

MELROSE HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES FOR MONDAY JANUARY 8, 2024 @ 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 Kimberly Marolda at 6:59pm. Members present in addition to Chair Marolda were Vice Chair Tom Champoux, Joseph Hunt, Shane Egan, George Biblos, Darren Brown, and Rebecca Blumenthal. There were no general members of the public present.

ORDERS OF BUSINESS

The first order of business was to approve the previous meeting's minutes from November 13, 2023. (There was no meeting held in December 2023.) After a typo was discussed, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes as amended.

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

DISCUSSION

I. Review Public Comment Policy

- a. No members of the public were present, thus eliminating the need to review policy.

II. MHC 50th Anniversary Photography Project Review

- a. See 10.16.23 meeting minutes for a summary of the Photography Project.
- b. Photography Project
 - i. Shane Egan provided the Commission with an overview of the final weeks of the event.

1. Most of the 34 businesses that participated in hosting the placement of historical photos in their windows starting in the end of October were happy to extend the placement through the end of the holiday season, as proposed in the 11.13.23 meeting minutes.
 2. The project was very well received by the public and business owners. Social media feedback was very positive. The public was very receptive to celebrating Melrose's history alongside the Commission. The goodwill generated by the event and the raised profile of the MHC due to its success provide a great opportunity to promote other ongoing Commission projects and events such as the upcoming Plaque Program.
 3. All photos have now been removed from local businesses.
- ii. The condition and future storage of the photos was considered.
 1. Many of the photo posters sustained some damage—via adhesive removal or bowing of the foam board. But upon a quick inspection by members, the overall condition was considered salvageable for future re-use.
 2. Chair Kimberly Marolda volunteered to store photo posters at her home.
 - iii. The Commission thanked Shane Egan for all his hard work that has gone into the successful launch and implementation of the MHC 50th Anniversary Photography Project.

III. ***Melrose Memorabilia Storage / Potential Permanent Showcase Update***

- a. At the 11.13.23 meeting the Commission discussed what role if any it might have regarding its charter to preserve, protect, and promote Melrose's historical heritage for future generations when it comes to memorabilia currently held by the city in diverse locations as well as privately held collections.
- b. Privately held collections.

Chair Marolda emphasized that the disposition of any specific privately held collections will only be discussed when the owners of said collections are invited to and attend Commission meetings.
- c. Member Darren Brown reported to the Commission regarding the ways in which neighboring towns handle historic collections.
 - i. All comparable neighboring towns, including Stoneham, Wakefield, Malden, Saugus et al., have functioning private historical societies. Most of these societies own their own properties in which to house their collections. Many of the neighboring local societies trace their roots to the U.S. centennial celebrations so have owned their properties for over a century.

- ii. Many neighboring societies work in concert with their local historical commissions to help promote their own historic house plaque programs.
- iii. Some North Shore community historic societies have transformed from volunteer-run to staffed museums. Entrance fees to museums bridge the gap left by falling membership fee revenue. However, most local historical societies are still run by volunteers. Genealogical research services help provide funding.
- iv. Some societies have used private-public partnerships to bridge the gap in funding by sharing their properties with local businesses (such as Saugus' partnership with the local cable station)
- v. Some local societies are part of a consortium that reduces expenses by buying archival supplies in bulk.
- vi. In other areas of the country, historical societies are organized by region or county, rather than by individual municipalities.

d. Melrose Historical Society

- i. Current Status.
 - 1. Chair Marolda discussed that the Melrose Historical Society is still extant but currently doesn't have any members interested in a leadership role necessary to bring it back to active status.
 - 2. Storage of the Melrose Historical Society collection is privately funded.
 - 3. Melrose Public Library currently caretakes the files of the Melrose Historical Society.
- ii. Role the MHC might have in reinvigorating this organization.
 - 1. Melrose's upcoming 125th anniversary celebration could provide an impetus.
 - 2. Chair Marolda contrasted the roles of the Commission vs. a historical society—The commission's focus is preservation while a historical society's focus tends toward the celebrational and educational.
 - 3. Members discussed that the MHC could use its platform to help generate interest in a historical society, suggested outreach initiatives such as a local cookbook or vintage photo calendar.
 - 4. Member Shane Egan volunteered to contact former historical society member Scott Macaulay to outreach to other society members to discuss its status in more depth.

e. Private/public partnership opportunities

- i. Displaying memorabilia raises awareness and support for the MHC's mission to preserve Melrose's historical heritage.
- ii. Provide tie-ins to other MHC activities such as the Research Your Home nights.

IV. Historic Home Plaque Program Project Update

- a. *See 10.16.23 meeting minutes for a summary of the Historic Home Plaque Program*

b. Member Joseph Hunt updated the Commission on the status of the Plaque Program.

i. PROMOTION

1. At the invitation of the Chamber of Commerce, Chair Marolda joined Joseph Hunt at the December meeting of the Melrose Rotary Club in the GAR Room of Memorial Hall. They introduced the Plaque Program at the meeting, passed around the example plaque and answered questions.
2. Hunt met subsequently with Stephanie Nelson of the Chamber of Commerce regarding ways the Chamber could help promote the Historic Home Plaque Program and other MHC activities
 - a. annual breakfast
 - b. networking events
 - c. newsletter
 - d. participation in the 2024 Victoria Fair
3. Chair Marolda will work with Hunt to finalize the Plaque Program application documents.

ii. PARTICIPATION GUIDANCE

1. Residence must be 75+ years old for participation.
2. Sell for \$125 per plaque.
3. Suggested to be affixed to the right-hand side of front door.
4. Signs cannot stray from size and color scheme to maintain community consistency.
5. Signs must be affixed by the resident; neither Markarian Sign Company nor the Commission will install the signage.
6. Residents will need to provide the details for printing and MHC will verify details prior to production.
 - a. Shane Egan and Joseph Hunt to confirm details once provided by resident.
7. Will need to create participation request form / process for application.
8. Disclaimer that we must print in batches of 6, so production may be delayed as we wait for requests to batch.
 - a. Proof procedures--Markarian to e-mail a proof to the purchaser; purchaser to return this proof e-mail indicating approval or corrections.
9. Will need to create a payment procedure.
 - a. Purchaser to pay the Commission directly via check or cash; Commission to deposit funds into our account; Markarian will bill the city for services rendered.
10. Will need to create shipping / pick-up process.

iii. Purchasers to retrieve their plaques from Commission directly; can be picked up during any of our regularly scheduled meetings. Chair Marolda will contact City Hall to inquire if they are willing to also hold plaques for pick up.

- iv. Commission will make opportunities to engage with the residents who purchase plaques and use photos of completed plaques / homeowners to continue to promote the program.

V. *Lifetime Achievement Award Update*

- a. *See 3.6.23 meeting minutes for earlier discussion of the proposal to create an honorary annual award bestowed upon Melrose denizens who have made independent contributions to promoting and preserving local history.*

- b. **NEXT STEPS**

- i. **AWARD TITLE**—reach out to descendants of a prominent local historian for endorsement of a commemorative award in their name.
- ii. **DETERMINE TIMING**—proposal to tie in the timing of the first presentation with the 125th anniversary of Melrose.
- iii. **DEFINE PARAMETERS**—George Biblos volunteered to draft criterion for conferring such an award.

VI. *Other Business*

- a. **Commission Term Renewals**—Joseph Hunt reviewed the options available to Commission members whose terms are close to expiring. At the end of a term a member has the option of leaving the Commission, staying on in ‘holdover mode’ or presenting the Mayor with a letter requesting to be renewed in their current position.
- b. **Reinstating Officers**—Hunt suggested the Commission resume the tradition of reinstating Commission officers during the January meeting of each year. Upon discussing that each officer had recently taken up their positions, it was decided to revisit this next January.
- c. **Research Your Home Night 2024**
 - i. Shane Egan encouraged the Commission to schedule this public event soon so that it could take place this spring.
 - ii. It was proposed to secure an inexpensive or free location that met the necessary size and technology parameters as soon as possible and hold back-to-back evening sessions within the same week of approximately 2 hours in length.
 - iii. Rebecca Blumenthal will contact the Mount Hood facility staff to see if this locale is a viable option.
- d. **Mayoral Visit**—This topic will be revisited in April.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting next meeting will be Monday, February 5th, 2024, at 7pm in the Cassidy Room of City Hall.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Marolda at 8:45pm.