



Historical Commission

Special

~ Minutes ~

36 Court Street
Springfield, MA 01103
<http://www.springfieldcityhall.com>

Andrew Strniste
4137876525

Monday, June 16, 2025

5:30 PM

Richard Neal Municipal Operations Center

I. Call to Order

5:30 PM Meeting called to order on June 16, 2025 at Richard Neal Municipal Operations Center, 70 Tapley Street, Springfield, MA.

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Andrew Strniste		Present	
Vincent Walsh	RAPV Representative	Present	
Alfonso Nardi	Chair	Present	
Judith Crowell	CPC Representative	Remote	
Walter Kroll		Present	
Marisa Zorzi		Absent	
Vana Nespor		Present	

II. Other Matters Properly Before the Commission

1. Informational (ID # 8743)

Discussion About Proposed Historical Ordinance Update

DISCUSSION ABOUT PROPOSED HISTORICAL ORDINANCE UPDATE

COMMENTS - Current Meeting:

Chair A. Nardi welcome everyone to the evening's special meeting, which was arranged to allow the public to provide input about the proposed historical ordinance update.

Staff Member A. Strniste inform all those in attendance that the objective of the proposed ordinance was mainly to reorganize and centralize all of the existing ordinances relating to the historic preservation - with a few updates and additions.

Chair A. Nardi read the submitted comments from the Springfield Preservation Trust.

A discussion ensued about the impact of the minimum fine being ten dollars. Chair A. Nardi opined that he would like to see specific actions tied to specific fee amounts, as well as require applicants and contractors who have committed infractions be required to sign affidavits that they are aware that the historical standards exist.

Staff Member Strniste cautioned the Commission from levying fines too quickly or that are too steep.

Commissioner V. Walsh could not recall a time when the Commission had levied a fee.

Harry Seymour from 68 Washington Road asked what the purpose of updating the ordinance was - Commissioner V. Walsh responded that the idea that an update was required was brought to his attention when he was Chair, which the Commission then commissioned an outside consultant.

In response to a question by Karen Lee from the Community Preservation Committee, Staff Member A. Strniste and Commissioner V. Walsh assured that this exercise was not meant to change the guidelines.

Bob McCarroll, also from the Community Preservation Committee, opined that the definition of Historic Site should be broader, and confirmed that landscaping is not of the jurisdiction of the Commission. Chair A. Nardi recommended using the term "similar appurtenances." Staff Member Strniste advised that the Municipal Protocol procedures that are now memorialized should result in the City coming before the Commission more often. He also recommended that perhaps there is an adopted list that can be disseminated to the City Departments.

B. McCarroll took issue with Section 49-10.C relating to Single-Building Districts with Five or Less Properties. Specifically, he advised that the Community Preservation Committee has a policy of only disbursing money to properties where the building are permanently protected. When a building is not permanently protected, they ask the landowner to pursue a local historic district. Thus the Committee's position is that the City is requiring landowner to seek a determination about being placed on the National Register of Historic Place, which goes beyond what is required for the establishment of a Local Historic District. Furthermore, the State's Historical Commission does not make determinations, as they only review applications to be placed on the National Register, thus the Ordinance is requiring an action that is not performed by Massachusetts Historic. K. Lee supported B. McCarroll's position and opined that this particular section takes power from the Commission. B. McCarroll then responded that many of the institutions seeking CPA grants are nonprofits.

Staff Member A. Strniste provided Staff's position that the creation of single-building local historic districts is resource- and time-intensive, in addition leading to an issue where there could be hundreds of single-building local historic districts that are likely to be hard to track. Additionally, he opined that this section may need to be revised if it did not accurately reflect a practical process.

B. McCarroll noted that State statute allows for the creation of single-building local historic districts, that the Community Preservation Committee does not have the ability to require neighbors to create a local historic district. He then advised that the Community Preservation Committee could only require the implementation of local historic district or preservation restrictions to ensure preservation of the building - with the local historic districts taking six months to finalize and a preservation restriction taking twelve months to finalize.

Commissioner V. Walsh inquired as to why a deed restriction could not serve the same purpose; B. McCarroll advised that the deed restriction is only enforceable on who is given the restriction while the preservation restriction is held by a government entity or nonprofit. Thus, if someone violates a preservation restriction, the entity can seek to enforce the restriction. B. McCarroll recommended eliminating Subsection C in its entirety. Commissioner V. Nespor opined that there is no need to fix something that is not a problem and then opined that future Commissions can handle the issue of an abundance of single-building local historical district districts.

B. McCarroll also advised that the benefit of local historic districts is that a review process is required.

A discussion then ensued about applicants paying for reports that are to be submitted to the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Commissioner V. Walsh opined that there is no money and that it costs money to draft and complete reports. B. McCarroll rebutted, arguing that the Planning Department found \$35,000 to assist with updating the ordinance, and therefore, if the department wants to find the money, they have the ability to do so.

K. Lee opined that the report expense would be a barrier for new preservation and would be happy with a happy medium or an exemption for some parties.

Chair A. Nardi opined that there need to be criteria for exemption.

H. Seymour inquired about various aspects of the proposed Ordinance: who levies the fines, if two nominees were required before an appointment. He commented that the ordinance should give more say in the appointment process. H. Seymour then inquired about the Commission conducting walking tours. W. Kroll outlined the challenges the Commission has regarding extending help to applicants and that there should be a bridge to assist applicants. Commissioner V. Nespor recommended that upon completion of projects, they should submit pictures, which could be displayed, thus highlighting the good aspects of preservation efforts being made by the Commission.

Commissioner J. Crowell opined about the difficulty of being a volunteer, especially the tension between landowners with strict financial limitations and historic preservation.

A discussion ensued about the proposed Birnie-Taylor-Lay Block Local Historic District. Staff Member A. Strniste highlighted some of the limitations relating to staff capacity, acknowledging that he was cognizant of the cost to applicants relating to historic preservation efforts.

H. Seymour inquired about enforcement and expressed his concern about those individuals who proceed with projects without the proper approvals in place beforehand.

H. Seymour then inquired about the New Construction Guidelines; that project is expected to be next after the Ordinance rewrite, which became a priority.

2. Informational (ID # 8744)

June 26, 2025 Quorum Call

JUNE 26, 2025 QUORUM CALL

COMMENTS - Current Meeting:

All attending Commissioners are expected to be at the next Historical Commission meeting - a Special Meeting to be held on June 26, 2025.

3. Informational (ID # 8745)

Public Speak-Out Session

PUBLIC SPEAK-OUT SESSION

COMMENTS - Current Meeting:

No public comments were provided. Commissioner W. Kroll made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner V. Walsh seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion was approved unanimously.