

2026 MAY 28 P 7:00 CITY OF BEVERLY
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

BOARD OR COMMISSION: City of Beverly Historic Districts Commission
DATE: March 12, 2026
LOCATION: City Council Chambers, City Hall, 191 Cabot Street
MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair William Finch; Vice Chair Suzanne LaMont; Wendy Pearl; Emily Hutchings; John Leahy; Christian Heath (remote)
STAFF PRESENT: Director of Planning & Development Darlene Wynne
OTHERS PRESENT: Michael Cahill, Mayor; David Gelineau, Purchasing Agent; David Leitman, Finegold Alexander Architects; Christopher Lane, Feingold Alexander Architects; John McGonagle, W.T. Rich; Matt Waltermire, W.T. Rich;
RECORDER: Kristan Patenaude

Call to Order

Chair Finch called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

1. Presentation on the Beverly City Hall Renovation & Expansion Project – 191 Cabot Street – City of Beverly and project team

David Leitman, Finegold Alexander Architects, gave a presentation of the overall Beverly City Hall Renovation & Expansion Project. The presentation included an overview of the site and neighborhood context, the proposed renovation plans, and the justification for demolition of the Annex. City Hall is surrounded by multi-use buildings and the Abbott Street cemetery, which is proposed to be protected during demolition and the reconstruction. Also in the area, there are residences, commercial buildings, and the existing City Park, which is to remain open to the public during demolition and construction. City Hall has been in the hands of the City for some time and there have been numerous changes made over the years. The original building was a house constructed in 1783. Many years after the City acquired it for City Hall, it was expanded in 1874. The footprint of the 1783 and 1874 building is what is currently considered City Hall. That building was renovated in 1934, and the Police Station was built on the same property in 1938. The Police Department left the building in 2021, and it has been abandoned ever since.

The proposal is to demolish the Annex only. The areas proposed to remain are the foundations, the slab on grade, and the foundation walls that are concrete, as well as the concrete slab of a portion of Level 1, which is the former cell block level. The proposed site plan shows the intention for a future project with a reconstructed Annex in essentially 98% of the same footprint, except for a small sliver along the south side as an expanded footprint.

Leitman explained that the intention of the project is to expand City Hall and provide accommodation for departments that are currently off-site, in addition to making key improvements. However, the four levels of the building behind it are not aligned with the City Hall floor levels, ranging between 2'-3' off. In order to utilize that building, ramps would have

47 been needed to make it accessible. This would require an entire reconstruction of the south
48 façade, as well as additional structural supports to accommodate the growth of that building.
49 Furthermore, there are remnants of the Police Station, the old shooting range, and the cell blocks
50 which have very narrow corridors which do not meet the program and needs of a municipal
51 facility. The intention is to retain the foundations in order to be grandfathered in by using the
52 same footprint. This minimizes a loss of parking, which is important to the City and allows
53 members of the public to access the building. It also limits any disturbances to the adjacent
54 historic cemetery to the north. This also allows for cost savings to the City.

55
56 Leitman presented images of the existing building including the Annex building from both
57 Thorndike and Cabot Street, where the primary entrance to the Police Station was set back
58 approximately 75'. Images were shown for the proposed new construction and how it will relate
59 to the existing City Hall and the surrounding context, as well as the existing conditions of the
60 property. He showed massing of elevations and proposed façade treatments of the proposed
61 annex and its relation to City Hall. The proposed construction will be three stories, which will
62 connect the historic building to the annex; the rest of the new annex will be two stories. The new
63 building will be a combination of applied brick and fiber cement siding.

64
65 John McGonagle, W.T. Rich, discussed site logistics and preservation of the cemetery during
66 construction. He explained that Cabot Street will remain open to the public during demolition
67 and construction. The intention is to minimize any impact to neighboring businesses and the
68 public park will remain open for use during the project. The server room for the City will also
69 remain open. A pre-engineered landing will be used for the duration of construction to protect
70 gravestones in the historic cemetery. The team will use pre-existing photos, to ensure that any
71 changes that occur throughout the project can be fixed.

72
73 Wynne clarified that the project does not include adding brick to the existing building, only the
74 expansion. Leitman answered the existing historic City Hall building may have some touch-up
75 work, but the character of the building will remain. There are no major alterations proposed to
76 the exterior. Leahy asked about the windows. Leitman answered the windows in the City Hall
77 building will remain and the former Police Station windows will be replaced.

78
79 Pearl asked if the project would include a preconstruction survey of the existing conditions of the
80 cemetery. McGonagle answered yes. Pearl asked about plans to deal with the alley off Cabot
81 Street, which will no longer be an entrance, creating a dead space. She expressed this is an
82 opportunity for this as an extension of Cabot Street. Leitman said the area is part of the project
83 but there are constraints to the area: including an easement for access to the neighboring property
84 and exterior stairs providing required egress from the basement. He said the sidewalk that
85 currently terminates at the entrance of the former Police Station will remain and the rest of the
86 area will be grass.

87
88 Hutchings asked about the proposed expansion of the footprint. Leitman explained that the
89 footprint will grow to the south and enable a direct corridor link between the existing building to
90 ensure they operate as one. The footprint will not grow toward the cemetery. Hutchings noted
91 that, to the rear of the building there is some existing informal access from Abbott Street near the
92 cemetery to City Hall and asked if this will be retained. Leitman explained that there will be a

new entrance in the rear with an accessible ramp for access. Mayor Michael Cahill opined that the shortcut behind the building may not be available during construction, but it will be accessible after. Leitman noted a generator will be in that location and there will be no formal sidewalk.

Pearl asked how the new building will be distinguished from the old in terms of material choices. Leitman explained that the desire was to show that the annex is a new building but also to reflect that the two operate as one building. The brick was chosen to resemble the existing brick and also for its civic quality. Material conversations are still ongoing. LaMont stated that the material choices do not seem to differentiate between the buildings. Leitman stated that the windows will be single pane, single light and that no divided lights are proposed at this time. Finch suggested that the coursing of the brick may be used to differentiate the two buildings.

Hutchings asked about deconstruction and reuse of materials. Finch indicated the construction time period and method may prohibit reuse. Christopher Lane, Feingold Alexander Architects noted that they have reused the brick in past examples but given the condition they are not sure there was enough to salvage in this situation.

Pearl gave credit for reusing the footprint and requested intentional future planning over the alley area off of Cabot Street. The members discussed their ideas about the materials to be used on the façade and how to accomplish the project's goals to match but also clearly separate the new and old. Opinions differed. Wynne read comments from Heath (remote) stating that he agreed with the discussion thus far. Also, he noted that it would likely take too much time to remediate the existing brick. Generally, feedback provided to the team included: material choices, windows, cornice line and type, how to treat the connector piece, which façade is more significant, and the design and function of the rear entry door to make it more welcoming.

The presentation has concluded.

Recess for Public Hearings

The Commission recessed for public hearing at 6:48pm.

2. Public Hearing & Determination: Demolition Delay Application (DD-26-2) – 1938 City Hall Annex / Police Station – 191 Cabot Street – City of Beverly c/o Mike Collins, Commissioner of Public Works (owner) c/o Matthew Waltermire, W.T. Rich Company (applicant)

Finch opened the public hearing for this item, which relates only to the demolition of the former police station, known as the Annex. He described the reason, being that the building is greater than 50 years old, the procedures and responsibilities of the HDC regarding the determination.

Leitman said they had no further information to present.

Finch opened the hearing to public comment.

A member of the public [name unintelligible] asked about the platform on the cemetery side and how far off the ground it will be. Leitman stated that it will run to the base of the foundation. This will be a pre-engineered structure. Finch noted that this hearing is on the question as to if the building is Historically Significant or not, and not necessarily to comment on the proposed design. The speaker asked about the bollards around the park, which are not being touched. The member of the public stated that he does not see an issue with demolishing the Annex as long as it stays in the same footprint.

Finch read a letter from Abby Battis, Director of Historic Beverly into the record. The letter discussed the materials believed to be stored within the building. It urged the City to take immediate and deliberate steps to ensure the preservation of any and all records currently housed inside the Annex. Finch noted that there are 18th century records stored in the cellar of this building [the City Hall building, which is not being demolished] and noted that the City has had a program to catalogue and preserve records.

Finch closed the public hearing and reconvened the Regular Meeting.

Leahy stated that he believes the building is Historically Significant. Pearl stated that the building does not have many features that are preservation-worthy, aside from possibly the alley front entrance with its decorative application. There may be relevance to civic events in the City. Hutchings stated that the building is lightly Historically Significant based on its relation to the civic development of the City. It does not hold the same level of significance as seen in other public and private buildings in the City. LaMont stated that she believes the building is Historically Significant. Heath stated that he is on the side of preservation and noted its association with the police station and the 1930s. Finch stated that the building has a clear significant association to the City's history, but not architectural significance or significance involving important persons.

Hutchings: Motion to deem the 1938 City Hall Annex / Police Station, 191 Cabot Street, Historically Significant due to its association to civic development of the City of Beverly. LaMont seconds. Motion carries (6-0, by roll call vote).

LaMont stated that retrofitting the existing building to make it useable is likely unreasonable and not worth the effort to do so. She would be okay with not placing a demolition delay on the building. Leahy agreed that allowing the demolition to occur is a better idea than trying to preserve a building that could be difficult, costly, and not very useful in its current state. Pearl agreed that the applicant has demonstrated that rehabilitating and reusing the building would be challenging and would not meet the City's needs. Hutchings stated that the purpose of the Demolition Delay Ordinance is to provide an additional layer of protection to historic buildings where there is a clear civic value to the protection. In this case, there is a clear civic value to the demolition of the structure and reconstruction of a building that is better for the City. Heath agreed with what has been said. Finch stated that, while the building has strong associational values, these values do not tie into the bricks and mortar of the building. He does not believe it warrants to be Preferably Preserved.

Leahy: Motion to deem the 1938 City Hall Annex / Police Station, 191 Cabot Street, Preferably Preserved due to its associations to local history and police history of the City of Beverly. Hutchings seconds. Motion fails (1-5*, by roll call vote).

[*Heath originally voted Yes, but changed his vote to No after clarifying he misheard the motion, so the amended vote was 0-6.]

Finch commented that the renovation program, including rebuilding the annex, works quite well in bringing forward Beverly's historic use of the building and hopefully the internal renovations will make it more functional.

The Commission took a five-minute recess at 7:15pm.

3. Election of Chair / Vice Chair

Leahy: Motion to nominate William Finch as Chair and Suzanne LaMont as Vice Chair of the Beverly Historic Districts Commission. Hutchings seconds. Motion carries (6-0, by roll call vote).

4. Discussion: Update to Historic Districts Commission's Rules of Procedure (time permitting)

Nothing additional at this time.

5. New business, other business, or topics for future meeting agendas, if any

a. Update on Historic Resource Survey Project: Cabot-Rantoul Residential Neighborhood from Suzie LaMont, designated representative

LaMont explained that the target number for the survey was 109 properties. The hired consultant has prepared a list with 102 individual properties and three area forms with an additional eleven properties. The consultant would like information on which properties can be removed from the list. Draft documents are available for review, and the group will meet at the end of this month to review these.

b. Update from Community Preservation Committee representative Wendy Pearl, if any

Pearl stated that the CPC will meet next week. Applicants will be before the CPC to answer questions at that meeting. The three historic preservation applications are in the supplementary round and only funded if money is available.

c. Update from Design Review Board representative Emily Hutchings, if any

Hutchings explained that the DRB reviewed a few signs at its last meeting and was informed that there will be a site plan review at its next meeting for a property on Federal Street, upon which

the Commission previously issued a Demolition Delay. Wynne noted that the project previously went before the ZBA. This plan involves demolition of the building.

6. Approval of Minutes, as available

a. January 28, 2026

LaMont: Motion to approve the January 28, 2026, meeting minutes, as amended. Leahy seconds. Motion carries (6-0, by roll call vote).

b. February 25, 2026

The Commission agreed to table discussion on these minutes to the next meeting.

The Commission discussed an update on 38 Standley Street.

7. Adjourn

Pearl: Motion to adjourn. Leahy seconds. Motion carries (6-0, by roll call vote).

Meeting adjourns at 7:53p.m.