BOSTON LANDMARKS COMMISSION
PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES
Boston City Hall, Boston, MA, 02201
held virtually via Zoom

APPROVED BY COMMISSION
October 27, 2026

OCTOBER 13, 2026

I. BOSTON LANDMARKS COMMISSION BUSINESS HEARING 6:00 PM

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: *John Amodeo, David Dixon, John Freeman, Susan Goganian, Jeffrey Gonyeau, Vineet Gupta, Kirsten Hoffman, Jeffrey Heyne, Felicia Jacques, Angela Ward-Hyatt, Justin Orlando (Vice-Chair), & Brad Walker (Chair)*
COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: *Christopher Hart, Senam Kumahia, Lindsey Mac-Jones.*
STAFF PRESENT: *Architectural Historian, Jennifer Gaugler; Director of the Office of Historic Preservation, Kathy Kottaridis; Preservation Assistant, Sarah Lawton, and Deputy Director of the Office of Historic Preservation, Elizabeth Sherva.*

6:02 PM: Commissioner Walker called the public hearing to order. He explained that, pursuant to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, that the public hearing was being conducted virtually via the online meeting platform Zoom in order to review Design Review applications. He also briefly explained how to participate in the online hearing. Members of the press Alison Pultinas, Fenway News, made herself known.

The Chair announced that the Commission would next review the Ratification of Meeting Minutes.

II. HEARING MINUTES

Review and ratification of Public Hearing Minutes from the August 25, 2026 meeting.

COMMISSIONER DIXON MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES. COMMISSIONER GOGANIAN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE VOTE WAS 8-0-0 (Y: JF, DD, JO, SG, VG, KH, JG, JA) (N: NONE) (ABS: NONE).

The Chair announced that the Commission would next review the Survey Rating Policy, petitions and study reports.

III. SURVEY RATING POLICY

Survey Rating Policy background information and request to retire Survey Rating Policy.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED: Documents presented included a presentation related to the Survey Rating Policy and proposal to retire the current policy.

DISCUSSION TOPICS: Discussion topics included background information about the current Survey Rating Policy, and information about the levels of significance categories and criteria. Discussion also summarized policy updates in 2002, 2003, 2023, and 2025. Staff recommend retiring the Survey Rating Policy, citing the following reasons:

- Survey ratings are not a required criteria for designation according to the Commission's enabling legislation.
- Most survey ratings were assigned in the 1970s-80s and do not reflect current historical knowledge or what is significant to today's communities.
- The policy does not equitably contemplate diverse neighborhood resources, as many buildings outside of downtown were never assigned survey ratings.
- Retiring the Survey Rating Policy would lower barriers for the general public to submit a petition.
- Survey rating assignments and upgrades require extra staff and Commission time to evaluate.
- A better option is to update the petition format to require more direct argumentation and evidence for how the proposed designation satisfies the criteria in the enabling legislation.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS: Commissioners discussed the Survey Rating Policy, and the proposed change to remove the requirement for a survey rating and instead require petitioners to address enabling legislation criteria. Commissioners supported retiring the policy, stating the current policy created confusion. Commissioners asked for clarification on the timeline for retirement of the policy, the alignment with National Register standards, and the impact on existing and proposed landmarks.

COMMISSIONER ORLANDO MOTIONED TO RETIRE THE SURVEY RATING POLICY. COMMISSIONER HEYNE SECONDED THE MOTION. THE VOTE WAS 0-0-0 (Y: DD, JF, SG, KH, JO, FS, AWH) (N: NONE) (ABS: NONE).

IV. LANDMARK PETITIONS

Petition background information, new petition format, and updated petition Instructions. No vote.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED: Documents presented included a presentation about the current petition format and the proposed revisions to the petition and introduction of a proposed guidebook.

DISCUSSION TOPICS: Discussion topics included the proposed revisions to the current petition form. Staff emphasized the need for clearer instructions in both the petition form and on the website, and the priority for increasing accessible resources to the public. Staff also noted that the proposed revisions to the format would ask applicants to identify the applicable criteria for designation and make a clear argument for significance. The petition process and the role of BLC staff were outlined, with Staff noting that only the petition form will be updated and the petition process itself will remain unchanged.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS: Commissioners discussed the current and proposed revisions to the Landmark petition form. Commissioners expressed support for the proposed changes that can reduce barriers to the public. Commissioners sought clarification on whether the new petition would be available in multiple languages, how the form's revision will be communicated on the landmarks website, and how this form differs from historic district petition forms. Commissioner Walker noted that Commissioners can petition for landmarks.

V. STUDY REPORTS

Presentation of new study report format.

DOCUMENTS PRESENTED: Documents presented included a presentation about the a presentation about the current study report format and the proposed revisions to the study report format.

DISCUSSION TOPICS: Discussion topics included reasons for the update and revisions and information related to the current challenges for the study report format. Staff proposed to reorganize sections of the report, integrate photographs with text, define the concept of but not enumerate character-defining features, and streamline the standards and criteria section.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS: Commissioners discussed proposed changes to the study report format, focusing on the character-defining features section. They expressed concern that reduced detail could shift the responsibility for defining these features to the Commissioners in the design review hearings, rather than the study report. Commissioners also emphasized the need for

clarity, and ultimately supported revisions to the format and commended BLC staff for their proactive improvements.

VI. STAFF UPDATES

Elizabeth Sherva, Deputy Director of the Office of Historic Preservation, announced that the next Design Review Hearing will take place at 4:00 PM, and the next BLC Business Meeting will take place at 6:00 PM on Tuesday, October 27, 2026.

She also recognized Architectural Historian Jennifer Gaugler for her ongoing efforts in revising the study report format, developing the new petition form, and preparing other documents for the Commission.

She also stated that she is coordinating with other city agencies to organize ethics and open meeting law training for Commissioners. Additionally, she announced that the Monument Square Study Committee will host an in-person community meeting in Charlestown, MA, at 6:00 PM on Thursday, October 21, 2026.

Chair Walker, congratulated Commissioner Freeman on receiving a preservation award for his work and service.

VII. ADJOURN – 7:19 PM

COMMISSIONER FREEMAN MOTIONED TO ADJOURN THE HEARING. COMMISSIONER HEYNE SECONDED THE MOTION. THE VOTE WAS 7-0-0 (Y: DD, JF, SG, KH, JO, FS, AWH)(N: NONE)(ABS: NONE).