

MSLD Study Committee Notes #12

April 8, 2026, 6:30 pm

Zoom <https://www.zoomgov.com/j/1619351920>

Study Committee Attendees:

Ameeth Deenanath
Crystal Galvin
Jeffrey Gonyeau
Julie Hall
Kirsten Hoffman
Nancy Johnsen (Chair)
Lindsey Mac-Jones
Ian Urquhart

Absent:

Intiya Ambrogi Isaza
Senam Kumahia
Linda Neshamkin
Fadi Samaha

Staff:

Gabriela Amore
Elizabeth Sherva
Jennifer Gaugler

Members of the Public:

Bee
Christopher R. Hennessy
Claire Wilkins
Elaine Hennessy
Kathleen McVey
Mary's iPhone
Maureen Hennessy
Claire Wilkins
Diane Valle
Johanna's iPhone

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

I. REVIEW AND VOTE ON MINUTES FROM THE MARCH 25, 2026 PUBLIC MEETING

- A. **Ameeth** motions to approve meeting minutes, **Kirsten** seconds the motion. Meeting minutes approved unanimously.

II. PUBLIC FEEDBACK SINCE LAST MEETING

- A. Feedback received by staff:
 1. **Gabby** reports no specific feedback.
- B. Feedback received by study committee members:
 1. None reported.

III. REVIEW PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT EVENT PLAN

- A. Planning to attend: **Ameeth, Jeff, Julie, Lindsey, Ian, Nancy**.
- B. **Nancy** hopes that study committee members can commit to spreading the word about the event to their own networks.
- C. **Julie**: Are there standards
 1. **Elizabeth**: Yes, we've issued the required public notice. The event is not for deliberation but for providing information to the public.

IV. STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

- A. Roof decks:
 1. **Ian**: It seems generally okay for a roof deck, including the platform base, to be visible from the street.
 2. **Jeff**: Generally supports allowing roof decks if there is a setback on the front and (where side of building is visible) the side.

- a) **Lindsey:** Echoes what Jeff said about setbacks on all sides where applicable.
 - 3. **Lindsey:** Being able to see a simple railing from a public way is fine. However, seeing exposed structure of the deck has more of a detrimental effect.
 - 4. **Nancy:** Agrees with Jeff on setbacks on front and sides. In terms of materials, the thin metal black railing shown here [on slide] blends in well. Thick white plastic or wood slats don't fit in with the neighborhood as well. Also agrees with Lindsey that seeing the structure/decking is not preferable.
 - 5. Question from **Elizabeth** - are you interested in roof decks being "minimally visible" or "not visible" from a public way?
 - a) **Nancy:** Depends on how "minimally visible" is defined. Not interested in banning roof decks.
 - b) **Jeff:** We don't want the setback to be so much that people can't have functional roof decks. Maybe look at typical building dimensions and set the setback at 2-3 feet, if that allows for reasonable-size roof decks. Is it possible to set a minimum setback of 2 feet, and then address on a case-by-case basis for highly visible elevations? If sidewall of building is highly visible then maybe a minimum setback applies on all sides, but if sidewall is not visible, then no minimum.
- B. Rooftop additions:
- 1. **Julie:** Roof additions shouldn't block views of the Monument if possible.
 - 2. **Nancy:** Large setback of the rooftop addition shown here [on slide] and minimal railing helps decrease the impact of this rooftop addition.
 - 3. **Jeff:** Sometimes the inclination is to embellish something to make it feel contextual, when it can actually be less intrusive to keep it minimal/slender. Black painted metal can also require less maintenance than wood.
 - 4. **Nancy:** Has observed cupolas installed in the neighborhood as a headhouse for roof access.
 - a) **Gabby:** Notes that non-original features can be defined as a later contributing feature.
 - 5. **Jeff:** It can be good to give people the opportunity to add square footage through the addition of dormers. Flexibility to add dormers can be beneficial and has already happened in the neighborhood historically.
 - a) **Jen:** We also see people infill between dormers. How does committee feel about that?
 - b) **Nancy:** It's good to think about how people can add living space without disturbing the visual integrity of the architecture.
- C. Chimneys:
- 1. **Jeff:** Chimneys are a character-defining feature. Tearing them down for no reason [other than minimizing maintenance] is unfortunate. Preserving existing historic chimneys that are architectural features is preferred. Unused chimneys can be capped to prevent water infiltration. Altering or removing chimneys for good reason (such as need to add more living space) could be allowed, but the district standards could encourage preservation of the exterior portion of the chimney while reclaiming space on the interior where possible.
 - 2. **Crystal:** Would like to see flexibility as much as possible.
- D. Cornices:
- 1. **Jeff:** These are definitely character-defining features. If you have one that is intact, it should be preserved. If it's missing and there's a model in the neighborhood to base it on, you should base it on that. Feels strongly that these are important.

V. REVIEW PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT EVENT PLAN

A. Gabby:

1. Study committee members: 5:30 pm arrival to help prep.
2. Event materials will be distributed to Study Committee members before the weekend to become familiar with the programming.
3. Event has been posted as a public notice.
4. Programming:
 - a) Status update presentation
 - b) Q&A
 - c) Engagement activities:
 - (1) What building elements you want to see regulated?
 - (2) Review of possible jurisdiction vantage points (ex. visible from a public way, etc.)
 - (a) Nancy would like this to have photos
 - (3) Map station regarding the potential boundaries
5. **Elizabeth:** We also are preparing a handout that will include the definition of a Landmark district, a map, a graphic with steps in the designation process, what generally would and wouldn't be regulated, and a graphic of the design review application process.

B. Julie: It might be a nice idea to regroup before the event to address any questions/concerns

1. **Gabby:** We can't violate OML, but feel free to reach out individually!
 - a) **Nancy:** Can you send response to everybody if there are questions?
 - (1) **Staff:** Yes!

C. Julie: How are we publicizing? Patriot-Bridge?

1. **Elizabeth:** We don't have budget for a newspaper ad. We have done printed flyers, social media, City event post, City public notice. Will be reaching out to IGR. Has alerted Planning and ONS.
 - a) **Nancy:** If we had known earlier there was no budget for the ad, we could have tried to talk to the Patriot-Bridge about printing it for free.
2. **Julie:** Maybe we talk to Sioux about running an ad for free or an editorial for the next community event. And we should flyer community places.
 - a) **Nancy:** Flyered 148 buildings personally. Has only a handful left to give out. Has been informed that there is no budget for more printed flyers. Hopes that committee members on the call can share the digital flyer with their own networks.
3. **Crystal:** Have we reached out to the Patriot-Bridge to ask them to cover the event?
 - a) **Staff:** That is a good idea, we will do that.

D. Nancy: Are you picturing committee members standing at the different activities?

1. **Gabby:** Most of the activities will be designed to be self-guided but it's a good idea to have people assigned to different stations.
 - a) **Elizabeth:** We will send out a sign-up sheet.

E. Lindsey: We talked about handing out individual maps and have people draw a boundary where they think it should go. The boundary seems like a hot-button issue.

1. **Staff:** We will think about how we could do that. Could still have the large map for reference and feedback could be given on individual maps.

F. Jeff: There are always going to be people who express that public notice is inadequate. At the community event, we can ask people: where would have been helpful to hear about this?

VI. STAFF UPDATES

- A. **Gabby:** We have had a number of constituents in Charlestown reach out to us with concern about some work going on in the neighborhood at 5 Putnam Street. This property falls within the potential Protection Area. We have worked with Planning and ISD to remediate the situation. The constituents knew about the work of the MSLD study committee and reached out because of their awareness.
- B. **Elizabeth:** Presents the Application Timeline graphic which shows the design review process.
 - 1. The projects going through this process in the proposed Monument Square Landmark District would be reviewed by the Boston Landmarks Commission. The Commission consists of 9 members and 9 alternates who live in the City of Boston and are appointed by the Mayor. Represent various groups as dictated by our enabling legislation.
 - 2. Study committee members **Jeff Gonyeau, Lindsey MacJones, and Kirsten Hoffman** sit on the Landmarks Commission.
 - 3. Charlestown won't be getting its own District Commission. It is hard to get Commissions established for smaller districts; there are often quorum issues, often due to recusals from people who are invested in the neighborhood through other organizations.
 - a) **Nancy:** Are there other districts that are just reviewed by the Landmarks Commission?
 - (1) **Elizabeth:** Not at this time, but there are some new districts in the queue for which this will be the strategy (going to the BLC).
 - b) **Lindsey:** Does the Charlestown Preservation Society review board or committee meet regularly? They could be like a pre-made District Commission?
 - (1) **Elizabeth:** We do have to meet certain parameters that are required by our enabling legislation. A new Commission would also require staff support.
 - (2) **Nancy:** Projects are required to go to their committee but they don't have actual power for design review.
 - c) **Julie:** Would like to understand more about the process of setting up a Commission and the design review process.
 - (1) **Nancy:** Agrees, would like more information on how applications are reviewed and how the Commissions work.
 - (2) **Staff can work on preparing more information.**
 - d) **Gabby:** It is also hard to establish quorum because the existing Commissioners are already volunteering on multiple commissions.

VII. PUBLIC COMMENTS

- A. **Claire Wilkins:** The flyer in my hallway was the first time I've received notice about this. Committee members need to listen to the opinions of the people who live here.
 - 1. **Nancy:** Clarifies that this is a working committee meeting and not a public hearing. The event next week is a public engagement event.
 - 2. **Jennifer:** Let's consider adding clarification to the public notices.
- B. **Johanna Hynes:** Agrees with Claire's points. Advocates for more notice, including notice in the paper. Would like to know who in ONS staff talked to.
- C. **Frank Hennessy:** It would be helpful to produce a list of definitions. Ex. "regulate," which has a specific legal meaning. "Original." Also, note that there are going to be

situations where things might run counter to your definition of “original” - ex. accessibility ramps, life-safety issues.

- D. **Howard Hall:** I see a lot of people volunteering and taking time away from their family to do this and they are not being appreciated. Public outreach should be carried out within reason, and it sounds like that is the case here. This process should be cooperative, not combative.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT: 8:30 PM

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