

x

MELROSE HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES FOR MONDAY JANUARY 5, 2026 @ 7PM

This meeting of the Melrose Historical Commission was conducted via in-person participation in the Lower Level Conference Room at the Melrose Public Library, 69 West Emerson Street, Melrose MA

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, Darren Brown, and Cath Giliberto. Gentry Andrews was absent. MHC high school volunteer Lucy Ferrante was also in attendance. There were seventeen members of the public present.

ORDERS OF BUSINESS

The first order of business was to approve the previous meeting's minutes from December 1, 2025. The Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes.

The second order of business was to open the forum for comments from the public. Seventeen members of the public were present, and none spoke during the initial open comments period.

DISCUSSION

- I. ***Review Public Comment Policy***

- II. ***Benjamin Lynde House Update—Szecon Development Presentation***
 - a. *See 12.2.25 meeting minutes for earlier discussion of the MHC response to the sale of the 244 Main Street property, also known as the Benjamin Lynde House.*

- b. Szecon Development owners Laura and Sean Szekely spoke along with members of their team to introduce the project in relation to the Benjamin Lynde historical house.
 - i. Laura Szekely: She indicated that from the beginning of their interest in developing the site, they never intended to demolition the Benjamin Lynde house. They were initially Interested in relocating to another parcel and donating to the city of Melrose but due to the expense city was not interested. They pivoted to alternative plan to relocate the house within the site and include it in the plans as a freestanding building, perhaps connected with a second floor attachment to the main building to utilize the elevator for accessibility. Still in discussions with the city regarding the right use for the space, perhaps to a rejuvenated Melrose Historical Society to serve as historical archives and storage space and community space.
 - ii. Donnie Garrety from O’Sullivan Architects: Discussed new footprint of parcel and preliminary design that includes a four-story 60 unit building with 25% affordable units over a subterranean parking garage, developed under the auspices of 40B.

- c. Chair Egan re-opened the floor for questions from the public.
 - i. Maggie Moore Abdow—Neighbor concerned that the new development does not reflect the residential history and character of the neighborhood.
 - ii. Michael Abdow—Neighbor asked committee if there was a relevance to the orientation of the original structure and foundation.
 - iii. Susan Hollister—Asked commission if their mandate was to survey the character defining features of the building as it relates to its structure, placement and relationship to the town. Questioned how much of the building was affordable. Developer stated 25% of 60 units would be in the affordable category.
 - iv. Diana Cafarella—Questioned the movement of the home and stripping of its historically significant features.

- v. James Francis—Neighbor concerned with the loss of the aesthetic green space and setting of the historic home. Asked MHC what options it had concerning the project moving forward.
- vi. Corey Mendonza—Appreciated effort to relocate house rather than demo it and idea of preserving historical artifacts. Hopes that the developer follows through with what was discussed tonight.
- vii. Nancy Clover—Gave the developer credit for the proposal to save the historic house.

III. *Commission Change from Advisory to Regulatory*

As a part of the Demolition Delay process, the MHC status will need to be changed from Advisory to Regulatory. It is on the agenda in the coming weeks. The MHC will be supported by the Planning Department. Public notices and the associated expenses will be managed by the Planning Department.

IV. *Demolition Delay—Development of Processes within MHC*

- a. MHC will need to start considering the following criteria as part of Demolition Delay:
 - i. “The commission in making a determination that a building is significant under this section shall consider the following criteria:
 1. Setting-the character of the location and how the building is situated in relationship to other features, such as the streetscape and neighboring buildings
 2. Materials-The elements that were originally combined to construct the building, sometimes referred to as historic building fabric
 3. Design-reflects the historic building style
 4. Location-the place where the building was originally placed
 5. Workmanship-evidence of the builder’s craft skill and technology
 6. Expression-the expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular time period
 7. Association-the direct link between an important event or person and the building

- ii. The commission shall adopt standards that detail the process for the evaluation of the foregoing criteria to allow for reasoned and predictable decision-making. These standards shall include minimum requirement for evidence needed to support finding of significance and they shall outline the method by which the commission will weigh the criteria presented.”
- b. The Commission will wordsmith the above mentioned “standards” in future meetings.

V. *Expansion of Local Historic Districts in Conjunction with the Historic District Commission*

- a. The MHC will work to identify homes in Melrose that should be considered for future local historic districts.
- b. Rob Tullis from the Melrose Historic District Commission is working on a parallel effort to identify such structures.
- c. Single lot additions to the Melrose Historic District would be under the purview of the Melrose Historic District Commission.

VI. *Summit Ave Development—Update on MHC Position/Next Steps (lead: Darren Brown/Chair Egan)*

- 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 reported that he has reached out again to the Massachusetts Historical Commission and State Archaeologist for their feedback on this site. He has not heard back from the State yet.

VII. *Historic Home Plaque Program Update*

- a. *See 10.16.23 meeting minutes for a summary of the Historic Home Plaque Program*
- b. Joe Hunt reported that he has received several new applications and three have been paid for and picked up by the manufacture.

VIII. MHS Senior Internship Update (lead: Chair Egan)

Chair Egan has contacted Principal Jason Merrill of the Melrose High School to let him know that the MHC is interested in participating in the Senior Internship program this spring.

IX. Social Media Post Ideas

- a. Lucy Ferrante is starting a Melrose History Club under the auspices of a National History Club and she is personally working on an article about inventions, including about a patent for bean canning associated with the Friends company.
- b. Cath Giliberto will work on a post to introduce the bio of Sewall Wright in light of the upcoming honoring of this Melrose-born geneticist.

OTHER BUSINESS

Darren Brown reported that the Bike Committee has not yet responded regarding partnering with the MHC on local history-themed bike tours of Melrose.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Monday, February 2, 2026, at 7pm and is currently planned to be held in the Lower Level Conference Room of the Melrose Public Library.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Egan at 8:40pm.