

**LOWELL HISTORIC BOARD
MINUTES
Mayor's Reception Room, Lowell City Hall
March 9, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.**

Note: These minutes are not completed verbatim. For further detail, contact the Lowell Historic Board, Lowell City Hall, Room 51, 375 Merrimack Street or refer to video recordings available online at www.LTC.org.

Members Present: George Villaras, Chair: Yovani Baez-Rose, Troy Depeiza, Aurora Erickson, Gray Fitzsimons, Jeffrey Harris, Lucia Walker

Members Absent: Deborah Belanger

Others Present: Stephen Stowell, Administrator

The following represents the actions taken by the Historic Board at the 3/9/26 meeting.

Chair Villaras called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

1. PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. DLHD-26-31: 281 and 463 Moody Street

Application for a Historic Permit by New North Canal LLC for demolition of 14 D-rated inconsistent buildings (ca. 1969) and construction of one four-story residential building, one five-story residential building, and associated site improvements pursuant to the Lowell Historic District Act (Chapter 566, Acts of 1983).

The Administrator said that the applicant has requested a continuance to the May 11 meeting so that they can complete design work for the proposed project.

Motion:

By Y. Baez-Rose, seconded by T. Depeiza, to:

Continue the hearing for DLHD-26-31 (281 and 463 Moody Street) to the Historic Board's May 11, 2026 meeting.

Unanimously approved, 7-0.

B. DLHD-26-33: 291 and 341 Jackson Street

Site of the former Lowell Machine Shop Foundry. Application for a Historic Permit by Cabot, Cabot, and Forbes for construction of two six-story mixed use residential buildings and associated site improvements pursuant to the Lowell Historic District Act (Chapter 566, Acts of 1983).

On Behalf:

Hayley Glidden, Cabot, Cabot, and Forbes

H. Glidden introduced and described the proposed project.

Speaking in Favor:

None

Speaking in Opposition:

Denise Warren, 219 Jackson Street

Discussion:

The Chair asked the Administrator if it would be the Building Department who would address D. Warren's concerns about noise, construction work hours, dust, and other issues. The Administrator said that it would be the Building Commissioner and inspectors in Development Services who would address concerns such as those. The Chair asked if people should go directly to them if there were any concerns and the Administrator said that would be the case.

G. Fitzsimons asked if the Administrator could prepare a memo noting D. Warren's concerns to the Building Commissioner and the Administrator said that he would.

The Chair stated that applicant had previously come to the Board for an informational presentation, thanked the applicant for the revised drawings, and hoped that the Administrator had been helpful. H. Glidden noted that the Administrator had been more than helpful.

The Chair noted that the project fits well in the space, that it harkens back to what used to be there even though the use is new and not industrial. The mass and size just works well along with the color blocking that breaks the design up so that it is not just a solid mass.

The Administrator thanked the applicant and The Architectural Team for the submittals, noting that the he hoped that the elevations illustrating the materials were useful for the Board members and the public to see. He also mentioned the design animation that was very useful and hopefully addressed questions regarding context at the informational presentation last month.

The Chair mentioned the recommended motion and conditions. The Administrator said they were provided to the applicant in advance and summarized them.

A. Erickson asked if the applicant wanted to respond to D. Warren's concerns about construction. H. Glidden stated that in prior projects elsewhere that they successfully manage construction and community concerns. She noted that with respect to the Jackson Street site that since there is no demolition involved, that dust should not be a concern and mitigation would be easier.

Y. Baez-Rose recognized D. Warren's concerns and that it is on their radar, that it is important to learn from past situations moving forward and thanked D. Warren for attending. She noted that the comments were appreciated and in her experience, that the applicant will be good to work with and that they now aware of past concerns regarding construction in the vicinity.

Motion:

By G. Fitzsimons, seconded by Y. Baez-Rose, to:

Vote to issue the Historic Permit for the construction of two six-story mixed use residential buildings and associated site improvements at 291 and 341 Jackson Street in the Downtown Lowell Historic District conditional upon the following:

1. Submittal, review, and approval of material and color samples including, but not limited to, masonry/mortar, cementitious panel/siding systems, metal, and paint. All cementitious siding products to have smooth (not raised or faux grain) surface. On-site samples will be required for review and approval prior to commencement of individual work items;
2. Submittal, review, and approval of final details related to all aspects of the window and door scope of work including, but not limited to, specifications, paint color, and blinds (dark color) prior to commencement of work;
3. Submittal, review, and approval of final roof plan and specifications including, but not limited to, mechanical units, any potential solar panels, and any potential roof decks prior to commencement of work;
4. Proposed new canal walk along the Hamilton Canal at 291 Jackson Street to be consistent with adjacent and existing Canalway design features. Design to be submitted for review and approval prior to commencement of work;
5. Existing canal walk infrastructure, including public art, around 341 Jackson Street to be protected and public access maintained (as safety permits) throughout construction;
6. Vibration monitoring to occur throughout construction for adjacent historic resources including, but not limited to, canal walls; Swamp Locks Dam, Locks, and Gatehouse; 110 Canal Street; and Appleton Mills. Proposed vibration monitoring work scope to be submitted for review and approval prior to commencement of work; and
7. Submittal, review, and approval of final design and construction details, and any scope of work alterations, including, but not limited to, lighting including traditional fixtures, security lighting, and architectural lighting; cameras; and building signage (individual commercial/retail tenants will need to submit separate applications) prior to commencement of individual work items.

Work is consistent with Sections 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 5.6, and 5.7 of the Design Review Standards for the Downtown Lowell Historic District.

Unanimously approved, 7-0.

C. DLHD-26-34: 43 Fletcher Street

The former Ashworth's File Factory (ca. 1865). Application for a Historic Permit by Valter DeCarvalho for demolition and construction of a six-story mixed-use residential building pursuant to the Lowell Historic District Act (Chapter 566, Acts of 1983).

On Behalf:

B. Ganek introduced the proposed project and presented project plans and designs.

Speaking in Favor:

None

Speaking in Opposition:

None

Discussion:

The Chair noted that the applicant previously appeared before the Board for an informational presentation and he appreciated how the building has evolved in terms of color and texture, making it more relatable to the surroundings which had been one of his concerns at the informational. He said that the new building reconciles the surrounding neighborhood with the Hamilton area across the way, bridging the two areas, and is a nice fit for the location.

Y. Baez-Rose asked if two separate votes were needed, one for the demolition and one for the new construction. The Administrator said that only one vote would be necessary.

T. Depeiza commended B. Ganek on the articulation of the project. He said that the materiality and scale has been addressed in response to the prior informational presentation and asked about the possibility of entry canopy. B. Ganek said that they would explore options but that a sleek streetscape was intended as part of the design, not compete with the overhanging bays.

G. Fitzsimons asked if there was a parking arrangement for the project. B. Ganek said that parking arrangements would be made with the City garages and that there are some adjacent City owned spaces they are researching acquiring.

G. Fitzsimons asked if there was a location where artifacts or images could be displayed that recalls the history of the site. B. Ganek said that there is a residential entrance lobby where some images could be located.

A. Erickson asked the Administrator about the existing building's history and how long it has been vacant. The Administrator noted that the building dates to around the Civil War, had been a small manufacturing facility, and was more recently known as the former Furey's Tavern. He said that it has been vacant for some time and longer than 2015 as had been mentioned.

G. Fitzsimons mentioned the City Engineer's Collection at the Center for Lowell History as a possible source for historic images. The Administrator said he has used the collection for a variety of projects through the years and historic images and maps could be enlarged for placement on interior walls like other development projects have done.

J. Harris appreciated the applicant's willingness to meet at informational sessions to review preliminary designs and hear feedback on design options, that it has resulted in a successful design. He noted that any time that a developer or architect takes the time to meet with the Board or the Administrator for preliminary feedback, it results in a good project. B. Ganek thanked the Board and the Administrator for their time. The Administrator noted that the National Park architect was also impressed with the design and especially the sectionals that detailed various construction items and compliance with new energy codes that are affecting projects' designs and budgets.

Y. Baez-Rose said it is important to get a variety of different sized projects and the idea of a 20 unit building in this location is perfect, very walkable and scaled to fit the neighborhood well. She complemented the scale and appearance of the building, that it was sophisticated and had nice layouts and amenities.

G. Fitzsimons asked what the applicant would use the City lot for in front of the building if they are successful in acquiring it. B. Ganek said it would be for on-site parking for the building.

Motion:

By J. Harris, seconded by Y. Baez-Rose, to:

Vote to issue the Historic Permit for demolition and construction of a six-story mixed-use residential building at 43 Fletcher Street in the Downtown Lowell Historic District conditional upon the following:

1. Submittal, review, and approval of material and color samples including, but not limited to, masonry/ mortar, cementitious panel/siding systems, metal, and paint. All cementitious siding products to have smooth (not raised or faux grain) surface. On-site samples will be required for review and approval prior to commencement of individual work items;
2. Submittal, review, and approval of final details related to all aspects of the window and door scope of work including, but not limited to, specifications, paint color, and blinds (dark color) prior to commencement of work;
3. Submittal, review, and approval of final roof plan and specifications including, but not limited to, mechanical units, any potential solar panels, and any potential roof decks prior to commencement of work; and
4. Submittal, review, and approval of final design and construction details, and any scope of work alterations, including, but not limited to, lighting including traditional fixtures, security lighting, and architectural lighting; cameras; and building signage (individual commercial/retail tenants will need to submit separate applications) prior to commencement of individual work items.

Work is consistent with Sections 3.1 and 3.2 of the Design Review Standards for the Downtown Lowell Historic District.

Unanimously approved, 7-0.

2. MINUTES

Approval of the Minutes of February 9, 2026.

Motion:

The Chair noted on page 4, the comment should note “breaks down” not “breaks done.”

By J. Harris, seconded by L. Walker, to:

Approve the Minutes of February 9, 2026.

Unanimously approved, 7-0.

3. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Enforcement/Violations Update

Non-conforming signage continues to be addressed with only a scattered number of lit signs being the primary issue. All continue to be addressed via personal visits that also include distribution of the Board’s custom open/closed signs and offers of sign grants. Maintenance work will be ramping up in the spring with several new addresses to be focused on.

B. Administrator’s Report

The Administrator noted that the materials in the packet are for informational purposes and would be included in the record.

Upcoming Projects and Project Review:

Post-permitting review and approval of design details and materials continues for a variety of projects including the Massachusetts Mills Main Power House/Boiler House (Bridge Street), 278 Central Street, 64 Clitheroe Street, 80 Mansur Street, 100 Market Street, 199 Market Street, 246.2 Market Street, 35-55 Merrimack Street, 484 Merrimack Street, 78 Middlesex Street, 218 Middlesex Street, 657 Middlesex Street, 50 Payne Street, 17 Rock Street, 684 Westford Street, 6 Wiggin Street, 71 Willie Street, and 52 Wyman Street. This is in addition to routine signage, maintenance, and other Minor Development activity.

Upcoming projects that will require public hearings include demolition/new residential construction at 43 Fletcher Street (informational presentation held in December, 2025 and public hearing at this meeting), the Lowell Community Charter School smokestack and expansion project on Middlesex Street (informational presentations held in July and November, 2025), North Canal Housing Redevelopment (informational presentation held in February, 2026 and public hearing at this meeting.), new mixed use construction at 291 and 341 Jackson Street (informational presentation held in February, 2026 and public hearing at this meeting), and demolition/new residential construction at 564 Dutton Street and 22 Fletcher Street (informational presentation TBD),

Since the start of FY26 on July 1, applications are running even with FY25 when compared with the same time period.

Board Member Updates:

Letters were sent in December to those statutory Board entities that have terms ending at the end of February. The terms of Troy Depeiza (Boston Society for Architecture/American Institute of Architects), Jeffrey Harris

(DCR), and George Villaras (Greater Lowell Chamber of Commerce) expire on February 28. Yovani Baez-Rose (DPD Director) expires on the same date but automatically renews as the position is statutorily designated and only requires swearing in.

The DCR Commissioner has again appointed Jeffrey Harris as their representative for a two-year term effective 3/1/26 and expiring 2/29/28. No City Council confirmation is required as it is a direct appointment to the Board.

Troy Depeiza was again nominated by the BSA/AIA for their seat, was appointed by the City Manager, and confirmed by the City Council on 2/27/26 for a two-year term effective 3/1/26 and expiring 2/29/28.

George Villaras was again nominated by the Chamber for their seat, was appointed by the City Manager, and confirmed by the City Council on 2/17/26 for a two-year term effective 3/1/26 and expiring 2/29/28.

Doors Open Lowell:

Planning for the 21st Doors Open Lowell continues which will be held on Saturday, May 9 during National Preservation Month. The building roster has been finalized while XTRA activities are still being scheduled. Sponsors also continue to be secured through the Lowell Heritage Partnership. Coordination with vendors for various products including banners and stickers is also occurring while design services have been secured for the program guide. Finally, all event social media platforms and website continue to be regularly updated while various eateries will be approached to become dining partners, providing discounts for those wearing event stickers which is a concept that harkens back to the earlier days of Doors Open Lowell.

The Administrator said that a new site had been added to the roster today, the Kirk Street School that has been converted into residential use that will be open on the Saturday afternoon of the event.

Social Media:

Social media continues to be a very popular and effective community engagement and outreach tool for the Board and is in many aspects, the cornerstone of those efforts. The Board's Facebook page has 10,067 followers, while individual posts continue to reach thousands and the page is seen as one of the most comprehensive, timely, and detailed municipal historic preservation pages in the state and nationally. Other platforms include Instagram (1,991) and Pinterest (40 followers).

Next Meeting:

The Board's next meeting is scheduled for Monday, April 13, 2026 in the Mayor's Reception Room.

The Chair inquired about lit window signs in terms of "open" vs. "atm" for example. The Administrator said that there is no distinction between them, lit window signs are not permitted.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Motion:

By G. Fitzsimons, seconded by Y. Baez-Rose, to:

Adjourn the meeting at 6:53 p.m.

Unanimously approved, 7-0.

ATTEST: _____
Stephen R. Stowell, Administrator