



City of Medford

HISTORICAL COMMISSION
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

City Hall – Room 308
85 George P. Hassett Drive
Medford, Massachusetts 02155

Medford Historical Commission Annual Report 2014

Membership (as of 12/31/14):

James Kossuth, Chair (Term Ex. 12/1/2015)

Ryan D. Hayward, Vice Chair (Term Ex. 12/1/2016)

Doug Carr, Secretary (Term Ex. 12/1/2016)

Claire Dempsey, Commissioner (Term Ex. 12/1/2015)

Suanna Crowley, Commissioner (Term Ex. 12/1/2015)

Gretchen Pineo, Commissioner (Term Ex. 12/1/2016)

Meetings:

Second Monday of every month, except noted holidays, 7PM, Room 201, Medford City Hall.

Contact:

HistoricalCommission@Medford.org

Activities (arranged chronologically):

- Held meetings with MassDOT and landscape architect for Woods Bridge project to research and draft content regarding history of the area, specifically as a drive-in movie theater and midget car race track.
- Worked with purchaser-developer of 114 South Street (Grandfather's House) in ultimately unsuccessful attempt to mitigate damage to historic streetscape from new development.
- Met with potential purchaser-developer of 23 Tucker Street and successfully encouraged developer to seek alternatives to demolition.
- Completed Section 106 review for projects on Mystic Ave and Peace Garden.

- Advocated unsuccessfully before City Council on behalf of M-BELT bond request.
- Invited developer of 34A Grove Street to discuss plans to build on newly-subdivided front lot of historic 34 Grove Street to the detriment of the historic streetscape, at request of daughter of abutters. Developer did not attend meeting.
- Met with potential purchaser-developer of 252 Main Street to encourage alternatives to demolition of rare pre-1900 resource.
- Completed initial survey of historic properties in Hillside Neighborhood, as ongoing part of long overdue citywide survey. The survey includes a comprehensive list of buildings constructed prior to 1900 (and therefore subject to Commission review prior to demolition), as well as 116 properties surveyed on 48 “Form B’s” (per Massachusetts Historical Commission requirements and guidelines for documenting individual buildings) and 5 “Form A’s” (per Massachusetts Historical Commission requirements and guidelines for documenting groups of buildings), and an essay on land use history in the neighborhood. The survey also includes a final report and several interim phase reports, all completed with \$20,000 budget, which comprised a grant from the state and matching funds from the City.
- Received grant from Massachusetts Historical Commission and matching funds from the City, totaling \$30,000 to begin survey of historic properties in Medford Square, and completed Phases I and II of that survey. The survey is expected to include, in addition to a comprehensive list of buildings built prior to 1900, a final report, and several interim phase reports, surveys of approximately 150 properties, including one very large “Form A,” which is expected to cover approximately 100 properties, and three smaller “Form A’s,” and approximately 75 “Form B’s.” The survey will also update and expand the overview essay from the Medford Survey Plan, last updated in 2010.
- Applied for grant from Massachusetts Historical Commission to begin survey of historic properties in East Medford.
- Maintained level annual budget at just over \$10,000, with funds used primarily to retain professional specialists to research and record buildings subject to demolition delay review.
- Formed subcommittee to work alongside community members and advocate for placement of Community Preservation Act question on ballot for 2015 municipal election.
- Designed and launched new website, with improved information to enhance Commission’s public visibility.
- Participated in Medford Community Day, inviting members of the community to learn the age of their homes, creating large color-coded map of the city showing relative ages of select homes.

- Began work to establish a National Register Historic District in West Medford, according to the recommendation of the consultant who surveyed the neighborhood in 2010.
- As requested by Stephanie Muccini Burke, conducted survey of surrounding communities to learn which communities charge demolition applicants for the work that Medford currently hires outside consultants to do, and found that no community charges developers for this type of work.
- Implemented program to send letters to real estate agents who list buildings for sale, which appear to be built before 1900, and which appear to be candidates for demolition by developer-purchasers. Letters sent to sellers of the following properties, with all but one small pre-1900 outbuilding saved (discussed below) --
 - 65 Prescott Street
 - 204 Winthrop Street
 - 163 Riverside Avenue
 - 88 Marshall Street
 - 14 Paris Street

Site Plan Review:

The Office of Community Development solicited, and the Commission provided, comments on the following requests for site plan review:

- 9 Playstead Road
- 1 Cabot Road
- 491-499 Riverside Avenue
- 200 Middlesex Avenue
- Fellsway Plaza

Demolition Delay:

- Properties Reviewed and actions:
- 134 Jerome Street -- After an initial inquiry from the owner-seller, the Commission researched the building's history and found that it was built prior to 1900. After no further contact from owner-seller for approximately four months, the Commission learned that the owner-seller had requested a variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals, and the Commission wrote to the ZBA to ask that the hearing be postponed until after Commission review, per current standards and practices. At a public meeting on the building's significance, the building was found not to be historically significant.

- 14 Paris Street (outbuilding only) -- The Commission found that a small outbuilding on the property was built prior to 1900, but was not historically significant.
- 470 Main Street -- After the Commission reviewed the building and its history, it was found to be built after 1900 and not subject to further review by the Commission.
- 19 Mystic Avenue -- The Commission determined that the building was built prior to 1900, but, due to the substantial and nearly comprehensive alterations to its fabric during its life, and especially in the last 30 years, it was found not to be historically significant. The applicant agreed to contribute funds to complete research on the building and those surrounding it, and the area's pre-1900 use as a brickworks, although the applicant has not responded to any further correspondence from the Commission.
- 25 Winthrop Place, a/k/a 11 Winthrop Place -- The Commission found that this building, built ca. 1855, is an extremely rare example of a worker's cottage, built and occupied by a worker in the Curtis shipyards, and was historically significant. However, after further investigation into the building's fabric, which had been heavily altered, the Commission determined that it was not preferably preserved. The Commission worked with the applicant to record and document the building prior to its demolition.

Goals for 2015

- Add seventh commissioner and fully staff Commission.
- Continue to educate owners, developers, and real estate brokers about the Demolition Delay ordinance. (Meeting with City department heads, public lecture/ Q&A session, newspaper article).
- Reuse granite from Cradock Bridge as benches in "Sleepy Hollow" (between Hand Footbridge and Rt 16), in coordination with state and local officials.
- Investigate feasibility of reusing gears and other mechanical parts from Woods Bridge as part of a display at One Cabot Road development.
- Finalize and publish results of West Medford historic property survey.
- Finalize and publish results of Hillside historic property survey.
- Finalize and publish results of Medford Square historic property survey.
- Complete Phase 1 of East Medford historic property survey.
- Continue to update and improve web site.
- Place Community Preservation Act question on municipal ballot for November 2015 and advocate for its passage.
- Actively seek new funding sources for survey of historic buildings:

- Request additional funding from the Mayor's Office for non-grant supported inventory, from, e.g., casino mitigation funds.
- Continue to apply for grant funding through the Massachusetts Historical Commission for historic property survey of additional neighborhoods.
- Discuss CDBG funding with the Office of Community Development

Respectfully submitted,

James Kossuth

Chair

April 10, 2015