

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION**  
**October 12, 2022**

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the Commission meeting was held remotely in a Zoom meeting.

Chairman Rosenberry called the meeting to order at 1:04 pm. On behalf of Secretary Galvin, he welcomed the Commissioners. Chairman Rosenberry next addressed the audience, thanking them for attending. For those individuals who may not have attended commission meetings in the past, Chairman Rosenberry explained the structure of the meeting and when in the process the public could address the commission. Chairman Rosenberry then took attendance to determine that a quorum was met, asking also that each Commissioner take a moment to state the organization they represent and a few words introducing themselves.

**Roll Call and Introduction of Commissioners**

**John Rosenberry** introduced himself as Legislative Director at Secretary of the Commonwealth of MA and Acting Chair of the Massachusetts Historical Commission on behalf of the Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin. The chair then called the roll, and those present followed with brief introductions.

**Simone Early** is Assistant Director Architects and Engineers for Public Housing at the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development.

**Ashley Stolba** is Undersecretary of Community Development, Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development.

**Dennis DeWitt** is the nominee of the Society of Architectural Historians (New England Chapter) of which he is Past-President of SAH(NE Chapter); also Past-President of the Waterworks Museum, and Past Vice-Chair of the Brookline Preservation Commission.

**Susan Ceccacci** represents the American Antiquarian Society; she was most recently Education Director for Preservation Worcester; prior to that a preservation consultant for 30 years.

**Suanna Selby Crowley** represents the Massachusetts Archaeological Society as Past-President and current Trustee; she is a geo-archaeologist by specialty.

**Mark Wilson** represents The Trustees of Reservations where he has been for over 24 years, and where he is Curator of Collections and western Massachusetts preservation project manager.

**Charles Sullivan** is the nominee of Historic New England /Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities; he has been on the Commission since 1988; trained as a city planner he has been Executive Director of the Cambridge Historical Commission since 1974.

**Donald Friary** since 2009 has been the nominee of the New England Historic Genealogical Society where is an honorary Trustee; for 28 years he was Executive Director of Historic Deerfield; and subsequently 14 years as President of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts.

**Gavin Kleespies** represents the Massachusetts Historical Society, where he is Director of Programs, Exhibitions, and Community Partnerships; he is also a member of the Massachusetts Committee for the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the American Revolution; and he is a member of the Cambridge Historical Commission.

**Michael McDowell** represents the Home Builders Association of Massachusetts of which he is Past-President; he started his first company in 1978; his background is in diesel technology and as a builder; he has operated 3 small companies and a school.

**Gina Perille** is a Governor's Appointee; she is a civic engagement enthusiast, and has worked in the public sector, higher education and non-profits with a focus on community engagement and strategy.

**Anne Pride** is a Governor's Appointee serving since 2016; she works in construction project management.

The Chairman turned to the first item on the agenda, the **approval of the September 14, 2022 meeting minutes**. He called for a MOTION TO ACCEPT the minutes. A MOTION was made by Commissioner Sullivan and SECONDED by Commissioner DeWitt. Hearing no questions or comments, the chair moved the motion. The motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chairman Rosenberry then turned to the next item on the agenda, the **Executive Director's Report**. He then turned the floor over to Brona Simon, Executive Director.

Ms. Simon began by discussing the MHC's Mission Statement, and the state law, Chapter 40C, regarding local historic district programs.

Starting with the Mission Statement she noted that MHC is the State Historic Preservation agency of the Commonwealth, so the MHC's goals are geared towards historic preservation across the state and supporting historic preservation efforts at the local level.

The MHC has two primary program goals:

1. To define the state's policy in historic preservation and pursue identification, evaluation, and protection of properties significant to the state's heritage.
2. To empower local communities through technical and financial assistance to identify and protect each community's significant historic and archaeological resources.

MHC's day-to-day activities and responsibilities have been delegated to the staff. For example, MHC staff review about 12,000 state and federally funded, licensed, or permitted projects each year. She noted that the Commission is the appellate body under MHC's State Register review regulations for a failure to reach an agreement between a project proponent and MHC's staff for the resolution of adverse effects to State Register properties; for federal reviews the appellate body is the Advisory Council for Historic Preservation in Washington D.C.

On a daily basis staff answer phone calls and respond to written requests, respond to public records requests within ten business days of receipt; and meet all the open meeting law requirements related to Commission meetings.

Ms. Simon then turned to Chapter 40C, in particular Section 3 that explains the administration by city and town governments regarding the establishments of local historic districts, where MHC is mentioned. A historic district study committee that is appointed by the town government writes a Preliminary Study Report and submits a copy of the report to the Massachusetts Historical Commission "for their respective consideration and recommendations." This relates to some discussion

the Commission has had about acknowledging receipt and making recommendations. In 2003, in an instance relating to the proposed landmarking of the Gaiety Theatre in Boston, MHC's legal counsel made it clear that local governments are legally responsible for establishing local landmarks and local historic districts, and the MHC's role is to receive the study reports and make recommendations. The MHC's attorney advised at that time the format of the motion that MHC staff presents to the Commission to acknowledge receipt and make advisory recommendations which would be the clearest way to state MHC's role in reviewing local landmark and local historic district study reports. MHC has no approval authority, and it is up to the local government to decide on establishing the local landmark or local historic district. MHC's role is just a small part of the process that the local government needs to undertake under Chapter 40C, including in the case of cities, city council approval, and in Boston, under its special legislative act, also requiring approval of the Mayor. In the case of the Gaiety Theatre, the building was not landmarked. It is not unusual for the local government not to follow MHC's recommendation, for example, the recent case of the First Universalist Church in Somerville that the Commission voted not to recommend, but which the City of Somerville then designated as a single-building local historic district. There are several examples where MHC's advisory comments were not followed. Chapter 40C also notes that MHC may consult with the Director of Economic Development, Director of Housing and Community Development, and Commissioner of Environmental Management with respect to these reports, which was done decades ago to develop guidelines. Ms. Simon directed the Commissioners to MHC's "Establishing Local Historic Districts" publication on MHC's website. Some communities operate under special legislative acts that govern the creation of their local districts, which can have different requirements. In the case of Sudbury, for example, there is no requirement that the town submit a study report to the MHC for its review and comment.

Ms. Simon then noted that at last month's meeting Commissioners asked to receive full copies of the preliminary study reports for local landmarks/local historic districts before the meetings. She apologized for the time it took to be able to do this due to the constraints on file sharing and cyber security as overseen by the Secretary of State's Cyber Security/IT Department. Going forward MHC staff will email copies of the study reports, which may need to be sent in multiple emails because of the file size limits that the state email system has imposed. And in some cases where the reports are posted on local websites, MHC staff Jenn Doherty will be able to email a link to the report, as she was able to do for today's meeting. Another alternative is to provide you with copies of the PowerPoint

presentations to review beforehand, as done previously when the Commission meetings were in person. This completed the Executive Director's report.

Chairman Rosenberry recognized Commissioner DeWitt, who expressed his appreciation for the staff's effort to provide these reports to the Commissioners, and suggested that available file compression software might make it easier to convey large pdf files by email.

Chairman Rosenberry then turned to the next item on the agenda, the Local Historic District Preliminary Study Reports, first calling for any recusals. Hearing none, he turned the meeting over to Jennifer Doherty, Local Government Programs Coordinator. Ms. Doherty presented the study reports with presentation slides. A copy of the slides is on file with these minutes.

### **City of Boston, (Back Bay) Frederick Ayer Mansion Interior**

Ms. Doherty first presented the **Frederick Ayer Mansion Interior in Back Bay, Boston**. Boston's Special Act legislation allows them to landmark both the exterior and interior of a building. She noted that the Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC) voted and approved the designation the previous evening.

The house is located at the west end of Back Bay at 395 Commonwealth Avenue.

The Ayer Mansion already has several different designations. It is part of the BLC's Back Bay Architectural District, designated in 1966, and the Back Bay Historic District, listed on the National Register in 1973. The house was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2005, and since 2013 the MHC has held a Preservation Restriction on the property, which as with all of MHC's Preservation Restrictions, covers both the exterior and interior of the building.

The Ayer Mansion is architecturally significant as one of only three extant interiors designed by Louis Comfort Tiffany, and the only one in situ where Tiffany worked with the architect to fully integrate his designs into the building. The exterior of the Classical Revival style rowhouse includes mosaic panels designed by Tiffany, although four of them were installed in 2014 as reproductions of the remaining original three. Stained glass windows on the façade have also been removed for preservation.

Inside, much of Tiffany's work was focused on the public spaces on the lower levels of the house; the upper stories, for only the Ayer family and staff, were more

restrained and did not include Tiffany pieces. These upper levels have also been more heavily altered than the Tiffany spaces.

The tile and marble entry vestibule leads into the marble hall, the house's main receiving space with access to the first floor parlor and drawing room. The walls feature marble wainscoting with painted walls shellacked to mimic marble. Mosaic tiling accents the mantelpiece on the west wall as well as the archways leading to the neighboring rooms. The marble hall is lit by the bottom globe of a five-stage chandelier that runs through the house's main elliptical stairway on the second through fifth floors.

On the east wall across from the fireplace a semicircular set of stairs leads up under a proscenium arch to the second floor. A tromp l'oeil mosaic at the stair landing mimics Tuscan or Roman columns, with the stairs splitting and rising to the second floor to either side of the mosaic. The stairway, which only rises from the first to second floor, is lit by a stained glass lay light that was restored in 2003.

At the second floor and above, an elliptical staircase along the west wall traverses all the floors, lit by a multi-level chandelier that extends from a skylight down to the marble hall room. The skylight was originally another stained glass panel but has been lost since its installation.

On the second floor, the south room overlooking Commonwealth Ave. is a space identified in early documents as a library. The ceiling has been altered by the installation of a drop ceiling while the original floor is still in place but covered by carpeting. An elaborate frieze surrounds the room with wood carvings of the bookplates of famous men.

Throughout the rest of the house, the remaining spaces have been altered. However, as noted earlier, contemporary documentation of the house suggested that Tiffany only worked on the lower levels and did not decorate much in the family's private spaces on floors three, four, and five.

The Ayer Mansion was designed for Frederick Ayer and his second wife, Ellen Barrows Banning. Ayer had established a successful patent medicine business with his brother and had investments in the textile industry. The couple had traveled throughout Europe, Africa, and Asia during the 1890s, exposing them to different forms of architecture and design. They purchased three lots on Commonwealth Ave. in 1899 and hired architect Alfred J. Manning to design the house and Louis Comfort Tiffany to decorate the interior.

The Ayers owned the house until their deaths in 1918, after which it transitioned through a series of commercial owners. It was acquired by the organization later known as the Trimount Foundation in 1964, which joined it with the neighboring building to the west in the 1970s and established the larger complex as a female dormitory. Trimount owned the property until 2021, when the Ayer Mansion and the neighboring building were sold to an LLC. Since 1998, Trimount has worked with the group the Campaign for the Ayer Mansion to restore and preserve the building. This group is now dissolving as the building is in private ownership.

Because of its significance as the only remaining in situ integral decoration of an interior by Louis Comfort Tiffany and its associations with local industrialist and art collector Frederick Ayer, BLC staff recommended that the Frederick Ayer Mansion Interior be designated as a Boston Landmark.

MHC staff recommends acknowledging receipt of the Landmark Study Report for the Frederick Ayer Mansion Interior and providing the following advisory recommendations and comments:

The Massachusetts Historical Commission concurs with the recommendations of the Boston Landmarks Commission staff.

### **Boston (Dorchester) Howe-Kingsley House**

Ms. Doherty then presented the **Howe-Kingsley House** in **Dorchester**. Due to the high degree of material integrity, this designation will include both the exterior as well as several interior features. Like the Ayer Mansion, the BLC voted and approved the designation the previous evening

The house is located at 16 Howe Street in Dorchester. The proposed landmark includes the lot with the house as well as a small, vacant, unbuildable lot behind it in common ownership.

The house sits northwest of Dorchester's Meetinghouse Hill, an early node of European settlement in Dorchester. However, the only property on Meetinghouse Hill with a designation is First Parish Church in Dorchester, on which the MHC holds a preservation restriction.

Northeast of the house is the William Monroe Trotter House, listed individually on the National Register of Historic Places and declared a National Historic Landmark in 1976, and made a Boston Landmark the following year. To the northwest of the

proposed landmark is the Columbia Road-Bellevue Street Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2017. Further to the east of the house, across Interstate 93, is the Savin Hill Historic District, listed on the National Register in 2003.

The other houses on Howe Street, a dead-end street, are primarily Queen Anne style multi-family buildings from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, reflective of the subdivision of the Howe-Kingsley House property at that time. They include a triple decker immediately to the west of the Howe-Kingsley House.

The Howe-Kingsley House is now difficult to see from the street due to the overgrowth of surrounding trees. It is a two-and-one-half story gabled house, although the roof extends to cover the half and upper full story, leaving only the first floor full-height.

Notably, the entryway is in the northeast gable end of the house, sited perpendicular to the street. The house also sits slightly skewed in its orientation to the street, evidence of its construction before Howe Street was laid out.

The house has simple, vernacular Greek Revival details, such as a cornice return and plain cornerboards. The windows throughout are six-over-six wood sash, likely original to the building's construction around 1836. They are protected by exterior storm windows, and the windows on the rear of the house retain their original shutter hardware. The house also has two chimneys projecting from the ridge line and serving multiple rooms on each side of the house.

The house historically had an ell extending from the southwest, or rear, gable end. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century it was altered and reduced in size to construct the house next door, leaving a smaller ell behind that extends the current kitchen space.

Inside, the house retains a significant amount of finish that appears to date to its 1830s construction. This includes horsehair plaster, large sections of wallpaper, wide plank floors, and fireplace mantels in most of the rooms, although several of the fireplaces have since been blocked. All of the fireplaces, except the kitchen which is a replacement, are typical of the transitional Federal-Greek Revival period, with those on the first floor more ornate than those on the second floor, representative of the difference between public and private spaces.

Many of the significant historic interior finishes will be protected by the interior landmark designation, such as the fireplaces and mantelpieces, the flooring and trim, the staircase, and the horsehair plaster walls and ceilings.

As noted earlier, the Howe-Kingsley House is sited northwest of Dorchester's Meetinghouse Hill, an early node of European settlement dating to the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. Dorchester itself was primarily farmland until the arrival of the railroad in the 19<sup>th</sup> century allowed residential development to encroach from Boston proper.

The Howe-Kingsley House was constructed for Nahum and Hannah Bragg around 1836. The previous year, Nahum had acquired over two acres of land in the area; the deed did not mention buildings. Following his death in 1837, the settlement of his estate included a house, which was acquired by his widow Hannah.

In 1842, Hannah Bragg conveyed the property to Samuel Barnett Howe, who owned a boot and shoe company located in Alabama. Due to his business being elsewhere, he conveyed the property to his father, Leonard Howe, a gardener.

Following his death, Leonard Howe's property was subdivided into seven lots for his children, with the 1883 subdivision plan showing a layout for Howe Street, named for the family. Through the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, various Howe children sold or developed their lots, typical of the transition from farmland to residential community found throughout Dorchester during this period.

Howe family members owned the Howe-Kingsley House until 1948, when it was conveyed to Lowell and Charlotte Lindenman Kingsley, who owned the property until 2017.

Lowell's mother, Edith Halliday Kingsley, and Helen Loud, founded the Kingsley School in Back Bay in 1938. The school is considered to be one of the first special education schools in the country, known for the remedial reading education it provided to students.

The same year the Kingsley's purchased the house, Lowell Kingsley became headmaster of the school, a position he held until he retired in 1985. The couple met as education students while at Boston University. Charlotte Lindenman Kingsley worked as a teacher at the school throughout her career. The school has since merged with a Montessori school but is still located in Back Bay.

An Article 85 application, Boston's demolition delay review, was submitted for the house in 2018 but withdrawn in 2020. A petition to landmark the house was submitted to the BLC in May of 2020, and accepted by the BLC the following month.

Because of its significance as an early 19<sup>th</sup> century farmhouse representative of Dorchester's early agricultural history, its display of transitional Federal-Greek Revival features and high degree of material integrity, and its association with the Kingsley family and their promotion of special education, BLC staff recommended that the Howe-Kingsley House be designated as a Boston Landmark.

MHC staff recommends acknowledging receipt of the Landmark Study Report for the Howe-Kingsley House and providing the following advisory recommendations and comments:

The Massachusetts Historical Commission concurs with the recommendations of the Boston Landmarks Commission staff.

### **City of Springfield, Federal Square-Upper State Street Local Historic District**

Ms. Doherty then presented the **Federal Square-Upper State Street Local Historic District in Springfield**, which would be the City's 17<sup>th</sup> local historic district.

The proposed district covers 19 properties primarily located along the south side of State Street just east of the city's downtown core. The large property on the north side of State Street is the former Springfield Armory site, now split in ownership between the federal and state governments.

The proposed district lies amidst several other designated districts and properties, and four of the properties proposed for the district are already listed on the National Register or are a single-property local historic district.

As noted the armory site sits across State Street from the proposed district. It was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1960 and listed on the National Register in 1966. An additional section of the armory lying to the northeast of the proposed district was listed on the National Register in 2019 as the Federal Square Historic District.

To the northwest is the Quadrangle-Mattoon Historic District, designated a local historic district in 1972, and listed in the National Register in 1974, with the National Register district expanded in 2000.

To the southwest of the proposed district across School Street lies the Lower Maple Street Local Historic District, designated in 2015. And finally, to the south is the Ridgewood Local Historic District, designated in 1977.

The buildings included in the proposed district are the primary commercial and institutional buildings along this stretch of State Street that have not been previously designated. In the blocks immediately away from State Street, the neighborhoods transition first to early 20<sup>th</sup> century apartment blocks, and then to single- and multi-family wood frame dwellings. The properties not fronting on State Street are distinctly different in character than those on State Street. And to the east of the district, demolition and new construction has removed what may have been historic buildings.

Because of its commercial, institutional, and large multi-family focus, many of the buildings in the district are high-style examples of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century styles of masonry or brick construction. They include popular styles such as the Classical and English Revivals, with an interesting Tudor style single-family dwelling remaining amidst the larger buildings. The commercial blocks are simpler, often with designs executed solely in brick, and many have alterations to their storefronts.

The Springfield Armory created a node of development beginning in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century that spurred growth along the length of State Street nearby. While the area was initially more of a mix of residential and commercial uses, by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century more institutional uses, such as churches, were developed. The early 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the proposed district transition to a more fully commercial and institutional neighborhood.

In addition to the several commercial blocks in the proposed district the remainder of the buildings were constructed for residential and institutional purposes. Most of them still retain their original use or have been transitioned to a new institutional use.

There are a few large multi-family residential buildings from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as a group of seven connected buildings constructed between 1901 and 1906 forming an apartment complex, and the Hotel Rainville on Byers Street, constructed in 1916. Both are still residential buildings.

The Cynthia Wesson Memorial Hospital Building was funded by Daniel Wesson, co-founder of Smith & Wesson, and named after his wife. The hospital was

originally located in another building nearby, but in 1904 the couple had this 100-bed facility constructed on High Street, a block over from State Street. It remains in use by Baystate Medical Center.

Both the Elks and the Masons constructed buildings on State Street, the Elks in 1914-1916 and the Masons ten years later. The Elks building is now owned by the City while the Masonic Temple is now the Springfield Conservatory of Arts.

The City constructed the High School of Commerce fronting on State Street between 1913 and 1915.

And the Federal government expanded its holdings in the area in 1924 with the construction of the Federal Land Bank of Springfield. One of a handful of federal land bank buildings constructed across the country, this building served the first district, covering the six New England states, New York, and New Jersey. The building is currently vacant and is proposed for redevelopment.

MHC staff recommends acknowledging receipt of the Preliminary Study Report for the Federal Square-Upper State Street Local Historic District and providing the following advisory recommendations and comments:

The Massachusetts Historical Commission encourages the City of Springfield to establish the Federal Square-Upper State Street Local Historic District.

Chairman Rosenberry then called for a MOTION TO ACCEPT the MHC staff recommendations on the Landmark Study Report for the **Frederick Ayer Mansion Interior in Boston (Back Bay)**. A MOTION was made by Commissioner Friary and SECONDED by Commissioner Pride. The Chair called for questions or comments from the commission. Hearing none, he called for questions or comments from the public. Hearing none, he moved the motion. The motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chairman Rosenberry then called for a MOTION TO ACCEPT the MHC staff recommendations on the Preliminary Study Report for the **Howe-Kingsley House in Boston (Dorchester)**. A MOTION was made by Commissioner Kleespies and SECONDED by Commissioner DeWitt. The chairman called for questions or comments from the commission. Hearing none, he called for questions or

comments from the public. Hearing none, he moved the motion. The motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chairman Rosenberry then called for a MOTION TO ACCEPT the MHC staff recommendations on the Preliminary Study Report for the **Federal Square-Upper State Street Local Historic District in Springfield**. A MOTION was made by Commissioner McDowell and SECONDED by Commissioner Friary. The chairman called for questions or comments from the commission. The Chair recognized Commissioner Pride, who asked if any letters of objection were received from the local proposed district. The Chair recognized Ms. Doherty who said that MHC has not received any letters from the district. The chairman then called for questions or comments from the public. Hearing none, he moved the motion. The motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

This concluded the voting.

The Chairman then called for any other new business, Hearing none, he called for a MOTION to adjourn. A MOTION was made by Commissioner Friary and SECONDED by Commissioner DeWitt. The MOTION CARRIED, and the meeting adjourned at 2:04pm.

#### Commissioners Present

John Rosenberry

Charles Sullivan

Dennis DeWitt

Michael McDowell

Anne Pride

Gina Perille

Susan Ceccacci

Donald Friary

Simone Early

Suanna Selby Crowley

Mark Wilson

Ashley Stolba

Gavin Kleespies

Staff Present

Brona Simon

Jennifer Doherty

Michael Steinitz

Ben Haley

Elizabeth Sherva

Joshua Dorin

Peter Stott

Paul Holtz

Nancy Alexson

Shari Perry-Wallace

Liz King

A TRUE COPY ATTEST

Respectfully submitted,

Shirley Brown