



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 2021

Membership:

Jennifer Keenan, Chair (Term Ex. 12/1/2023)
Ryan D. Hayward, Vice Chair (Term Ex. 12/1/2022)
Doug Carr, Commissioner (Term Ex. 12/1/2022)
Abigail Salerno, Commissioner (Term Ex. 12/1/2024)
Peter Miller, Secretary (Term Ex. 12/1/2024)
Edward Wiest, Commissioner (Term Ex. 12/1/2022)
Jessica Farrell, Commissioner (Term Ex. 12/1/2023)

Benjamin Johnson, Commissioner, resigned 1/31/2021.

Meetings:

Second Monday of every month, except noted holidays, 7PM, Room 201, Medford City Hall. All meetings were held via Zoom in compliance with COVID-19 restrictions.

Meeting Dates: January 11, February 8, March 8, April 12, May 10, June 14, July 12, August 9, September 13, October 18, November 8, December 13.

Contact:

Email: HistoricalCommission@Medford-MA.gov

Activities of the Commission:

- The Historical Commission budget remained at \$35,000. The request to increase the Historical Commission budget by \$2,000 to accommodate a larger Survey and Planning Grant award from the Massachusetts Historical Commission (see below) was not approved; however, the Commission was able to move line items in the budget as enacted) so as to utilize the entire matching grant.

- The Commission worked extensively with the Building Department in order to get access to its Citizen Serve software to help manage permit reviews. The Commission’s Permit Review Subcommittee has been tasked with keeping on top of incoming permits for approval. The Building Commissioner provided high praise for our ability to keep ahead of the tide of permits which have not slowed down since the beginning of the year.
- Members of the Commission met with the Mayor in November to review pending demolition delay cases and ongoing challenges facing the Commission. The Commission was able to provide information on every project which has come before it in recent years to demonstrate that full-scale demolition of historic structures are slowing down, consistent with the purpose of the demolition delay ordinance as amended. The Commissioners present discussed its efforts to engage every owner of properties in demolition delay, and the fact the property owners who made bona fide efforts to address concerns expressed during the process were released from delay of their projects, most within three months of the imposition of the 18-month delay permitted under the ordinance. The Commission continues to track those projects subject to the 18-month delay where owners have taken no action after a finding the property was “preferably preserved.”
- The Commission received Community Preservation funding to begin work on Thomas Brooks Park. The projects are working through procurement processes to secure bidders. We expect the projects to start construction in the spring of 2022. The Commission is very excited to see this work take place.
- The Commission supported the Historic District Commission to establish a new local district at 16 Foster Court. While the HDC’s proposed historic district was not approved by the City Council, the lessons learned by both bodies as the proposal moved forward taught several valuable lessons and provided a framework for collaboration with the Historic District Commission as it looks to expand the number of local historic districts in the future.
- The Commission’s work benefitted from newly provided staff support throughout the entire year. The Commission would like to thank Denis MacDougal for his hard work being the public face of the Commission at City Hall.
- The Commission reviewed, at the request of the Office of Planning, Development, and Sustainability, site plans for a number of projects for which zoning relief would be required, specially:
 - 200 Boston Avenue
 - 640-760 Fellsway
 - 152 Summer Street
 - 23 Sycamore Avenue
 - 16 Foster Court

The Commission will continue to work with the Office of Planning, Development, and Sustainability to ensure it receives agendas and project attachments during a period in which all city agencies have been conducting digital, rather than in-person meetings. The Commission (three of whose members are architects and/or historic preservation consultants) provides

valuable input to these discussions, as it has critical expertise regarding the existing landscape and historic elements.

- Historical survey work, under the aegis of the Commission, has been ongoing and is about to conclude in the Winter Hill area of the city under a \$32,000 grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission. While the completion of the project has been extended through 2022 due to restrictions from COVID-19, consultants working with the Commission have completed most of the area and building forms documenting large portions of the neighborhood.
- The Commission has applied to the Massachusetts Historical Commission for a \$36,000 Survey and Planning Grant for next fiscal year, and is looking to document historic resources in the Brickyards/Mystic Park neighborhood. This area is experiencing increased pressures of development from the Green Line Extension and Somerville. This grant will be conditioned upon an \$18,000 match by the City which comes from the Commission's budget.

New Inventory Forms:

The Commission procured Massachusetts Historical Commission Form Bs on more than 20 properties in 2021, adding to its historical inventory:

- 15 Hadley Place
- 73-75 South Street
- 23 South Street
- 31 South Street
- 104 Harvard Avenue
- 70 Lawrence Street
- 3960 Mystic Valley Parkway
- 34 Linden Avenue
- 174 Fulton Street
- 28 Albion
- 7 Vine Street
- 33 Vine Street
- 2 Ames Street – Fulton Heights Fire Station
- 435 Riverside Avenue – Riverside Avenue Fire Station
- 276 Salem Street – Salem Street Fire Station
- 437 Main Street – Curtis Tufts School
- 30 Dearborn Street
- Rhone Tennis Courts at Duggar Park
- 290-292 Riverside Avenue
- 84 Cotting Street
- 90 Alexander Avenue
- 75 Clewley Road
- 29 Summer Street
- 290 Salem Street/209 Park Street
- 17 Manning Street
- 160 Forest Street
- 130 Boston Avenue

Summary of forms added under the Winter Hill Neighborhood Survey Project:

- The Winter Hill Neighborhood Survey Project is ongoing. The Commission is awaiting the submission of phase IIIB in order to have an accurate number of forms generated for this project.

The Commission is awaiting additional survey product for the Hall Estate subdivision in Medford Square, and an additional area form for the Wellington neighborhood. These will add additional MHC form Bs for their respective neighborhoods.

Community and Section 106 Project Reviews:

The Massachusetts Historical Commission and other local organizations solicited, and the Commission provided, comments of the following projects:

- High Street Sidewalk Improvements – Section 106 Review
- Oak Grove Cemetery Service Building – CPC Support
- Middlesex Avenue Crosswalk/ADA Upgrades
- Fire Station Roof and Window Repairs – CPC Support
- Rhone Tennis Court Rehabilitation – CPC Support
- Chevalier Theater, Exterior Restoration - CPC Support
- Curtis/Tufts School – CPC Support

Demolition Delay:

This year, the Commission began using the CitizenServe software. Board members were trained by both CitizenServe and the Building Department to review permits assigned. The Historical Commission and Building Department made great strides using the software effectively and efficiently. The Commission uses the software to review permit applications, request additional information, flag projects that require full review under the demolition delay, and to upload our findings for the permit record.

The Commission took action on demolition delay applications on the following properties:

- 15 Hadley Place: The Commission reviewed an application for the demolition of a nineteenth century Queen Anne Victorian home slated for total demolition and found the structure to be **historically significant and preferably preserved**. The Commission expressed interest in working with the owner and architect to find a solution that would mitigate the demolition. After the Commission reached out for two consecutive months, the owner has chosen not to engage in the process and would wait out the full delay.
- 73-75 South Street: An application was received for the total demolition of a pre-1875 duplex in a prominent shipbuilding neighborhood. The building was found to be **historically significant and preferably preserved**. Commissioners are working with the owner to find a solution that balances the new construction with the existing streetscape and are awaiting a final design.
- 403 Riverside Avenue: This property first came before the Commission four years ago. A new application was submitted to permit the demolition of a late nineteenth century dwelling house so the lots can be combined for commercial use. The building was found to be **not significant**. The

Owner has received his demolition permit, but has not yet proceeded on the permit. 104 Harvard Avenue: The building owner submitted demolition paperwork in advance of future demolition on the property. The Commission found this early 20th century bungalow style residence to be **historically significant and preferably preserved**. The owner has no plans at this time and simply wishes to wait out the demolition delay.

- 120 Jerome Street: The Commission worked with the building owner to mitigate the proposed demolition. The project was allowed to move forward and has been completed as of the writing of this report.
- 202 Middlesex Avenue: A new owner came forward with an application for the partial demolition of this significant nineteenth century residence. The project as proposed would significantly alter the building beyond recognition. The Commission had **previously determined significance** so the process went directly to a public hearing. At that time, the building was found to be **preferably preserved**. The owner and architect worked with the Commission to change plans in order to mitigate the demolition. Construction is ongoing but under current plans will maintain the residence largely as-is as an important resource in the Wellington neighborhood.
- 70 Lawrence Street: The property was submitted for demolition delay review. The building is a nineteenth century dwelling house that had been altered. Additional proposed alterations would obliterate the historical integrity of this building. The building was found **not significant**. Planned renovations to the building have been completed as of the date of this report.
- 3960 Mystic Valley Parkway: An industrial building owned by General Electric, was proposed to be demolished in advance of a planned 40B project. The Commission was impressed by the history of the site, but did not feel the building warranted preservation. A motion to find for significance failed 1-4. The building, therefore, was found to be **not significant**. Demolition is underway.
- 34 Linden Avenue: A mid-nineteenth century building now located in what has become a largely industrial/commercial zone. Due to the loss of context, the Commission voted that the building was **not significant**. The building has been demolished.
- 174 Fulton Street: A proposal to raise the roofline of an early 20th century building for a new second and third floor addition. The Commission voted the work to be **not significant**.
- 28 Albion Street: The Commission discussed this project. After review, it was determined by the Board that alterations would not significantly impact the house and voted to pass on review. No determination was made for the property.
- 109 Forest Street: A new owner of 109 Forest Street (a building which had been before the Commission several times) sought Commission approval to tear down the side porch to permit the erection of a new addition/unit on the left side of the property. As the Commission had found the structure to be significant in 20[19?], a public hearing on the preferable preservation of the structure was conducted. The Commission once again determined the building to be **preferably preserved**. The Commission outlined a process which would permit work to go forward, but to date, the Owner has chosen to not engage with the Commission.

- 7 Vine Street: This structure, one of Medford's few remaining 18th century buildings, was presented for demolition review inasmuch as proposed alterations would forever remove any remaining integrity of the original structure. A permit was erroneously granted for partial demolition prior to the start of review. The building was researched but the Commission ultimately found the building **not significant** for purposes of demolition delay. The Commission requested the permit be held while documentation was completed. The permit was issued regardless and demolition took place prior to any record being generated. We have lost a chance for documentation of one of the few ancient resources forever.
- 30 Dearborn Street: This 20th century structure came up for full demolition. The Commission found the building **not significant**.
- 70 Stanley Avenue: The Commission determined that the scope of this project was insufficient for demolition review .
- 290-292 Riverside Avenue: Our board received notice of an impending demolition of the dwelling house on this property due to an oil spill. The pre-1875 structure relates to the shipbuilding industry and warranted full Commission review. After a determination of **significance**, the building commissioner ordered the **property demolished for health and safety reasons**, and the Commission took no further action.
- 33 Vine Street: During permit review, this property was flagged for major demolition that would result in the loss of all existing fabric. The property was reviewed for partial demolition. It was found **historically significant and preferably preserved**. The owner worked with the Commission and the delay was released after two months. The Commission was satisfied that the change in design would mitigate the loss of the structure.
- 75 Clewley Road: Renovations to this 20th century shingle style home prompted review due to proposed demolition, and the Commission found it to be **historically significant and preferably preserved**. After working with the Commission for two months, the owners presented a bona fide plan to mitigate the effects of the demolition, the demolition delay was lifted, and the project was approved to proceed.
- 84 Cotting Street: This is a nineteenth century dwelling house for which was proposed major roof alterations which would result in major change to the streetscape. It was found to be **not significant** by the Commission.
- 90 Alexander Avenue: This fire ravaged structure was found to be **not significant** by the Commission.
- 29 Summer Street: This nineteenth century duplex home was found to be both **historically significant and preferably preserved**. The Owners expressed willingness to work with the Commission and the design tweaked to mitigate demolition. Documentation was also prepared for the to record pre-demolition conditions. The Commission voted to lift the delay on this property as the Owners made a bona fide effort to mitigate their impact.
- 290 Salem/290 Park Street: A heavily altered nineteenth century mixed commercial/residential block was slated for demolition. The upper stories of this building had been been previously

removed long before review and as a result, the surviving building lacked any historical integrity. The building and associated carriage house were both found to be **not significant**.

- 17 Manning Street: A new owner came forward with an application for partial demolition of this nineteenth century building. The project has been found **historically significant and preferably preserved**. The Commission will begin working with the Owners to mitigate the demolition. The Commission expects the demolition delay to be lifted prior to maximum eighteen month period.
- 160 Forest Street: This project was stopped by the Building Commissioner for exceeding the scope of work allowed by the permit as granted. The Building Commissioner then directed the property owner to come before the Historical Commission due to the excessive demolition that had taken place. Review of this building is ongoing.

Goals for 2022

- Continue to educate owners, developers, real estate brokers, and City departments about the Demolition Delay ordinance in order to preserve Medford's historic resources. The Commission will uphold the spirit of the bylaw and work with the Building Department to identify projects that warrant review.
- Administer the most ambitious CPC project yet at Thomas Brooks Park. This project has the full support of Community Development and Purchasing Departments. We will work with both agencies to ensure tasks are tackled in a timely manner.
- Work with the Historic District Commission to secure funding for a city-wide local historic district plan, using the extensive survey work which has been completed over the last [] years. This work will address concerns raised in the City Council while the proposed 16 Foster Court historic district and we will advocate with City Council and the Mayor approve additional historic districts when proposed by the HDC.
- Compile survey recommendations and create a plan for a new city-wide survey plan working with the Mayor and other City departments.
- Survey the City residents on their understanding of the Demolition Delay, its applicability, success and ways to improve the process.
- Regularly publish updates on Commission's website and social media accounts to keep the public informed about any ongoing action by the Historical Commission, Historic District Commission, or combination of the same.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer M. Keenan
Commission Chairman

January 31, 2022