



**LEGISLATION AND PRESERVATION TOOLS SUBCOMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES**

Boston City Hall Boston, MA, 02201  
Held virtually via Zoom

**SEPTEMBER 10, 2024**

**Commissioners Present:** *Amanda Zettel, Alison Frazee, Chelsea Blanchard, Cyerrah Walker, Margaret Dyson, Lydia Lowe*

**Commissioners Absent:** *Michael Creasey, Chief of EEOS Cabinet, Senator Mike Rush, Kenzie Bok, Rebecca Tomasovic, Jean Luc Pierite, Lynn Smiledge*

**Staff Present:** *Genesis Pimentel, Commemoration Commission Manager*

Public: Alison Pultinas

Press: Alison Pultinas

A full recording of the meeting is available on [boston.gov/commemoration-commission](https://boston.gov/commemoration-commission)

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**SESSION BEGINS - 2:00 PM**

**I. WELCOME**

- a. Commemoration Commission Manager Genesis Pimentel welcomed attendees.

**II. ORDER OF BUSINESS**

- a. Meeting minutes were approved.

**III. ARTICLE 80 + SQUARES & STREETS UPDATE**

- a. Genesis Pimentel provided an update on the fact that the Planning Department was working on a document for Article 80 Modernization and shared the document with Historic Preservation to comment. She discussed the feedback that Historic Preservation gave the Planning Department.
- b. Commissioner Chelsea Blanchard discussed reviewing these documents with the belief the OHP was going to be included in Planning Staff.
- c. Chair Alison Frazee asked what OHP learned about CATs and when the public will be able to see the Article 80 document. Chair Frazee asked Blanchard if she anticipated that OHP staff will serve in a role similar to Urban Design where one staff member is assigned to every project for review.



- i. Commissioner Blanchard said that this was a good question, as she currently believes that there may have to be a historic or cultural resource component.
        - ii. Chair Frazee stated that there needs to be a guarantee that there will always be preservation-minded people in the review process for every appropriate project.
  - d. The group began discussing Squares and Streets.
    - i. Squares and Streets stated that they are doing Historical Context Studies that are meant to describe socioeconomic histories of the area and how the built environment evolved in response as well as to identify key historic buildings and areas that are both extant and non-extant. These studies will form the basis of a future update to area forms.
      1. Commissioner Blanchard stated that actual survey work will not be done because Squares and Streets has identified that this undertaking would take too long and be too expensive.
  - e. Chair Frazee asked about whether CATs will be geographical and whether there would be people represented from multiple fields including preservation, and Pimentel confirmed that this would be the case.
  - f. Commissioner Amanda Zettel asked if OHP was about to review the Historical Context Study RFP, to which Commissioner Blanchard responded that this was not the case.
  - g. Commissioner Zettel suggested that the subcommittee make comments on the Historical Context Studies and what comes out of them.
  - h. Chair Frazee stated that the Commission must continue to push for a comprehensive resource survey, and for Article 80 to be a climate action tool.
  - i. [Public Comment](#)

#### IV. ARTICLE 85 WORKING SESSION

- a. Chair Frazee stated that the goal is to make formal recommendations on Article 80, Article 85, and other things such as demolition by neglect. She stated that the Article 85 working group will be working on some draft language for people to respond to, to recommend that everything discussed is analyzed at the beginning of Article 80 and made public before the project is deep into the process. She added that most projects don't consider reuse and most don't present alternatives until Article 85, and still they do not give a real effort to consider alternatives.
- b. Commissioner Margaret Dyson asked if there are good models from other cities of developers doing alternative analysis as a precedent example. She also



discussed how the National Trust used to have a network of statewide and local preservation nonprofits, and whether they might have experiences they could share with the zoning code language to go with it.

- c. Commissioner Blanchard stated that projects taken on by Historic Boston Inc. are the most successful examples she knows of.
- d. Commissioner Dyson asked about commercial developers doing the kind of alternative analysis Chair Frazee is envisioning, and how to get into the conversation early enough and if there are good models from other communities where developers have this obligation, since Boston does not really use the zoning code to identify a community's needs and align development with those and Boston's overall goals.
- e. Chair Frazee stated that she thinks that the goal of Squares and Streets is to hypothetically work with communities to identify places in neighborhoods to sort by housing, density, height limit, but that it does not seem to address existing buildings and their reuse or upgrading.
- f. Commissioner Zettel discussed how PLAN Charlestown added a clause that in order for A80 projects to be approved in specific areas, they must have a preservation component included.
- g. Chair Frazee stated that if Article 85 isn't also seen as a climate action tool, a lot of buildings will be lost and demolition will continue to become waste in landfills. She added that there is a need for facts and other parameters to analyze the benefit or cost of demolition to the City.
- h. Commissioner Dyson stated that the City Council is looking into addressing displacement and the impact it has on community and environment, and she stated that preservation impact might be part of the same analysis.

## V. DISCUSSION ON FUTURE MEETING TOPICS

- a. Genesis Pimentel stated that a future meeting topic should be cultural districts.
  - i. Chair Lydia Lowe agreed and asked how cultural assets can become part of historic districts and what is considered historic. She continued by agreeing that preservation is not just buildings, but that it addresses displacement, environmental impact, and historic preservation impact. It is important for something like the fair housing analysis to exist for displacement not just for an individual person but a whole community.
  - ii. Genesis Pimentel flagged that it will be important to think through how best to engage communities when using tools like cultural asset mapping because those infrastructures can analyze something and miss something that is considered valuable and historic to a community. She added that



questions that must be asked are: What does Boston consider historical? What does it consider cultural? What's the difference and why?

- iii. Chair Lowe stated that people in Chinatown are always engaging in this conversation, so she would love to invite people when this is on the agenda. She clarified that Chinatown stated to MAPC immediately that their cultural plan is not just about the arts but about having their cultural community-owned businesses and being able to hear people speaking their homeland's dialects in the streets.
  - iv. Commissioner Zettel stated that it is important to include the fact that older buildings house mom and pop shops, and new buildings lose that community value by displacing that business.
  - v. Commissioner Blanchard stated that CPA is doing a good job of recognizing cultural heritage.
- b. Commissioners discussed needing a more comprehensive and inclusive definition of what is historic that isn't just based on the National Register of the Secretary of the Interior.
  - c. Chair Frazee highlighted that sometimes developers will buy a property and let it fall apart and sit vacant for 5 years and then claim it has no cultural or historic significance, when they must look at the decade past and how it contributed then. She also discussed how the Greater Ashmont Main Street self-identified important places and categorized them as red, yellow, and green for demolition purposes.

## **VI. PUBLIC COMMENT**

- a. Alison Pultinas commented that, based on comments made around developers wanting to demolish a home in Field's Corner, that Squares and Streets and what is pushed for development reflects an equity and class divide issue that is embedded in City Hall's thinking around downtown neighborhoods being historic while Squares and Streets locations don't meet that standard.

## **VII. ADJOURNMENT - 3:22 PM**

- a. Chair Frazee motioned to adjourn the meeting.
- b. Chair Lowe seconded.