

**City of Salem, Massachusetts
Public Meeting Minutes**

Board or Committee: Joint Salem Redevelopment Authority and Design Review Board
Date and Time: Wednesday, September 9, 2026, at 6:00pm
Meeting Location: Zoom Meeting
SRA Members Present: Chair Grace Napolitano, Christopher Dunn, Glenn Larose, Ryan Macione, and Christine Madore
DRB Members Present: Chair Paul Durand, Daniel Estes, Catherine Miller, Elizabeth Murray, and Joseph Badowski
Others Present: Tom Daniel, Executive Director, Kate Newhall-Smith, Principal Planner, Stephanie Owens, Senior Planner

Ms. Napolitano read the following statement:

Before we get started with our meeting agenda items, I'd like to make a statement as Chair of the Board regarding the many comments received, social media posts, and media coverage about the recent updates made to the Sign Manual.

First I'd like to say that as a Board, we have always been and will continue to be supportive of the contribution of the arts to the character of our downtown. Many may not be aware that prior to the establishment of Salem's Public Art Commission, the SRA was the public body leading public art opportunities. Salem's artbox program originated as a demonstration project supported by the SRA back in 2010. For many years, the SRA has led or supported public art projects including murals, sculptures, and public space activations. To this day, enhancing and activating public spaces by way of supporting public arts and programming remains a priority of the SRA.

Over the years, we have worked closely with the Design Review Board (DRB), having often relied on their professional guidance to be partners in reviewing a multitude of projects – from the largest scale such as the courthouse redevelopment project to the smaller scale design elements of signage. We have also engaged the local community and valued public input from business groups and creative groups alike. Beyond this, we are all citizens of this city and personally enjoy the benefits of being part of the unique and vibrant community that Salem is.

What I don't think many people realize is that the recent update to the Sign Manual was a mechanism to expand the allowance of window art from outdated regulations of the 1970's, which limited window art to no more than 15 days at a time and no more than 15% of the window area – however, these outdated regulations were rarely, if ever, enforced. Following collaboration with interested parties like Salem Main Streets, Creative Collective, and the Commission on Disabilities, updated changes were adopted in 2025 and efforts were then made to communicate the changes to downtown businesses – this seems to have sparked concerns and mischaracterizations of the intent of the outreach.

I'd like to be very clear that no one on these Boards intended to diminish or censor public art. On the contrary, the whole purpose of instituting updated guidelines was to make it such that businesses could commission window art without needing to seek any approvals so long as time, place, and manner guidelines were followed. The updated guidelines were intended to allow more space for art on a window than previously, for longer periods of time, and to eliminate any need for Board review. Only if a business sought to establish something permanent or beyond the guidelines would they need to petition the Board to do so through our small project review application – and, this could still be approved.

The intention was to clarify rules and support window art. However, it is clear that the impact of the new guidelines has been contrary to this intent. We as a Board welcome your input. We are more than happy to put this back on our agenda for further discussion, to take additional public comment, and see what changes might be warranted.

While community members and businesses have every right to make their voices heard, I will be honest that I have struggled over the last couple of days to understand the need to stir up a heightened response over a long holiday weekend without giving the Board nor the city staff an opportunity to either respond to the concerns being raised or to facilitate a forum for change – like pausing and adding the item to our next agenda to consider additional public comment. Perhaps the community feels that this outcome would not have been achieved without such a response, and I hope that we can change that perception, because my personal experience with having served on this Board for over 10 years is that the city staff who work with us are responsive to concerns and keep us updated when there are issues or opportunities for pause. I do want to be clear on one point that at no time did city staff relay any intent to issue fines for window art. I'm not sure why that implication came about, but the SRA did not instruct nor did city staff inform businesses that we were seeking to fine anyone.

As you may have already heard, the SRA through its Executive Director is pausing any enforcement on the updated guidance in order to add this discussion to our agenda at a future Board meeting once the city has moved past the height of the busiest time of the year. Staff will be meeting with businesses and the public during this time as well. Due to the Veteran's Day holiday, the SRA November meeting is one week early on November 4. Where the meeting will be happening within days after Halloween weekend, staff will get input from businesses if they would prefer to wait until our December meeting. Generally, the Board's process is to receive public comment only on the items on its publicly posted agenda, which was posted last week in advance of tonight's meeting. This means that Temporary Window Art is not on the agenda this evening, so we will not be taking public comment relative to that topic at this time nor will Board members be engaging in any dialogue on the matter. However, as I stated, we intend to put Temporary Window Art on the November or December agenda and we'd ask any members of the public here this evening who planned to offer comment on Window Art to either plan to attend the future meeting or you can certainly feel free to email your comments and the Board will review them for the meeting.

Lastly, as I said I have served on this Board for over 10 years and I'd just like to say that in that time, I have never once felt concerned or uncomfortable attending a meeting, no matter how contentious the issue or project might be. Sadly, that very much changed this week when it came to light that an individual posted a threatening comment relative to tonight's meeting, prompting the decision to move to a remote platform rather than to be in person. This was hugely disappointing and works against our goal of civil public discourse. My understanding is that there have been threatening emails sent as well. It is my sincere hope that everyone who cares about this issue and wants to have their voice heard does so with the mindset that we are your fellow citizens and neighbors. We serve on this Board because we care about our downtown and our community. We look forward to hearing your input and to working towards a better outcome together. Thank you.

Joint Public Meeting with the Design Review Board

1. Presentation of Lappin Park Redesign project.

Mr. Daniel reported that the Lappin Park design process started a couple of years ago with the Department of Public Works to explore options for the park. There have been meetings to review conceptual design with Ms. Owens and Ms. Newhall-Smith. Previous comments from the public discussed concerns regarding construction. Funding has not been secured.

Greg St. Louis with Bobrek Engineering and Construction and Michael Blier and Christopher MacFarlane of Landworks were present to provide an update:

- Mr. St. Louis noted that they are at 95% design.
- Mr. Blier noted that Lappin Park is a special place in the City but that it has limitations in terms of accessibility and rugged topography.
- A site plan and several renderings were shared and reviewed.
- The plan creates a primary gathering spot that is a flexible use space and provides a new home for the Samantha statue which will reduce spill out onto the sidewalk and street. There are space opportunities for various events year-round.
- The planned perimeter is robustly planted to create thresholds and visual connections. The planted zones also create opportunities for infiltration for stormwater management.
- There is new clearance for the pedestrian circulation and spill-out restaurant spaces.
- Mr. Blier said the cross path from Essex Street to Washington Street is retained and bigger openings are created at the corner of Washington Street and Congress Street.
- There is a prominent opening in the middle of the park for a holiday tree with an integrated tree holder in the ground. There is a drinking fountain, bike racks, and benches planned. Movable, seasonal kiosks are proposed. The commemorative stone column will remain.
- The new park will be completely ADA accessible where the existing park is not.
- Multiple stories of trees are planned that set the park up for shade immediately. Jefferson Elms are planned around the perimeter.
- Concrete paving in a grid pattern with inlaid reclaimed stone is proposed.
- The planting and layout plan was shared and reviewed.
- The hope is that the redesigned Lappin Park will create continuity with the new work that has been created in the City.

- In addition to the Jefferson Elm, maple and Amelanchier trees are proposed along with a shrub layer that creates seasonal interest.
- The space is intended to serve as a social destination place with large and small programming that can be offered year-round for residents and visitors.
- There is space proposed for art installations.

Chair Napolitano opens the discussion to SRA and DRB members for questions and comments.

- Mr. Durand expressed support for the design.
- Ms. Miller said she likes the space and that it is useful for events and ADA accessible, and that trees are being replaced. She inquired about the accessibility of the doorways on the buildings. She said she has experience with grading and would like to see a grading plan to ensure that front doors of the restaurants are accessible. She knows there are a lot of grade changes in the area.
- Ms. Miller noted that any public way can't have an excess of a 2% cross slope. She does not want the City to have liability for promoting spaces that are not accessible.
- Ms. Miller said it makes sense to pull in the palette that already exists in the City.
- Mr. Estes echoed the comments that this is a massive improvement to the area. He asked if there was any consideration given to changing the location of the Samantha statue as it appears to counter the direction of flow.
- Mr. Blier said they studied the issue and determined that the proposed location provides a visual from the various entries to the park without interfering with the crowd coming out of restaurants.
- Mr. Macfarlane said that trash bins are proposed to be located along the perimeter of the park along the sidewalk areas.
- Mr. St. Louis said they are at the maximum tolerance of grades. He said the ramp sections are about 4.5% slope and the plaza is at 1% and that is maintained as you come to the perimeter of the businesses. One business has a proposed ramp and two businesses have proposed improved landings for their doorway entrances. There are also secondary ADA access points.
- Mr. St. Louis said they have a grading plan that they can provide to Planning Office.
- Ms. Madore inquired about how the space could be activated and how people would flow through in the scenario of a small performance occurring.
- Mr. Blier said there were many scenarios they considered such as performances or a winter ice ring. He said the pathway allows for a performance zone, and the pathway allows for people to walk around the street side without interrupting while they can still look into the event. An information kiosk is proposed on the side so that people can queue on the side. There is space for table and chairs similar to Derby Square. He said the space is inherently flexible for programming while also moving through.
- Ms. Madore asked whether there could be an issue with people trampling the shrubs under the trees for more crowded events and asked whether a stone structure would create more of a flex space.
- Mr. St Louis responded saying that some of the landscaping areas are being used to meet grade. He suggested that some of the landscaping could be minimized but that some of the framing of the space would be lost. He said there are some boulders

proposed in the landscaping that provide seating opportunities and work to discourage vegetation trampling.

- Mr. Macfarlane said they'd chosen shrubs to fill the space but not overfill the space.
- Ms. Miller noted that the landscaping areas are also being used to address stormwater.
- Mr. St. Louis said there is subsurface infiltration system under the plaza to handle extreme storm events.
- Ms. Madore said she was glad there was a holder for a holiday tree. She asked about potential spaces for art installations, types of medium, vision, etc.
- Mr. St. Louis said there could be a jack-o'-lantern festival, there are outlets for various installations or vendors requiring power.
- Ms. Miller inquired whether there was any desire from the City to secure a site certification for the project. Ms. Miller said that if the project reuses a lot of material or manages a lot of stormwater, you will earn many points. It would be worth having a discussion with staff.
- In response to Ms. Madore's question about public art, Mr. Daniel said that Julie Berry, the Senior Planner of Arts and Culture, has been managing a rotating sculpture display and that this park could become part of that rotation.
- Mr. Macfarlane noted that reclaimed stone from the Crescent lot is planned for the site.
- Mr. Daniel inquired about the safety perspective of the shrub plantings. Mr. Blier said the height is similar to the height of the landscaping at the PEM thresholds. It allows for different levels of spectators and for sightlines to be maintained.
- Ms. Madore expressed hope that public art is not sited haphazardly that that it is installed with intention. She hopes the City can come up with a real, meaningful public art space that engages with the public.
- Mr. Larose expressed support for the design. He supports the change to the taller light poles.

The meeting was open for public comments and questions with Chair Napolitano providing a reminder that they will not be taking any public comment on temporary window art.

- Tyler Twombly inquired about the justification for the removal of the Linden trees and if there is any possibility of preserving any of the trees. He also noted that mixed opinions about the Samantha statue and whether it represents Salem and if it should remain a focal point of the park.
 - Mr. MacFarlane responded that the trees have been looked at by arborists and that they have several issues, primarily the over-compaction of the roots, and while they are doing well, they are getting towards the end of their life cycle. He said they looked at whether they could keep them but that the new design would further negatively impact their root systems. Mr. Blier said trees are also at different elevations and keeping them would impact the accessibility of the park.
 - Mr. Macfarlane said they have tried to subtly deemphasize the Samantha statue. He said there were some people who did not want the statue moved at all. Mr. Daniel said the statue has been discussed internally for a few years, and the

decision was made to keep the statue in Lappin Park. With the redesign, the statue is an element of the park, not a focal point.

- Benjamin Selecki and his business partner Alexis Abare, owners of two abutting properties expressed concern about the underneath structure being able to support equipment needed to install the holiday tree. He also noted that he has never seen anyone have an issue navigating the terrain of the park despite the slopes. He expressed concern that the plantings may block the visibility of the restaurants from the park interior. He asked if the restaurants will still have outdoor seating capabilities. He wondered if this park would be similar in use to Charlotte Fortin Park and the Flag Pavillion. He wasn't supportive of how those parks are used in everyday use. He expressed concern about the timeline of the trees being able to provide shade. Finally, he noted that he did not think the surrounding restaurants and retail stores would be enthusiastic about other restaurants, food services, or retail markets popping up. He expressed concern about the area being an ad-hoc street market.
- Mr. St. Louis said most of the parks they design accommodate vehicular loading and cranes can access the site from the roadway. He said the 10–12-foot space for seating plus the five-foot walkway is being maintained. He said that right now he believes that businesses signs are not visible on a summer day due to the density of the tree canopy. Mr. Blier said he believes the landscape design will enhance and bring in diners. He said the elm trees are very fast growing. He added that they are not looking to block views, but to create layers. He said they understand that concern as they have the same concern. He said he hopes ADA compliance of the park will bring in even more people.
- Laura Potter, owner of Flying Saucer Pizza Company, said she loves the use of materials that can be found throughout the City as well as the proposed lighting. She is concerned that her signage cannot be seen from any of the angles shown. She has already made requests for trees to be trimmed so that her sign is visible from Washington Street. Visibility is her primary concern. She expressed interest in expanding their patio footprint. She expects that during construction business will be impacted. She requested extra trash cans be considered. She requested clarification on improved access and what that would mean for their restaurant. She thanked the SRA for approving their event request for Lappin Park. She hoped that existing businesses could have priority for using the park.
 - Ms. Newhall-Smith suggested that given Ms. Potter's specific question that it may make sense to meet and discuss her questions with the consultant team. Ms. Potter agreed.
- Averil Svahn, 99 Washington Street, lives across the street from the park. She understood how much work went into the planning and that there were many comments about restaurants, tourists, and City events, but very few comments were made about how residents would use the park. She would like a place close by where she could have morning coffee or meet friends for lunch. She does not want to see a park with very little green space. She hopes the park can be more resident-friendly.
- Mr. Blier said that he also lives in Salem and acknowledges the diversity of open spaces within the City. He said there is a lot of pressure on this space from a tourist point of view and residents. He said they worked to create a space that feels like a garden. He said there are seating options, benches, etc. He said they listened to

people in the neighborhood. They worked to create something flexible and open for people to enjoy almost at a courtyard scale for the neighborhood, but one that can also absorb the surges.

- Ms. Svahn expressed disappointment that this seems to be designed for City tourists and restaurants instead of the residents.
- Darleen Melis, Chair of the Salem Tree Commission, expressed her appreciation for considering elms for this location. She expressed concern that they require a great deal of soil in order to be successful. She expressed concern that the boulders will compete with the roots. She also expressed concern about maintenance of the plants.
- Elizabeth Ide said this park is one of her favorite places in Salem and that it is working in a lot of ways. She noted that there are other proximate spaces for gathering that overlap with purposes of this park. She expressed concern about plantings not working out. She said the Linden trees are important to many people and asked whether a canopy study has been done downtown. She said important things are being given up when trees are removed in the urban forest. She noted that ADA does not cover every need that people have. She said shade keeps children from getting burnt on pavement if they fall which is what happens now at Charlotte Fortin Park. She said people waiting in shade is helpful and also in keeping pavement and adjacent restaurants with large windows cooler. She said a large flat surface is difficult to keep free of ice in the winter months. She said she could offer resources that help architects and planners find ways to build around mature trees.
- Ms. Napolitano thanked everyone for their attendance and input and that there were many comments to consider.

Adjournment

VOTE: Madore made a motion to adjourn meeting.

Seconded by: Miller

SRA Roll Call: Dunn, Larose, Macione, Madore, and Napolitano. 5-0 in favor.

DRB Roll Call: Estes, Miller, Murray, Badowski, and Durand. 5-0 in favor.

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Executive Director's Report

Mr. Daniel reported that they closed on the Courthouse and Crescent lots on Friday. He said this was the last phase of the Judicial Center Complex that goes back to the Paul Cellucci administration. The final phase was tied to a 2008 MOA between DCAMM and MHC, who was involved due to the demolition of some historic properties and the relocation of the a historic church. As mitigation there was a commitment that the Superior Court Building and County Commissioner's Building be preserved.

There has been involvement from local leaders, non-profits, civic organizations, residents, the state, and SRA Board members. Members throughout the project included Ms. Napolitano, Conrad Baldnini, Robert Curran, Matt Smith, Gary Barrett, Dave Garino, Dean Rubin, Anita Soto, and Russ Vickers. He said it was complicated to get legislation passed, but it eventually passed and was signed by former Governor Baker.

The SRA facilitated public meetings, downtown visioning with support from the Urban Land Institute. An intergovernmental transfer facilitating the transfer of the Crescent Lot from the City to the SRA helped with the challenges that were happening, which allowed that lot to be included in the disposition of the courthouses.

Mr. Daniel acknowledged local leadership through Mayor Driscoll, Acting Mayor Bob McCarthy, and current Mayor Pangallo as well as State Representatives John Keenan, Paul Tucker, Manny Cruz, Senator Fred Berry, and Senator Lovely. He also thanked DCAMM staff; former Commissioner Gladstone, Commissioner Baacke, and Warran Madden, Gail Rosenberg, Steve Zeller, and Paul Crawley who all worked on the project.

Mr. Daniel acknowledged Patti Kelleher, the City's Preservation Planner and Historic Salem, Inc who worked with Ms. Newhall-Smith on the preservation restriction.

He said they knew the land would be subject to Chapter 91 jurisdiction so intentionally included the property in the City's harbor plan. He acknowledged The Salem Partnership, Executive Director Beth Debski and her predecessor Patricia Zaido, current and past City Councilor members, City Departments, the Design Review Board, and their project partner, Winn Development. He said any disagreements they had were always respectful and the City's and community interests were being preserved. He also acknowledged Matt Zahler, the City's consultant on the project as well as Sherrin Everett from KP Law,

Kim Martin-Epstein and Cheray Shein from Hackett-Feinberg. He also thanked Ms. Newhall-Smith for all her work and keeping things organized and who is wonderful to work with.

He said work will continue with Winn and DCAMM, and as legislation for the Massachusetts National Guard moves forward and subsequent support for funding. Time parameters for the law library have been activated. Construction will continue and will provide 115 new homes, with a mixture of income from 30% AMI to market rate with ground floor commercial and public spaces.

Ms. Napolitano thanked Mr. Daniel and Ms. Newhall-Smith for their meticulous oversight and keeping it on track over the years as well as their consistent message of the community's intent and goals through all the changes and the pandemic. She congratulated everyone and acknowledged it as a great milestone.

Mr. Daniel said he and Ms. Newhall Smith would have a follow-up financial report to present at the next meeting.

Projects in the Urban Renewal Area

1. **Downtown Wayfinding in October** – Presentation by Creative Collective of temporary wayfinding plan to facilitate crowd movement during October

John Andrews was present to discuss the proposal:

- Mr. Andrews said they are working to figure out temporary signage for festivals and moving people around downtown when a festival is in town.
- He noted that people seem very drawn to orange lights and he has spoken with Northeast Illuminators about providing more orange lights running from Forten Park and in the wax museum neighborhood as a wayfinding point.
- These would be temporary lights for Derby Square, Front Street, and Forten Park so people can see there is something to walk towards as they are coming off the pedestrian mall.
- The lights would be temporary and not permanently affixed to anything.
- He does not believe DPW metal signs for use only two days/week makes sense.
- Mr. Andrews said he wasn't seeking approval, just providing a presentation on the proposal.
- He believes the orange lights would help with safety and security.
- He is not sure how many lights he can afford as the company quoted him \$36,500. He is working to secure some extra sponsorships.
- Ms. Newhall-Smith said the intention of the presentation is to be informative.
- Mr. Andrews said the lights would be shut off at night and would be used Saturday nights, and Sundays later in the month as it starts to get darker. He said most programming happens on Saturday nights.
- Mr. Andrews said he wasn't planning to ask the SRA for funds. Ms. Madore encouraged Mr. Andrews to speak with Ms. Newhall-Smith about their application process for funding.
- In response to Mr. Macione's question, Mr. Andrew said he is only envisioning the lights at Forten Park, the corner of Central and Front Streets, and Old Town Hall. It's a beacon to move people.

- Mr. Andrews was told by the Building Department that he had to remove most of their signage on Front Street. He is hoping to have a conversation about temporary signage for festivals and markets.
- Creative Collective has the contract to activate Charlotte Fortin Park from the last week in September through November 2nd. The contract was awarded through an RFP with the City. A bar will be installed along with the cannery and Holy Cow Ice Cream as vendors. He knows it is a complicated space to work in but wants it to work.
- Ms. Newhall-Smith said this contract didn't come before the SRA. The RFP was open for proposals that would meet the requirements of what the City wanted to accomplish during the month of October.

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

2. **11 Summer Street:** Small Project Review – Review of DRB Recommendation for the proposed expansion of the Salem Inn campus through the renovation of the main structure into 15 hotel rooms and the carriage house into one townhouse unit. Proposed site improvements include a new parking area with a solar panel carport, walking paths, landscaping, drainage system, and geothermal system.

Christine Granese, attorney representing Emerson House LLC, Dan Ricciarelli and Julia Meridian of Seger Architects, and Dick Pabich, owner of the Salem Inn were present to discuss the proposal:

- Ms. Granese noted that since their last appearance before the SRA they have received approval from the DRB.
- Mr. Ricciarelli said they had a very positive meeting with the DRB. He said they received approval from the Historic Commission to tear down the garages and remove the vinyl siding.
- The carriage house will be retained.
- Mr. Ricciarelli reviewed the site plan and landscape plan and the flow of traffic.
- The property will be supported with solar and geothermal energy.
- Mr. Ricciarelli said one DRB comment was in regard to the color of the carriage house. The applicant is proposing a yellow color which is in line with the branding of the Salem Inn. He said the DRB was divided on the color choice.
- There is still work to be done on the design of the fence. A metal fence is proposed with a gate that will enter into a pocket park. The design of that will probably come at the 50% construction document phase.

The meeting was opened for public comment and questions.

- Ana Gordan, abutter at 12 Crombie Street, said she is very excited about the project, but that construction has been quite disruptive and hopes for more proactive communication. She received late contact regarding the cutting down of three mature trees. A fence was removed and has not been reinstalled. Her property is very exposed with vibration, and she is concerned about damage being done to her property.
 - Mr. Ricciarelli said he would reach out to Mr. Pabich about that issue and try to get a better communication going. He said the concrete removal is over and believes the garage has been torn down but will check.

There were no other public comments.

- The next step is for the project to go before the Planning Board.
- Mr. Daniel said the project would need to come back to SRA if there are changes to the exterior of the site plan, but that the SRA can approve the proposal before them.

VOTE: Madore made a motion to approve.

Second: Dunn.

Roll Call: Dunn, Larose, Macione, Madore, and Napolitano. 5-0 in favor.

3. **14 New Derby Street:** Small Project Review – Review of DRB Recommendation for the proposed ADA accessible ramp entrance at the rear of the building.

Ben Goldberg was present to discuss the proposal:

- Mr. Goldberg reported that the new bank tenant is requesting an accessible route be installed to overcome a small grade change in the rear of the building.
- The project has been approved by the DRB. The site plan and rendering were shared.
- The bollards were previously approved, and the depth was designed to maintain them.

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

VOTE: Dunn made a motion to approve.

Second: Larose.

Roll Call: Dunn, Larose, Macione, Madore, and Napolitano. 5-0 in favor.

4. **192 (Corrected Address) Essex Street, Unit 170, Flying Monkey:** Small Project Review: Façade trim painting

The applicant was not present. Ms. Newhall-Smith presented the project in her absence:

- Ms. Newhall-Smith said the owner painted all the white trim black. The neighboring business also painted their trim without approval from the SRA. Staff is working with the store owner on their excess window signage.
- The DRB has not yet approved the black paint.
- SRA staff asked the applicant to come before the Board.
- Mr. Daniel noted that when multiple storefronts are located within one building, the thinking has been that they should be unified in terms of trim treatment. The DRB may want to consider that thinking during their review.

VOTE: Dunn made a motion to approve pending DRB review.

Second: Madore.

Roll Call: Dunn, Larose, Macione, Madore, and Napolitano. 5-0 in favor.

5. **161 Essex Street, Peabody Essex Museum:** Small Project Review – Proposed sign package for Charter Street façade.

Derek O'Brien, Chief Marketing Officer for the PEM, was present to discuss the project:

- Mr. O'Brien is the Chief Marketing Officer for the P.E.M.
- Mr. O'Brien noted that they are looking to utilize their Charter Street faced more, particularly in the fall season to alleviate traffic.
- A map was shared. They have 400 feet of usable frontage. Mr. O'Brien met with the Planning Department to come up with a solution as they are not permitted to use a large-scale vinyl sign application.
- The proposed solution is to use aluminum frames that allow for a fabric banner that can be changed out.
- A rendering was shared.
- The aluminum frames would be permanently mounted on the brick, but the banners can be swapped out every 4-6 months.
- Mr. O'Brien said they are aware the proposed square footage of the signs exceeds the new signage guidelines, but they are hoping to get approval.
- The signs would be mounted quite a bit higher than what they have on Essex Street to make sure they are out of the way of pedestrian traffic.
- No lighting for the signs is proposed.
- Mr. O'Brien said they are trying to get people to understand that this is an active entrance. There is a welcome graphic that is on the glass.
- Mr. Daniel noted that if people exit from this location, it could further activate this area and move some of the traffic down towards other areas of the City.

There were no public comments.

VOTE: Dunn made a motion to approve the project subject to DRB review with the understanding that proposed signage is larger than allowable but is appropriately scaled for the size of the facade. Second: Macione.

Roll Call: Dunn, Larose, Macione, Madore, and Napolitano. 5-0 in favor.

New/Old Business

1. Redevelopment of the Historic Courthouses and the Crescent Lot: Update on project status
Update provided above.
2. Receipt of Grant Report for Poet Laureate Event
Ms. Newhall-Smith noted the \$400.00 grant to support the Poet Laureate event. The final report included photographs from the event.
3. SRA Financials
4. Other

Approval of Minutes

1. August 12, 2026

VOTE: Dunn made a motion to approve the June 10th meeting minutes.

Second: Madore

Roll Call: Dunn, Larose, Macione, Madore, and Napolitano. 5-0 in favor.

Adjournment of Regular Meeting

VOTE: Larose made a motion to adjourn the regular meeting.

Seconded by: Madore

Roll Call: Dunn, Larose, Macione, Madore, and Napolitano. 5-0 in favor.

DRAFT

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Annual Meeting

1. Fiscal Year 2027 Goals

Mr. Daniel reviewed the fiscal year goals. He said the first goal is to continue work from the 2018 Downtown Vision Workshop. The focus has been the courthouse and Crescent lot. Ongoing work will continue with Winn, DCAMM, and the pending legislation.

He discussed moving forward with the implementation of the parking study, looking at the Church Street lot and downtown garage.

The second goal is to advance systems and procedures. The key focus from the previous fiscal year was the sign manual. In addition, the SRA voted to include Charlotte Fortin Park, Lappin Park, and East India Square into the City's permitting portal. This created efficiencies for applicants and City departments. There has been an enhancement of grants that the SRA has awarded.

The third goal was the completion of the shade structure at Charlotte Fortin Park. He noted that the contract ended with Anthem. The SRA provides extra support for landscaping of the planting beds at the park.

Mr. Daniel said the current fiscal year's goals will parallel the prior year's goals. For the 2018 North Downtown Vision Workshop, they will continue working with Winn and the Mass. National Guard. They will start the engagement process for Church Street.

The second goal's focus is to how to make meetings more efficient and the materials received in advance.

The third goal is specific to Charlotte Forten Park and how they can work with other city departments and community partners to support programming and activation of downtown public spaces, regardless of whether they are owned by the SRA or the City.

2. Annual Report and Financial Report

Mr. Daniel reviewed the Annual Report; including the work at Charlotte Fortin Park, Anthem, and other activities that took place there. The Mayor's office and the Friends of Charlotte Fortin Park have been leading some activities including the World Cup watch parties. The shade structure was noted, and that the sails will come down prior to the winter. He noted the successes of the court-houses and Crescent lot.

Mr. Daniel discussed the previous year's vote for quarterly hybrid meetings and suggested it be discussed.

He noted the outdoor dining licensing continues. The project at 301 Essex Street has gone through schematic review. El Centro will be starting construction. He noted the City's storefront improvement program and the DRB's role in reviewing storefront project requests. Façade improvements are listed in the report.

The DRB is an advisory entity to the SRA and its role has expanded to provide recommendations to the Planning Board. Examples include the project on North Street, the Cataldo Ambulance building, and Smart Growth District. The DRB is also providing support on City projects such as the new ferry terminal building and the project making the Old Town Hall fully accessible. Programming for Derby Square and Artist Row continues. Kylie Sullivan manages the Main Street program. The SRA also has a small business loan program.

In terms of SRA membership, Dean Rubin resigned, and Ryan Macione has joined. For the DRB membership, Leanne Leftwich and Katie Martin have resigned over the past year and they have been replaced with Daniel Estes and Joe Badowski.

The SRA's main account started the fiscal year with \$27,700 and ended with \$18,600. Expenses were mainly for their consultant, Matt Zoller, and attorney Sherrin Everett. Income included interest and license renewal. The Charlotte Fortin easement activation account began with \$155,000 and ended with just under \$133,000. Expenses included support for the Pirate Festival, construction fencing, the Juneteenth Jam, and planting bed maintenance.

Ms. Madore asked if the 2012 Urban Renewal Plan should be revisited; what has been accomplished, etc. Mr. Daniel said the plan is valid for 30 years so runs until 2042. Ms. Madore suggested that it may be time to plan how to use the incoming funds more intentionally in regard to the second and third goal. She wondered whether they could be more proactive in planning what they want to fund and encourage.

Ms. Newhall-Smith said they could have another discussion about the goals at the October meeting.

VOTE: Dunn made a motion to hold the vote on the FY27 goals at the October meeting.

Second: Madore.

Roll Call: Dunn, Larose, Macione, Madore, and Napolitano. 5-0 in favor.

Ms. Newhall-Smith will reach out to members individually by phone to discuss further.

3. Election of Officers: Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer

VOTE: Macione made a motion to renew the current positions of the Treasurer, Vice Chair, and Chair for 2027.

Second: Larose.

Roll Call: Dunn, Larose, Macione, Madore, and Napolitano. 5-0 in favor.

Ms. Napolitano expressed support for meeting once a quarter in person. Mr. Larose agreed.

4. Adjournment

VOTE: Dunn made a motion to adjourn.

Second: Larose.

Roll Call: Dunn, Larose, Macione, Madore, and Napolitano. 5-0 in favor.