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MELROSE HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES FOR MONDAY NOVEMBER 3, 2025 @ 7PM

This meeting of the Melrose Historical Commission was conducted via in-person participation in the Conference Room at the Melrose Public Library, Melrose

CALL TO ORDER

This regular meeting of the Melrose Historical Commission was called to order by Chair Shane Egan at 7:00PM. Members in attendance included Rebecca Blumenthal, George Biblios, Joe Hunt, Cath Giliberto and Gentry Andrews. Member Darren Brown was absent. MHC high school volunteer Lucy Ferrante was also in attendance. There were five members of the public present.

ORDERS OF BUSINESS

The first order of business was to approve the previous meeting's minutes from October 6, 2025. The Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes.

The second order of business was to open the forum for comments from the public. Five members of the public were present and four spoke during the open comments period.

- Madaline Minichiello of 296 Main St. expressed her concern about the 244 Main Street site.
- Ellen Putnam of the Melrose Messenger discussed her idea to add a local history section to the Melrose Messenger. Inquired if the Historical Commission would agree to have their existing articles republished or perhaps generate original material for the MM.
- Nancy Clover updated the MHC on some of the projects she is pursuing that overlap with the interests of the Commission. She contacted the Parks Dept. for signage for Mary Livermore Park. She is spearheading a committee to renovate the Mary Livermore crypt. She has communicated with the Pine Banks Park regarding a missing plaque. She has also communicated with City Hall regarding the urn at the Essex Street entrance to City Hall.

- Megan McDonough, Main St, is also concerned about the future of the in the 244 Main St. and adjacent property. Interested in developing reflecting/resting sites throughout the city that might include natural and place history as well as shade and seating areas. She suggested this location might be a candidate for such a site.

DISCUSSION

I. *Review Public Comment Policy*

II. *Benjamin Lynde House Sale/Demolition Delay*

- a. In October it came to the attention of the MHC that a historically significant property was being offered for sale along with an adjacent multi-family property for development opportunities. This property is located at 244 Main St.
- b. The Ensign Benjamin Lynde home was built in 1693 and was the home of one of the first settlers of North Malden (now Melrose) who was a revolutionary soldier who marched on Lexington in April 1775, the 250th anniversary that was recently marked in Melrose and nationwide.
- c. Chair Egan, Rebecca Blumenthal and Joe Hunt met last week with the Mayor, city solicitor and city planner regarding options available to the MHC. Chair Egan has continued those discussions in more depth. The following two options were laid out at this discussion:
 - i. Demolition Delay—Gives an opportunity to halt demolition for a specified time to investigate options to preserve or study the property. Requires new legislation/ordinance to be passed by the City Council.
 - ii. Melrose Historic District expansion—Main Street from Emerson St. to Foster St. currently. The Historic District Commission governs these properties. There is an option to expand the MHD by identifying historically significant single lots/structures. This option also requires the support of the City Council.

- d. Both options require a super-majority of the City Council to approve
- e. Chair Egan separately with the City Planner regarding process for expanding the MHD. Need 8 of 11 City Councilors plus the Mayor's support.
- f. If the Benjamin Lynde House were included in the MHD then it would fall under the purview of the MHD Commission.
- g. Only governs the exterior of protected structures.
- h. City Councilor Cal Finocchiaro has taken up this issue to try to get a draft of a Demolition Delay through the legal process. With the upcoming election, it might take several months for this process to proceed. May need to ask the public to talk with their City Councilors to gain support.
- i. Shane emphasized that these are private properties and options are limited.

III. *Sewall Wright Memorial Follow-Up from Professor Govindaraju and Update from Parks Dept. Meeting*

- a. *See 9.8.25 meeting minutes for earlier discussion*
- b. Shane attended the Parks Committee meeting and spoke with Rob Carillo. Identified a public venue adjacent to the birth home of Sewall Wright (private) that is already named after his family—Sewall Woods.
- c. The Parks Dept. is open to the instillation of a plaque if private funding is attained. It is conservation land, so Parks Dept is looking for a large rock on which to mount a plaque. Shane is seeking quotes for a such a memorial.

IV. *Summit Ave Development*

- a. *See 9.8.25 meeting minutes for earlier discussion of a citizen request for more information about the archaeological relevance of this development parcel.*
- b. Darren Brown could not attend this meeting, but he passed along information to Chair Egan regarding abutters request that the MHC assist them in requesting an

evaluation of the area as an archaeological site of native American artifacts. Darren Brown has drafted a letter to the State of Massachusetts Department Executive Direction and State Archaeologist of the Melrose Historical Commission concerning this request.

- c. A copy of the letter is included with these minutes.

V. *Historic Home Plaque Program Project Update*

- a. *See 10.16.23 meeting minutes for a summary of the Historic Home Plaque Program*
- b. Melrose Weekly ran an article regarding the history of the Ryan home/Etymological Lab that has received one of the first Historic Home Plaques offered as part of this program.
- c. The MHC posted a link to the article and will post it again in mid-November via its MHC social media pages

VI. *Halloween Social Media Post*

Rebecca Blumenthal discussed her research for the post on Spiritualism in late 19th c Melrose and its engagement on the Commissions social media outlets in conjunction with Halloween.

VII. *November Vietnam Veteran's Social Media Post Status*

- a. MHC high school volunteer Lucy Ferrante has taken the lead on researching a topic related to Veteran's Day for early November social media content.
- b. Ferrante identified a list of 11 Melrose veterans who sacrificed their lives during the Vietnam War.
- c. Cath Gilberto, Shane Egan, and Rebecca Blumenthal researched biographical information related to these veterans.
- d. The 11 posts are currently being presented on the Commission's social media pages during the 11 days of November leading up to Veterans' Day 2025.

VIII. *Research Your Home Night (RYHN) Re-cap*

- a. *See 6.2.25 meeting minutes for a summary of the most recent Research Your Home Night (RYHN).*
- b. The most recent October RYHN at the Melrose VFW was a success. More than 30 homes were represented, and the MHC was grateful for the participation of local historian Scott Macaulay and his personal maps, books, and artifacts. Thanks also go to the Melrose Public Library for loaning resources from its local history collection.
- c. George Biblios and volunteer Lucy Ferrante captured photographs for the MHC social media pages. Some contributions were collected to help pay for future hall rentals.

IX. *Melrose Tree Project Collaboration Update*

Chair Egan has provided the Melrose Tree Project with research tools to help them investigate local historic trees in Melrose

X. *Future Melrose Museum Ideas*

Long term discussions have begun between Rob Tullis of the Melrose Historical District Commission and Chair Egan regarding a Melrose Museum. There are plenty of artifacts, but the city has limited space. Shane will work with the MHC and the MHDC and the Mayor to research space options.

XI. *Suggestion for Award or Recognition for Historically Accurate Renovations*

- a. Rob Tullis of the MHDC also suggested finding a way to honor Melrosians that complete historically sensitive renovations.
- b. Discussion included the appropriateness of applying the MSC Award for this purpose.

- c. Another suggestion was to reach out to social media followers for volunteers to create a database of homeowners that would be interested in offering the MHC access to their homes to be featured on its socials to honor and highlight their efforts and inspire other homeowners to preserve the history of their home.

XII. *MHS Senior Internship Brainstorming*

Shane asked the group to brainstorm ideas for next month's meeting regarding ways to utilize high school Senior Interns at the MHC.

XIII. *Open MHC Seat Status*

Gentry Andrews was in attendance for her first meeting. All Historical Commission positions are now filled.

XIV. *Other Business*

Commission members in attendance agreed that the Melrose Messenger can begin reposting Melrose Historical Commission articles. The MHC requested that the reposts include information/link to enable readers to find and follow the MHC social media pages.

Melrose resident Garrett Nelson of Altascope.org (*see 10.6.25 meeting minutes*) offered to present a discussion on mapping. Chair Egan will look for a site to organize a public presentation.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Monday, December 1, 2025, at 7pm in the Conference Room of the Melrose Public Library.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Egan at 8:30pm.

Addendum re: Summit Ave. Development:

Melrose Historical Commission
562 Main Street
Melrose, MA 02176

30 October 2025

Brona Simon
Executive Director & State Archaeologist
Massachusetts Historical Commission
Mass Archives Building
220 Morrissey Blvd
Boston, MA 02125

Dear Ms. Simon,

I have received your contact information from Ed Bell and am reaching out on behalf of the Melrose Historical Commission. I would like to request the MHC's technical assistance in archaeology and historic preservation to review a proposed development in Melrose. This proposed development is located in a residential area at 34-55 Summit Avenue which is located in the Highlands neighborhood. Two houses are to be razed and a large wooded area is going to be severely impacted through blasting and the construction of a new topography.

The location is set on top of a large hill that overlooks much of Melrose. This rocky high point also overlooks Greenwood Avenue in the foreground, where another development is moving forward that impacts an historic home. Neighbors have long heard about Indigenous artifacts being discovered in this area in the past and of it being potentially significant archaeological area. There is a sizable collection of artifacts located at the Peabody Institute of Archaeology that originates from the bordering town of Wakefield. The location of this proposed development is within one quarter of a mile from the Wakefield town line.

Thanks in advance for your assistance and I look forward to hearing from you. If you have any questions or any additional information is needed, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Darren Brown
Melrose Historical Commission