

MELROSE HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES FOR MONDAY, JANUARY 9th, 2023 @ 7PM

This meeting of the Melrose Historical Commission was conducted via in-person participation in the Cassidy Room of City Hall, Melrose

CALL TO ORDER

This regular meeting of the Melrose Historical Commission was called to order by Chair Kate Monea at 7:02pm. Members present in addition to Chair Monea were Vice Chair Tom Champoux, Secretary Kimberly Marolda, Joe Hunt, Kate Roberts, George Bibilos, and Shane Egan. There were no members present from the general public.

ORDERS OF BUSINESS

The first order of business was to approve the previous meeting's minutes from December 7th, 2022, which were universally approved by the Commission.

Second order of business was to open up the forum for comments from the public of which there were none.

DISCUSSION

- I. *Historical Commission 50th Anniversary:* Anniversary date of Sunday 10/29/2023, and Mayor Brodeur supports a public celebration.
 - a. Shane Egan mentioned that one of the earliest members of the Historical Commission is still alive and in the area, and recommended that any former Commission members be officially invited to attend any events in celebration of the Commission.
 - i. Joe Hunt proposed utilizing our social media platforms to ask past members to identify themselves. George Bibilos inquired as to whether the City has records of past Commission members, to which Chair Monea responded that she would follow-up with the City Clerk.
 - b. Vice Chair Tom Champoux moved to make it a month-long event to coincide with other City events, and to invite other local historians to attend and make presentations.
 - i. Kate Roberts suggested presenting an honorary award to those in our City who have made independent contributions to preserving local history, with Mayor Brodeur presenting the award. Chair Monea recommended naming the award after Mary Stetson Clark, as she was the one who had originally pushed the concept of the Commission forward.

- c. To promote, Vice Chair Champoux mentioned that a banner could be added to the website and our social media to celebrate our history, with Roberts suggesting we could use these mediums to collect and display photos of what life was like in Melrose ca. 1973.
 - i. Secretary Marolda mentioned utilizing participation in the autumn Victorian Fair to promote any events that are organized, with Egan mentioning that it can also be advertised alongside any Research Your Home Nights that may occur around that time.
 - ii. Chair Monea recommended finding ways to include the public in any celebrations.
 - 1. Hunt suggested that any business along Main Street with a window facing the street could be gifted an enlarged photo of their location ca. 1973 for window display; Egan proposed asking local historian Scott Macauley for ideas and any archival stories and photos. Bibilos suggested partnering with Miter Biter Frame Company and Hunt's Photo & Video to assist with photographic reproductions and framing for these window displays.
 - iii. Chair Monea will create a brainstorming document to circulate for event brainstorming and logistical ideas.

II. Research Your Home Night Planning: This event has not been in effect since pre-pandemic.

- a. The Melrose Public Library is no longer a venue option as it is currently under construction. Chair Monea revisited previous brainstorming on potential new locations.
 - i. Any room that could potentially be used for this event would need presentation technology to highlight demos on how to use available resources and conduct online searches. Space should have wifi, large presentation screens with bluetooth / casting connectivity, outlets, and ample tables and chairs, and space for each participant to spread out with their research.
 - 1. Secretary Marolda asked what previous turnouts have been, as headcount would dictate the size of venue choice, to which it was determined that the average attendance is approximately 12-15 people.
 - ii. Secretary Marolda asked if there was any available space within City Hall, and Vice Chair Champoux mentioned that Temple Beth Shalom may also be an option.
- b. Chair Monea commented that a list of research resources was being updated for use in upcoming events.

- i. Egan mentioned that the Public Library has resources that are currently unavailable, but within the archives are printed directories by residential addresses that have proven to be very popular at past events. Chair Monea will reach out to see what is possible to borrow for any future events.
 - ii. Hunt seconded the use of these directories, and also mentioned that fire maps can often be the biggest resource.
 - iii. Vice Chair Champoux mentioned that some directories and census information may be online, potentially via the Registry of Deeds and MACRIS to assist with homeowner history in addition to architectural and development details.
 - c. Chair Monea brought up the scheduling of the event, and suggested that in order to capture the most attendees, any event planned should occur on a weekday evening (Monday - Tuesday - Wednesday) and to avoid any school vacation weeks. This eliminated the month of April, and it was proposed that the Commission should look for dates in March or in May, dependent upon location availability.
 - i. Chair Monea stated that all attendees should be encouraged to sign up ahead of time online with the address, as Commission members can prepare the space accordingly in addition to pre-researching each location as a courtesy to each participant. Attendees will be requested to bring their own laptops to use for research.
 - ii. Chair Monea then suggested that the agenda for the evening should begin with a brief introduction and a general overview of how to best utilize any available resources, with the remainder of the evening opened up for independent work. Lecture-style presentations should be avoided, and the Commission is encouraged to brainstorm ideas as to how to make the event more immersive for attendees.
 - iii. It had been suggested at previous Commission meetings that our first event should coincide with the unveiling of our Historic Home Signage Program; we could potentially offer a discount on the Signage Program for any eligible attendees. There will also be a donation box present at these events for attendees to consider.
- III. *ARCGIS for Mapping Resources:* Massachusetts Historical Commission has already mapped any Form B registered houses via ARCGIS; this Commission considers any house built before 1973 to be historic.
- a. Roberts suggested that we should continue to survey any undocumented and / or unregistered houses via Form B for the Massachusetts Historical Commission to add to their database. Egan mentioned that the potential internship with the Melrose High School will be able to assist with this, but we will have to verify the student's work before submitting.

- IV. *Website:* A new website would be our ideal primary site moving forward, and any other sites would need to be removed or migrated in order to streamline materials.

- V. *Social Media Projects:* Jim Bennett, former Commission member and chair, currently submits content to the Commission social media accounts and has invited current members to contribute should anyone be interested. Chair Monea and Vice Chair Champoux are the only current Commission members with log-in credentials to the social media sites, and posts must go through them to ensure quality and consistency. There is no set social media schedule for postings or any other campaigns currently in place; all posts are currently ad hoc.

- a. Chair Monea reviewed current content and encouraged the Commission to brainstorm other ideas for content, including more short-form concepts to keep with the current trends of social media use. She also mentioned that there will likely be a Black History Month (February) and / or Women's Month (March) update.
- b. Vice Chair Champoux noted that all socials will need a website address update once the new site launches; can also update profile and banner photos at that time.
- c. It has been noted at previous meetings by Chair Monea that since the Commission

currently has many projects underway, it is advised to keep our social media use as is regarding frequency and content of posts, but should use it in the future to leverage our projects as they become more formalized. Examples included the High School internship program, Research Your Home events, future architectural surveys, and the promotion of our website once live.

VI. *Historic District Commission Liaison:* Chair Monea mentioned that there is a separate Historic District Commission that specifically oversees Melrose's historic district, which includes a large portion of the Main St. area. There is currently no point of contact between the two commissions even though there may be content overlap.

- a. The Melrose Historic District Commission reviews all proposed architectural changes in the Downtown Historic District to preserve and protect the distinctive and significant characteristics of buildings and places; to maintain and improve the settings of those buildings and places; and to encourage new designs compatible with existing buildings in the district. They review proposed changes to buildings, as well as signs, fences, walls, light fixtures, or similar devices that are visible from a public way. Building projects that must be reviewed include construction, reconstruction, demolition, and removal of architectural features. The Commission may review the kind, color, and texture of exterior building materials and the type and style of windows, doors, lights, signs, awnings, and other fixtures. The City's Building Commissioner will not provide a building or demolition permit for any construction project or sign located in the Historic District unless the Commission has reviewed the project and issued a Certificate of Appropriateness.
- b. The Downtown Melrose Historic District was established in 1979 and has general boundaries following rear property lines of properties bordering Main Street from the intersection of West and East Foster Streets to the south side of West and East Emerson Streets.
- c. Roberts volunteered to be the liaison between the Historic District Commission and the Historical Commission and will receive contact information from Chair Monea. Roberts will then make the connection to establish parameters of participation.

VII. *Other Business – MHC Roster Information, Term Expirations and Vacated Seat:*

- a. Chair Monea reminded all members to submit their contact information for listing within the Massachusetts Historical Commission, which is updating their roster of all local Historical Commission members.
- b. Chair Monea stated that there are Commission members with terms that are nearing completion, including Monea herself, Bibilos, and Hunt. Bibilos and Hunt have expressed interest in renewing their terms for another three-year commitment, but Monea will not be renewing her term and will be stepping down as Chair at the end of February.
 - i. A vote will take place at the February meeting to select a new Chair. Any members who are interested in being nominated for the role should reach out to

Chair Monea for more information.

- ii.* Chair Monea's term completion will open up a vacant seat on the Commission for Mayor Brodeur to fill.

NEXT MEETING

Chair Monea reminded the Commission of the next scheduled meeting date of February 6th, 2023, at 7pm. This meeting will be held in-person at City Hall pending room reservation; a message will be sent to all Commission members including the location, the agenda for the upcoming February 6th meeting, and the minutes for the January 9th meeting for review.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Monea at 8:10pm.