

MSLD Study Committee Notes #18

July 29, 2026, 6:30 pm

Zoom <https://www.zoomgov.com/j/1613864897>

Study Committee Attendees:

Ameeth Deenanath (Alternate)
Crystal Galvin
Jeffrey Gonyeau
Julie Hall
Kirsten Hoffman
Intiya Ambrogi Isaza
Nancy Johnsen (Chair)
Lindsey Mac-Jones
Linda Neshamkin

Staff:

Gabriela Amore
Elizabeth Sherva

Members of the Public:

Action/follow-up items for staff are highlighted in yellow.

I. REVIEW AND VOTE ON MINUTES FROM LAST MEETING

A. ~~_____ motions to approve meeting minutes from April 29, 2026. _____ seconds the motion. Meeting minutes approved unanimously.~~ Postponed to next meeting.

II. PUBLIC FEEDBACK SINCE LAST MEETING

A. Feedback received by staff:

1. **Jennifer** had a call with Zachary Cutler, an environmental planning and urban design adaptation anthropologist in Charlestown. Zachary expressed his concern over the climate and flood resilience of Charlestown —particularly that the potential district might prevent the use of deployable flood barriers and other mitigation strategies. Jennifer explained that the proposed District is not intended to conflict with flood resilience or sea level rise adaptations; for example, the standards and criteria would not prevent the use of deployables. Zachary signed up for the email list and Jennifer asked him to please write in with any concerns after the working draft of the study report is released.

a) **Gabriela** reports that staff has been meeting with the Planning Department about climate resilience and will check if they have any comments on the draft standards and criteria in the working report.

b) **Elizabeth** adds that after meeting with Amber Galko, the designated staff contact for the Coastal Flood Resilience Overlay District (CFROD) project at the Planning Dept., that there is currently little to no overlap between the potential CFROD district and the potential Monument Square district or protection area.

B. Feedback received by study committee members:

1. **Julie** reports that there is still a lot of misinformation circulating in the community about the purpose of the proposed designation. It would help to clarify that the protection area will help protect against overdevelopment.

III. REVIEW PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLANS

- A. Staff presents a work plan for the completion of the report and for public engagement through the rest of the process.

- B. Opportunities for verbal public testimony will occur at:
 - 1. Community event at Memorial Hall.
 - 2. Boston Landmarks Commission Hearing #1
 - 3. Boston Landmarks Commission Hearing #2
- C. Outreach efforts will include:
 - 1. Flyering (600+)
 - 2. Emails to our MSLD listserv
 - 3. Social media posts
 - 4. Contact local orgs.
 - 5. Announcement in Patriot-Bridge
 - 6. Mailings to property owners
- D. **Nancy** states that a mailing to property owners would be especially helpful in advance of the next community engagement event. Staff agrees to check into the possibility of doing this mailing in addition to the mailings that are legally mandated.

IV. REVIEW STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

- A. Protection Area boundary:
 - 1. Staff is going to double-check with the Legal department about the issue of jurisdiction where the 1200-foot maximum boundary for a Protection Area cuts through a parcel.
 - 2. Staff will also add the 1200-foot maximum boundary layer to the same map as the working district and protection area boundary, so that it is easier to see where they overlay.
 - 3. **Lindsey** asks if there is any benefit to including historic burying grounds in the Protection Area?
 - a) **Elizabeth** reports that the Phipps Street Burying Ground is already regulated by a Preservation Restriction so it has a very high level of protection. It is also outside of the 1200-foot maximum boundary for the Protection Area.
 - b) **Elizabeth** also reports that the Bunker Hill Burying Ground is inventoried but doesn't currently have any protections. The Study Committee could consider including this burying ground in the Protection Area.
 - 4. **Intiya** observes that on the east side of the Protection Area, Chelsea Street seems like a natural break.
 - 5. **Jeff** asks if it is best to have a boundary that does not cut through a block?
 - a) **Elizabeth** says yes, it is best for cohesion and clarity not to divide through the middle of a block. Owners and the general public can better understand boundaries that follow streets and block edges.
 - b) **Jeff** says it seems to make sense to err on the side of inclusiveness in the protection area, because the restrictions are much less onerous.
 - c) **Intiya** says that the staff had compelling reasons for straight boundaries at the main arteries of the neighborhood, like Chelsea Street.
 - (1) **Linda** agrees.
 - (2) **Intiya** asks where the actual boundary would be along a street?
 - (a) **Elizabeth**: Usually down the middle of the street.
 - 6. **Nancy** observes that City Square Park and the John Harvard Mall are both areas that have good views of the monument and fall along the path you would take to walk to Monument Square. Would like to include those in the Protection Area.

7. **Nancy** and **Intiya** both state that Peter Looney Park should be included in the Protection Area.
8. **Crystal** asks to return to the Bunker Hill Burying Ground and asks whether it is related to the Revolution?
 - a) **Julie** explains that it is a nineteenth-century Victorian cemetery, but there was a ground-penetrating radar test that showed that there could be some artifacts dating to the Battle of Bunker Hill below ground. It was probably also an eighteenth-century burial ground that holds some of the remains from the battle. It should definitely be protected.
 - (1) **Elizabeth** offers to look into state burial law and what protections the burying ground currently has.
 - (2) **Intiya** suggests that staff could also produce a map showing other forms of protection that sites already have.
9. **Nancy** recommends all study committee members read through the history section of the report which includes geological, indigenous, and revolutionary history as well as an explanation of how the Monument Association disposed of the land around the square and how the housing was built to lend to the dignity of the monument.
 - a) **Julie** suggests that the study committee should be prepared to answer questions about why the district is not about where the battle was fought, specifically.
 - b) **Nancy** also points out that the petition for the district was not about the battle but about the architecture of Monument Square that exists now.

B. Private ways:

1. **Gabriela** reads information on the slide from the Massachusetts Municipal Association:
 - a) *Private ways, while privately owned, may be open to the public for travel, including walking. Private roads, on the other hand, are typically intended for the use of specific individuals, like residents of a property, and may not be open to the general public.*
 - b) **Jeff** asks why the parcels and buildings along a private way would be treated differently from the parcels in any other part of the district. The parcels are all private property.
 - c) The study committee discusses some known private ways in the neighborhood. **Ameeth** points out that Concord Ave is another example of a private way within the area proposed for designation.
 - (1) Staff will come back with more information at the next meeting after some research on the legality of what can be regulated adjacent to private ways.

C. Working study report:

1. Study Committee decides to revisit the “Levels of Review” in the standards and criteria.
 - a) **Nancy, Crystal, Julie, Linda, and Jeff** all agree to remove the reference to a six-week timeframe from the list of items that are not subject to review. In other words, temporary seasonal decorations are never subject to review even if they are up for more than six weeks.
 - b) **Elizabeth** suggests revisiting air-conditioners. Temporary air-conditioners will not be regulated. However, what about the installation of a permanent window heating or cooling unit?

- (1) **Nancy** suggests adding the word “seasonal” to clarify that any seasonal installations will not be regulated.
 - (2) **Crystal** expresses concern that the focus might be getting too narrow?
 - (3) **Lindsey** says that the goal isn’t to regulate seasonal window units, but if there is a permanent heat pump in a window all year round, that would be something that might need to be reviewed.
 - (4) **Gabriela** points out that the goal of regulating historic architecture is usually to prevent the destruction of pieces of historic buildings that you can never get back, but not to regulate temporary (removable) things.
 - (5) **Jeff**: Might be good to consider the difference between specific and prescriptive. Specificity can help people in some cases to clarify details without being too prescriptive.
2. **Nancy** suggests that at the next meeting the committee should review the information in the first section of the report about the application and review process.

V. PUBLIC COMMENTS

- A. **Scott Haldane** asks about the timeline for potential designation. Staff confirms that it won’t be until 2027 and offers to schedule a call anytime to discuss further. Scott says he lives on Monument Square and supports this completely. Scott also asks to confirm that the designation is not official until approved by the Landmarks Commission, and staff confirm that and explain that it also must be reviewed by the Mayor and City Council.

VI. ADJOURNMENT: 8:40 PM

- A. **Linda** motions to adjourn, **Julie** seconds. Unanimous vote to adjourn.