

**City of Salem Massachusetts
Public Meeting Minutes**

Board or Committee:	Design Review Board, Regular Meeting
Date and Time:	Wednesday, July 22, 2026 at 6:00 pm
Meeting Location:	Virtual Zoom Meeting
DRB Members Present:	Chair Paul Durand, Daniel Estes, Catherine Miller, Elizabeth Murray, Marc Perras, and Sarah Tarbet
Others Present:	Stephanie Owens, Senior Planner
Recorder:	Christine Petryszyn

The meeting was called to order at 6:09pm. Roll call was taken.

Signs in the Urban Renewal Area

1. 161 Essex Street: Peabody Essex Museum Walking Tours

Mia Alcover was present to discuss the proposal:

- Ms. Alcover noted that they would like to have temporary signage for the building they call PEM Connect, which serves as space for staff leading walking tours.
- The purpose of the signage is to clearly identify the location and help visitors understand where to begin their tour.
- Ms. Alcover said they are proposing two temporary painted aluminum signs, one facing Essex Street and the other facing Washington Street. The signs would be installed from August 2026 through December 2026.
- The dimensions, locations, and installation methods are the same as the temporary signage that was reviewed and approved for this building last year.
- The dimensions of each sign are 8 ft by 3.6 ft.
- There will be no new penetrations into the brick façade. The aluminum pan will be attached to the existing system.
- Images of the sign and installation were shared.
- Mr. Perras said he liked the system of changing out panels.
- Ms. Alcover said the DRB had great feedback on the design last year.
- Ms. Miller inquired about getting people on other walking tours because the font of “Walking Tours” is very big.
- Ms. Alcover said the sign has the PEM logo and that it is next to their museum. She said they are relatively new to doing walking tours so wanted to provide that emphasis.
- Ms. Miller suggested that if they use a QR code that a link to the location is included to help people find their way to the building.

There were no comments or questions from members of the public.

VOTE: Mr. Perras made a motion to approve as submitted.

Seconded by Tarbet.

Roll Call: Estes, Miller, Murray, Perras, Tarbet, and Durand. 6-0 in favor.

2. **231-251 Washington Street:** Levana Group Leasing Signage

Justin Steele with REMAX and a partner with Levana Group was present to discuss the proposal:

- The property was put on the market last week. They are proposing 3 ft by 8 ft vinyl leasing banners.
- Sample banners were shared.
- The individual garage door windows make the percentage of window coverage difficult.
- Mr. Steele noted that they would like to advertise the lease availability but do not want to alter the exterior of the building. They hope this is a very short-term promotion.
- The current banners are held in place by high load suction cups attached to the glass.
- Mr. Steele said they have also designed smaller signs that occupy less than 20% of the individual windowpanes.
- The City's temporary sign clause is for two weeks. As this is a very large commercial space, the sign is probably going to be needed well beyond that time.
- Mr. Perras said the DRB has allowed seasonal signage for three months. He suggested that they accept the signage as part of that bucket. He recommended that they put a three-month term on the signage and that if it goes beyond that then they would need to come back before the DRB.
- Mr. Steele said that three months is reasonable. He said that a space of this size and cost is likely to take some time. He said he would appreciate having a six-month time frame. He noted that there were some other signs in the area, The GOAT and RCG, had banner signs for longer periods of time.
- Mr. Perras said he is concerned about creating precedent for temporary signage extending beyond three months.
- Ms. Owens noted that the permit process and code for their existing banner only allows for a banner for 15 days. If they use the rendering, they could use the sign permit and keep it up for three months. It would no longer be considered a temporary sign.
- Mr. Perras noted that others have put up large banners and been asked to take them down multiple times without doing so. He suggested that allowing them to keep the sign up for three months is a reasonable, temporary change to the ordinance. Others agreed.

There were no comments or questions from members of the public.

VOTE: Mr. Perras made a motion to allow the sign to remain in place for three months, and that at that time if the building is not leased, the lessor will come back before the DRB.

Seconded by Murray.

Roll Call: Estes, Miller, Murray, Perras, Tarbet, and Durand. 6-0 in favor.

Projects in the Urban Renewal Area

1. **6 Front Street:** Small Project Review – Replacement of 34 windows on the second and third floors of the property.

No one from the applicant team was present.

VOTE: Ms. Miller made a motion to continue.

Seconded by Perras.

Roll Call: Estes, Miller, Murray, Perras, Tarbet, and Durand. 6-0 in favor.

Projects Outside the Urban Renewal Area

There are no projects to review.

New / Old Business

1. Approval of Minutes:

a. June 24, 2026

VOTE: Ms. Miller made a motion to approve the June 24th meeting minutes.

Seconded by Perras.

Roll Call: Estes, Miller, Murray, Perras, Tarbet, and Durand. 6-0 in favor.

2. Staff updates, if any

Ms. Owens reminded the Board about the joint meeting with the Planning Board regarding the Life Bridge 40R project at Margin Street, High Street, and Endicott Street. The meeting will begin at 6:30pm via Zoom. Ms. Owens also noted that the Planning Board may mention the possibility of another joint meeting or if they want to send the project to the DRB.

Ms. Miller raised the issue of the Planning Board giving time limits on their approvals. She noted that some businesses that received DRB approvals still have signs up and paper in the windows after a significant time passage since approval. She inquired as to whether the DRB's approval to the SRA be that their recommendation must be made and that they are temporary signage.

Ms. Owens noted that the sign permits do have a time limit, either 9 or 12 months, and that The Goat is hitting that now. Representatives from The Goat reached out to Ms. Owens and she has been communicating with the Building Department on next steps and if it needs to come back to the DRB. Ms. Owens said if a sign permit is not approved it is an enforcement issue, which she can add to the tracker that is included in the minutes.

Upcoming Meetings

1. SRA: August 12

2. DRB: August 26

Adjournment

VOTE: Mr. Perras made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by: Miller. All in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 6:35PM.

Know your rights under the Open Meeting Law M.G.L. c. 39 §23B and City Ordinance Sections 2-028
through 2-2033

Enforcement Tracking

Business	Item	Status
Ascend	Window clings	Emailed again on 7/29
Witchside Tavern	Menu displays on brick facade	Denied permit in OpenGov in May. Emailed on 7/23.
Salem Wax Museum	Cornice lights	Emailed again on 7/30
Fountain Place	Tattered awning signs	Emailed on 7/23, response received 7/24
World of Wizardry	Window cling on door – more than 20% coverage	Emailed again on 7/30
Pirates Museum	String lights at cornice	Emailed again on 7/30, response received 7/30
TruNorth Bank	Temporary banners	Observed on 7/30
The Goat	Temporary banners	Observed on 7/30