



**COMMEMORATION COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

Boston City Hall Boston, MA, 02201

Held virtually via Zoom

FEBRUARY 20, 2024

Commissioners Present: Alison Frazee, Lydia Lowe, Amanda Zettel, Lynn Smiledge, Rosanne Foley, Mariama White-Hammond, Maureen Garceau, Arthur Jemison, Council President Ruthzee Louijeune, Jean-Luc Pierite

Commissioners Absent: Kenzie Bok, Byron Rushing, Michael Creasey

Staff Present: Genesis Pimentel, Commemoration Commission Manager

A full recording of the meeting is available on boston.gov/commemoration-commission

SESSION BEGINS - 1:00 PM

I. WELCOME

- a. Commemoration Commission Manager Genesis Pimentel welcomed attendees.
- b. Commissioners introduced themselves and expressed their interest in historic preservation.

II. ORDER OF BUSINESS

- a. Selecting Co-Chairs: Commissioner Alison Frazee and Commissioner Lydia Lowe self-nominated prior to this meeting. During the meeting, the co-chair selection was put to a vote, and both Lydia Lowe and Alison Frazee were unanimously voted in as co-chairs.

III. OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION STAFF ARCHITECT INTRO

- a. Chelsea Blanchard, OHP Staff Architect, was invited to present on Article 85, which regulates demolition delay of significant buildings. She updated the subcommittee on the challenges related to Article 85 including
 - i. the fact that not all demolitions come through her desk
 - ii. the lack of feasible alternative designs to demolition from developers
 - iii. Current process does not require owners to really reuse properties with historic essence in tact
 - iv. The fact that since most people just wait for the 90-day delay to expire, a lot of City resources are used on demolition delays without producing quality results.
- b. Genesis Pimentel opened the floor for questions.



- c. Lynn Smiledge discussed how the BLC has worked on solutions and considered all options for Article 85, but it was for nothing since there was no political will or support. She believes there is an opportunity to strengthen our relationship with ISD, BPDA, and other relevant City departments.
- d. Alison Frazee discussed how the Boston Preservation Alliance has been working on Article 85 for a long time and thinks this is a pivotal moment to integrate Article 85 into the larger planning efforts. Alison stated that no one wants to stop growth or construction, but instead that we as a community are more conscious. She noted that tweaks and minor changes to Article 85 will not be enough to reach the end goal.
- e. Lydia Lowe asked if demo delay is the same process if there's a historic district and Chelsea Blanchard let her know that historic districts and landmarks are usually protected from demolition. Blanchard raised the issue that demolition by neglect is the loophole with which people will use to demolish landmarks and buildings in historic districts.
- f. Chief White-Hammond emphasized the need to establish language on demo by neglect and streamline the landmarking process. She also stated that 90 days for demolition is too little for a demolition delay.
- g. Alison Frazee discussed other countries having grading systems that will let developers have predictability and for residents to feel safe that they won't lose their landmarks. In addition, she addressed the fact that landmarking and districting has been historically inequitable.
- h. Amanda Zettel stated that the petition process to get a building or district considered for landmarking is extensive and time consuming. She also commented that Article 80 reform and Streets and Squares is timely.
- i. Chelsea Blanchard commented that the grading system is useful, especially without a Boston-wide historic resource survey. She also commented that OHP should be sitting in all BPDA planning meetings.
- j. Lynn Smiledge commented that the citywide survey is crucial for planning efforts and would provide guidance.

IV. SCOPE, TIMELINE, AND DEFINING OF THE LPT SUBCOMMITTEE

- a. Chief White-Hammond brought up that she has been having conversations surrounding what the mechanisms are to ensure that surveys are properly updated regularly to create a general funding mechanism. She mentioned that Arts and Culture will be trying to do a survey, Parks is looking at doing an open space survey. She mentioned that the question around GIS systems to map all these data points together also came up.
- b. Chair Alison Frazee discussed SurveyLA and the issue with how "historic" is defined because even though a building may not be historic, it hosts a legacy business or a cultural institution. She noted that it is important that our historic



benchmarks aren't rigid and tied to 50 years of history since many places are younger than that but very historic. She stated that surveys are multiyear, multimillion dollar undertakings, so it is important to know conditions of the property, flood risk, canopy, set backs, and more that could be integrated into planning and in one project.

- c. Chair Lydia Lowe agreed, stating that the lines between historic, cultural, and economic impact is blurry.
- d. Discussions on how the City and State could fund these projects took place.
- e. City Council President Louijeune stated her support for bringing ideas to the City Council.

V. DISCUSSION ON IMPLEMENTING "SPEAKER SERIES"

- a. Chief Mariama White-Hammond suggested Director Murray Miller, OHP, come speak to this group because she thinks he has an interesting perspective on the fact that federal legislation has been updated, so the City's legislation, which is connected to the national, should follow suit.
- b. There was interest in inviting someone from Squares and Streets to talk to the Commission.
- c. Commissioner Jean-Luc Pierite suggested the Supporting Indigenous Communities Program Manager and the City Archaeologist.
- d. Katharine Lusk was recommended.
- e. Invite Aimee Chambers, Diana Fernandez, and Kathleen Onufer from BPDA.

VI. OPEN DISCUSSION ON RELEVANT TOPICS

- a. Chair Lydia Lowe introduced a conversation on the definition and process of designating new historic districts and Chair Alison Frazee overviewed what people have at our disposal.
- b. Discussions about whether Historic Preservation should stay in the EEOS Cabinet or move to another Cabinet took place.
- c. Commissioner Lynn Smiledge noted that there is a dire lack of Commissioners, especially in ones that do not have quorums.
- d. Discussion took place on how Article 85 changes would have to go through the BPDA Zoning Board.
- e. Chief Mariama White-Hammond suggested that the focus be on Article 85 now as it's been worked on and will not cost anything.
- f. Commissioner Amanda Zettel suggested that Master Plans under Article 80 might include a sentence or so on requiring a historic resource survey in the area, so the resource survey can get tackled in smaller chunks with private money.
- g. Chair Alison Frazee raised the concern that previous surveys have been piecemeal and haven't been able to get done across the City to the point that



they are now out of date. She also believes that the City needs a committee that discusses statues, memorializations, and name changes. Chief White-Hammond discussed the Monuments Project that MOAC is a part of.

- h. Commission Jean-Luc Pierite asked about Imagine Boston 2030 and Chief White-Hammond responded that she is unclear where that group stands while Commissioner Lynn Smiledge added that historic preservation is not included in Imagine Boston 2030.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENT

- a. There was no public comment.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT - 2:50 PM

DRAFT