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**CITY OF BEVERLY
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

2026 JUL -3 A 4 52

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4 BOARD OR COMMISSION: City of Beverly Historic Districts Commission
5 DATE: April 29, 2026
6 LOCATION: City Council Chambers, City Hall, 191 Cabot Street
7 MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair William Finch; Vice Chair Suzanne LaMont; Wendy
8 Pearl; Emily Hutchings; John Leahy
9 MEMBERS ABSENT: Christian Heath
10 OTHERS PRESENT: Shawn Mahoney, Fay Salt, Roger Herson, David Kaysar,
11 Caroline Mason, Abby Battis, Jeff Dauzat
12 STAFF PRESENT: Director of Planning & Development Darlene Wynne
13 RECORDER: Kristan Patenaude

14
15 **Call to Order**

16
17 Chair Finch called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

18
19 **1. Citizen Presentation and Discussion: Suggested Updates to Chapter 168, Historic**
20 **Buildings and Districts, including the City's Demolition Delay Procedures**

21
22 Fay Salt, 66 Haskell Street, presented on behalf of the citizens group that was formed after a
23 recent HDC meeting with the common belief that the current Demolition Delay Ordinance could
24 be improved upon. She introduced the group's members. The request is that the Commission
25 endorse the working group's proposed changes, with a goal of bringing it before the City
26 Council. She adds that the Demolition Delay Ordinance was last updated 22 years ago in 2004.
27 In just the past year, two historic properties were demolished after the one-year delay expired
28 and there is currently one demolition delay in effect for the 38 Standley Street property. The
29 current ordinance allows for only a one-year delay.

30
31 Salt continues that they believe the proposed language has already been tested in other areas and
32 is workable for residents, owners, and the City alike. The group reviewed communities across
33 the Commonwealth that have already modernized their ordinances. The most important change is
34 replacing the procedures section, with a proposal to swap Beverly's procedures with a modern set
35 taken from the Brookline ordinance. This includes adding a bona fide sale effort clause where
36 owners must make a documented good faith attempt to sell before demolishing a property. This
37 gives someone with a preservation bias a chance to obtain the property and take action. The
38 proposed language also adds a new clause that resets the clock on a property sold during a
39 demolition delay. The clock would start anew if there were a new owner, being called the
40 wait-it-out clause. Another item suggested by the group is to require a sign on-site, supplied by
41 the City, with a QR code containing information. Finally, the group proposes adding a
42 severability clause, meaning that if one part is struck down, the rest still stands.

43
44 Hutchings expressed concern regarding the bona fide sale section. Building demolitions
45 generally fall into three categories: the demolition of institutional buildings where the institution
46 is no longer able to keep it or they want to do something different with the property and so there

47 is a balancing of public benefits consideration; the demolition of smaller buildings in multifamily
48 districts for the construction of new multifamily buildings which also leads to a balancing of
49 priorities; and the demolition of single-family homes which are being torn down and replaced
50 with other single-family homes. For the last category, it might be reasonable to insist on a bona
51 fide sales effort before a demolition permit is granted. But it is unclear if this category can be
52 separated out. She asked if there might be other policies and incentives that could better protect
53 properties.

54

55 Pearl stated that it does not seem like the two-step process which currently exists, to determine
56 Historic Significance and then discuss Preferably Preserved status, exists in this proposal. These
57 items seem to have disappeared into the initial and final determination process proposed. This
58 would be a real loss because the Preferably Preserved determination means that the Commission
59 can determine that a project is significant based purely on historic integrity, value, connections to
60 the history of the property, and relationship to the City. She opines that this allows for the
61 decision to be split, where the proposal does not. There are also some terms, such as "substantial
62 alteration," which are new and it is unclear how they fit into the procedures. This may lead to the
63 Building Inspector making a determination on these terms. Finch explained that in Brookline, the
64 determination of significance made by the Commission triggers the delay immediately.

65

66 Hutchings suggested maintaining the current process and potentially extending associated
67 timelines in order to give the community more time to pursue alternatives.

68

69 Finch explained that it is the Building Inspector who determines whether an applicant is
70 required, for a demolition permit, to file with the Commission. The typical threshold is that if an
71 applicant proposes to demolish more than 50% of a building, a demo permit is needed. The
72 Brookline ordinance defines "demolition" at length, and the Brookline Commission is the one
73 that determines if someone needs to file a permit. Hutchings suggested that the Beverly
74 definition for "demolition" follow the standard. The proposed definition describes architectural
75 elements which could be a judgment call, ripe for appeal.

76

77 The Commission suggested identifying things that can be easily changed in the HDC's Rules of
78 Procedure and considering other policies or reviewing the fee structure for the process. There
79 was a suggestion to table the procedures portion of the suggestion and focus on the five goals
80 provide by the citizen group through the lens of the Commission's existing procedures.

81

82 There was discussion regarding how public comment would factor into the proposed process.
83 Wynne stated that she thinks the most appropriate process is for the proposal to ultimately come
84 from the Planning Department, with recommendations from the group and Commission.

85

86 The Commission agreed that for the next meeting there would be further discussion to review the
87 proposed items that could be considered for changes in the Commission's existing Rules of
88 Procedure.

89

90 **2. Discussion: Update to Historic Districts Commission's Rules of Procedure**

91 The Commission reviewed the proposed updates to the Rules of Procedure document made by
92 Hutchings, which were primarily administrative, grammatical, or scrivener's. Hutchings
93 requested that Wynne send the revised version to the Clerk's office for official documentation.

94

95 Hutchings: Motion to approve the proposed amendments, as edited and discussed.
96 Leahy seconds. Motion carries (5-0).

97

98 Hutchings asked for an opinion from the City Solicitor regarding whether staff or the
99 Commission can establish a fee schedule for historic applications, both Local Historic District
100 and Demolition Delay reviews, or if this requires an Ordinance change. Secondly, whether the
101 Commission may require a physical sign on site, including regulations in the Rules of Procedure,
102 or whether this would require an Ordinance change.

103

104 LaMont: Motion to ask the stated questions of the City Solicitor. Leahy seconds.
105 Motion carries (5-0).

106

107 **3. Status Update: Proposed Bills HD.4331 and S.1428 before the Massachusetts**
108 **Legislature with proposed changes to MGL Chapter 40, Section 8d and MGL**
109 **Chapter 40C.**

110

111 *The Commission tabled discussion on this item to a later date.*

112

113 **4. Project/Committee updates, if any:**

114 **a. Update on Historic Resource Survey Project: Cabot-Rantoul residential**
115 **neighborhood from Suzie LaMont, designated representative**

116

117 LaMont stated that the property list for review has been reduced to the target goal of 110
118 properties.

119

120 **b. Update from Community Preservation Committee representative Wendy**
121 **Pearl**

122

123 Pearl stated that the CPC approved all of the applications. The Housing Trust's request was voted
124 at half of the amount requested.

125

126 **c. Update from Design Review Board representative Emily Hutchings**

127

128 Hutchings stated that the DRB reviewed 46 Federal Street which is a completely new building.
129 The current design is more in line with the neighborhood character. The DRB recommended
130 approval. The Planning Board voted to approve the application last night.

131

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

133 **a. Essex Heritage Partnership Grant application**

134

135 Wynne noted that this grant was not awarded to the City.

136

- 137 **b. Correspondence: Consultation letter to MHC from Planning Department**
138 **regarding new CDBG-funded Beverly Housing Rehabilitation program**
139 **(BHRP) submitted pursuant to HUD Regulation 24, CFR Part 50 and**
140 **Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (HUD required**
141 **Environmental Review Process)**

142
143 *The Commission tabled discussion on this item to a later date.*

144
145 **6. Approval of Minutes, as available**

146 **a. February 25, 2026**

147 **b. March 12, 2026**

148
149 *The Commission tabled discussion on this item to a later date.*

150
151 **7. Adjourn**

152
153 Pearl: Motion to adjourn. Leahy seconds. Motion carries (5-0).

154
155 Meeting adjourns at 9:30 p.m.