National Register District

The Commission notes the Historic Preservation Plan recommends that the district be extended. The Commission reviews the need to submit a proposed amendment to the National Register to expand the district, which will likely require the assistance of a consultant. It is noted that the City has the survey on the Cabot Street Extension Area, which recommends the area be added to the Center Business National Register District. The Commission reviews the procedure for submitting a Nomination form, including receiving input from the Massachusetts Historical District Commission and potentially working with a consultant to provide a recommendation and to formally write the amendment to nominate the area.

Mason recommends that expanding the area would be a method of raising awareness about the city's historic resources. Members discuss the cumbersome process of the designation. LaMont suggests making the information more accessible to the public, such as providing information on how to treat buildings and what can be done within the district. Members discuss protection, private property owners, and tax credits as it relates to renovating downtown areas, citing the Depot II project as an impetus for action on Cabot Street. Mason points out there is often a negative connotation to residing in a historical district, and that those districts are unfairly categorized as too restrictive.

Members discuss the area and how the National Register District would be expanded. Finch notes the Cabot Street Expansion Area is contiguous to the existing district. Members review the properties within the proposed expansion area, and the categories for significance of the existing district and proposed expansion area. Members ask about next steps and whether the Mayor is aware of the project. Hutchings states she has not had a discussion on this specific issue, but that it is in the Historic Preservation Plan. Finch recommends reviewing the nuances of the National Register nominations with the Mayor. Mason notes the importance of publicity and providing information to the public on why these buildings are so significant. Mason again refers to the Depot II project as a demonstration of what happens if there are no protections for buildings, and recommends moving forward with a local historic district after expanding the National Register district.

The Commission reviews next steps. Hutchings recommends that if the Commission would like to have a conversation with the Mayor, they should extend an invitation to attend the next

meeting. The Commission reviews other needs to protect and enhance the downtown area, including updating downtown design guidelines. Hutchings asks the Commission if they would like to invite the Mayor to the next HDC meeting, and they confirm yes.

There being no further comments. No action required at this time.

4. Project Updates:

a. Historic Preservation Plan

- i. Hutchings provides updates, stating she is still working on the spreadsheet to organize all the actions. Hutchings has reached out the Massachusetts State Historic Preservation Officer about Beverly's interest in becoming a Certified Local Government, and anticipates further communications and assistance in continuing the process of certification. She notes that she believes the City already meets most of the requirements.

b. Dodge's Row Cemetery

- i. Hutching states she is working to acquire the final easement to determine access. Hutchings states she is coordinating with the Southern Essex Registry of Deeds to find the documentation.

There being no further comments. No action required at this time.

5. Approval of minutes

a. January 28, 2021

Motion: Mason moves to approve the minutes as presented. Finch seconds. The motion carries 4-0.

6. New/Other Business

a. Other items

Hutchings provides a reminder there is a Joint City Council meeting with the CPC, as well as the HDC and other boards, on Monday, April 26, 2021.

7. Adjournment

Motion: LaMont moves to adjourn. Mason seconds. The motion carries 4-0.

Meeting adjourned 7:45 pm.

Next meeting scheduled for 5.27.21 at 7 p.m.