

MELROSE HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES FOR MONDAY FEBRUARY 12, 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 7:07pm. Members present in addition to Chair Marolda were Vice Chair Tom Champoux, Treasurer Shane Egan, Secretary Rebecca Blumenthal, Joseph Hunt, and Darren Brown. Member George Biblos was absent. There was one general member of the public present, former MHC member Jim Bennett.

ORDERS OF BUSINESS

The first order of business was to approve the previous meeting's minutes from January 8, 2024. The Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes.

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. *See 6.6.24 meeting minutes for more detail on the public comment policy.*

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

- a. See 1.8.2024 meeting minutes for a summary of this topic.
- b. Shane Egan updated the Commission on his efforts to ascertain the status of the Melrose Historical Society and reach out to former and present members.
- c. The Melrose Historical Society today

Shane Egan detailed that, as it exists today, the Melrose Historical Society was organized about the year 2000. Earlier iterations of the Society were organized near the Bicentennial of 1976 and before that, in the 1920s. The early 20th c. version of the Melrose Historical Society was responsible for the purchase and

early preservation efforts of the First Period Upham House before it was sold to the Upham Family Society. Currently the non-profit status of the Society has lapsed. Remaining members are not inclined to reinvigorate the organization currently.

d. Melrose Historical Society Collection Status

- i. Shane Egan visited the storage facility in Stoneham where the Melrose Historical Society currently keeps their archives and collections.
- ii. The 5 ft x 8 ft storage unit is financed by private funds by one of the members. Egan shared his assessment of the quality and quantity of the items stored there in and displayed photos of some of the items and storage boxes. It includes art, clothing, school and society memorabilia, ledgers, blueprints, and publications concerning Melrose, among other ephemera.
- iii. Upon Egan's inquiry, the Society members shared that ideally, they would like the items to go to the City of Melrose or perhaps to a new society. Their preference would be for assistance identifying a city-owned space where items could be moved and stored safely.

e. What role the MHC can play in the preservation of Melrose historical ephemera

- i. The MHC's charter does not include taking responsibility for memorabilia. Chair Marolda advised that the MHC cannot broker the relocation of this material—Society members will need to take ultimate responsibility for re-housing their memorabilia. She regularly refers persons who inquire about donating historical items to local private collectors as there is no appropriate public venue. The Melrose Public Library does not accept these types of donations and its space dedicated to Melrose history will be reduced in the new facility.
- ii. Discussion involved how to gather a group of stakeholders perhaps including private collectors such as Brad Hutchinson and Scott Macaulay together with current Society members and other community members willing to take on the effort to re-establish a Society and raise the considerable funds necessary to endow the storage, housing, and display of Melrose's historical legacy and to fund an archivist to manage it. Darren Brown advised that any such effort would be well-advised to borrow heavily from neighboring historical societies when it comes to establishing a charter, policies, and membership guidance.
- iii. The Commission resolved to find an opportunity to make Mayor Grigoraitis aware of this pending issue within the community. Tom Champoux will contact former Mayor Paul Brodeur to update him per his inquiry at the MHC's 10.16.23 meeting.

III. ***Historic Home Plaque Program Project Update***

- a. *See 10.16.23 meeting minutes for a summary of the Historic Home Plaque Program.*
- b. Chair Marolda has been in contact with City Hall to verify that the program follows all legislation. The program will not move forward until it has the approval of the City.
- c. Joe Hunt followed up with Markarian Sign Company on a question of price posed at the 10.16.23 MHC meeting. Markarian is willing to produce the signs for \$100 each if they are doing so in batches of 6.
- d. Markarian responded to concerns about the materials used giving assurance that PVC is a safe material that does not require paint and that cleanses easily.
- e. Mission Statement. Chair Marolda developed a statement to define the mission of the Historic Home Plaque Program as follows—

To recognize and encourage the preservation of the rich architectural history of our city as well as the people who lived there; to tell our shared community heritage and stimulate an interest and appreciation of the historic buildings in our city; to act as a source of pride for the homeowner and a continual visual reminder of the families and dwellings that have shaped the history of Melrose.

Members of the committee will review the wording and provide feedback to Chair Marolda.

- f. Commission members debated the 75+ years home age threshold that is currently identified as a criterion for a homeowner to qualify for a historic home plaque. Members advocated for keeping the program inclusive and easy to manage while other preferred to keep the threshold at 75+.
- g. Chair Marolda will inquire with the City solicitor as to the hypothetical case of a homeowner mimicking MHC signage without applying to the program for a plaque.

IV. ***Lifetime Achievement Award Update***

- a. *See 1.8.24 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. Due to George Biblios' absence, discussion of this topic will be deferred until the 3.4.2024 meeting.

V. ***Other Business***

a. Research Your Home Night Scheduling

- i. Members discussed various public and private options for holding the Research Your Home Night. The venue must be available for two nights and have Wi-Fi. Accessibility and access to an A/V system would be ideal. Venue should be appropriate for approximately 70 attendees.
- ii. The event would ideally be scheduled in the April/May timeframe.
- iii. Chair Marolda will follow up with the City for more information on what City-owned venues are available for the MHC to use for free. Other venues will be approached as needed.

b. City Commission Training

Chair Marolda shared information on a City-led training available for Commission members on 2.28.24.

c. Lake Avenue

- i. Jim Bennett shared that some homeowners in the Lake Avenue area have approached him regarding creating an Historic District in their neighborhood.
- ii. Chair Marolda welcomed the neighbors to approach her to discuss their interest.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be Monday, March 4th, 2024 at 7pm in the Cassidy Room of City Hall.

ADJOURNMENT

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