

**City of South Portland  
Arts and Historic Preservation Committee Meeting  
Minutes for Wednesday, February 11**

**Present:** Amanda Larsen, Jane Batzell, Scott Whitaker, Kathy DiPhilippo, Susan Robbins, Tex Huaser. **Absent:** James Norton.

**NOTE:** Following the meeting, it was observed that John Schwartzman is listed online as a member of this committee and had not been receiving notifications of meetings. For this reason, although he did not attend the February 11 meeting, it does not count as an official absence.

Jessica Skwire Routhier called the meeting to order at 8 a.m.

**1. Committee composition and oversight**

**A. Discuss process for replacing Benita Russo.** Benita Russo (from District Two) has resigned from the committee, citing family obligations, so we need to replace her in order to complete the committee. Tex explained that the process for adding new members to the committee begins with potential candidates filling out an online application. He believes that Benita's replacement will need to be from District Two and will need to be appointed formally by the Councilor from that district, Melissa Linscott. Kathy observed that if we establish a Facebook page for the AHPC, we could post an announcement there that we are looking for a new committee member. All agreed that this was a good idea, and Tex confirmed that it would be OK from the city's perspective to create a committee Facebook page. Tex also offered to post the committee opening on the South Portland Community Newsletter.

**NOTE:** After the meeting, James Norton also resigned from the committee, stating concerns about the time commitment involved, so we are now seeking to replace two committee members from District Two.

**B. Appointment of vice chair.** Kathy moved to designate Scott Whitaker as Vice Chair of the committee; Amanda seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

**C. Appointment of minute-taker.** Kathy moved to designate Susan Robbins as the Secretary of the committee; Scott seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Jessica indicated that she would take the minutes for the February 11 meeting, creating a template for Susan to follow for subsequent meetings.

**D. Review of attendance requirements.** Jessica reviewed the attendance requirements for the committee as provided by the City Clerk's office. The city charter states that a vacancy on the committee (in other words, the removal of a committee member) shall be created by the "failure of a member to attend four (4) consecutive regular meetings or failure of a member to attend at least seventy-five (75) per cent of all meetings during the preceding twelve-month period, subject to the provisions of section 2-122." Tex added that while this is true, there is a waiver procedure for exceptional circumstances, so

that a committee member may remain in place despite absences that the committee agrees are excused.

**E. Define role and responsibilities of appointed positions.** Jessica proposed the roles of committee officers as following: the Chair will set the agenda for meetings, lead the meetings, and act as the primary contact with the City; the Vice Chair will perform those duties if and when the Chair is not able to do so; and the Secretary will take minutes at each meeting and will distribute minutes to the Committee members and the City Clerk's office. There was general agreement that these roles confirm the group's expectations for committee officers.

**2. Develop regular meeting schedule.** After some conversation, the group agreed that it would meet on the second Wednesday of each month at 8 a.m., in the Planning Department conference room on Ocean Street (as long as the Planning Department offices remain in this location). For the time being—because of limitations to Jessica's schedule—meetings will last only one hour. The group agreed that additional meetings may be schedule around these monthly meetings as necessary and that in the future meetings may go as late as 9:30 a.m. if warranted.

**3. Discuss content and use of committee page on city website. Identify a point person within the committee for updates or content.** The committee looked at its current webpage on the City of South Portland's site—it includes the committee charter, a committee list, and a tab for agendas and minutes. Tex confirmed that he has been trained to use the webpage and can make changes as necessary; he can make sure that the meeting schedule, agendas, and minutes remain updated (though they should also be cc'd to Karen Morrill and Sue Moody in the Clerk's office). Jessica also suggested that perhaps the website might include links to resources and news stories that are relevant to the committee's mission; after some conversation it was agreed that a list of resources (for instance, Greater Portland Landmarks and South Portland Historical Society) would be a useful thing to include on our webpage (especially for those residents who aren't on Facebook), but that news items and clippings are more appropriate for social media. Scott agreed to work on the list of resources. Tex also noted that there is a "current notices" feature on the landing page of the website that we may be able to use for special announcements to the public.

**4. Background from Jane on Greater Portland Landmarks' involvement in forming the committee. GPL should define their vision and or expectations for the committee.** Jane explained that GPL takes seriously their name of "Greater" Portland Landmarks, and considers that their role is as an educational leader and advocate for historic preservation throughout this area, including South Portland. She explained that including South Portland on the 2013 "Places in Peril" list was meant to celebrate the wealth of historic material here and to make people aware that there were no protections in place. Jane added that the City of South Portland had already been planning to form a public art committee when this conversation was taking place, and so the decision was made for a new committee to take on both roles: public art and historic preservation. Some work is already underway—GPL and the South Portland Historical Society, with the help of some grant funding, have undertaken a survey of South Portland's historic structures and have already completed 200-some

properties, beginning with the Willard neighborhood. (Christopher Closs is acting as a paid consultant.) Jane concluded by stating that GPL is here to help the committee in its efforts, and that they see a large part of that as education and advocacy—preserving vernacular architecture and making the city livable.

Jane also noted that Christopher Closs will be speaking about historic preservation and energy efficiency at the Betsy Ross House on February 12 at 7 p.m.

As part of this conversation, Jessica noted that a recent article in the Current announced the formation of the Arts & Historic Preservation Committee.

Several committee members observed that there are strong neighborhood associations in Ferry Village, Willard Beach, and Thornton Heights, and that they are natural allies. Scott offered to speak to Christopher Closs about Ferry Village.

Tex observed that since the 2013 “Places in Peril” list came out, some protections have been put in place to protect historic structures in South Portland through the planning process. He showed the current language to the committee, which gives some oversight power to GPL and the South Portland Historical Society. Jessica observed that this committee should also have oversight, and Tex agreed but cautioned that this is zoning language and is no small matter to change; therefore, we should wait until we know whether or not we will have other changes to recommend before we approach Planning about this addition.

**5. Discussion: conduct internal survey of priorities for committee.** Jessica said that as a committee we should have a conversation about what our priorities and our major initiatives should be, reminding everyone that we have a dual role of supporting public art as well as historic preservation. There was discussion of conducting an internal, online survey of committee members, but Scott also remarked that before we do that it might be good to begin a conversation about a mission statement. After some discussion, we agreed that we would schedule a special meeting of the committee for February 25 at 8 a.m.—so two weeks before our regular meeting time—with the sole agenda item of discussing a mission statement. To prepare for the meeting, each committee member should come up with some ideas or talking points that might be useful for a mission statement. We anticipate that a discussion about priorities—leading eventually to something like a strategic plan--will evolve from the mission statement discussion.

It was acknowledged that the process will take time, and that no one expects to finalize a mission statement or strategic plan in one meeting. Amanda observed that we’re a start-up, and it will take more time and energy in the beginning to get going.

**6. Other business.** There was no other business.

**7. Adjourn.** Jessica adjourned the meeting just after 9 a.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Jessica Routhier.

**Next meetings:**

- Wednesday, February 25, 8 a.m., Planning Department: Workshop meeting to begin drafting mission statement
- Wednesday, March 11, 8 a.m., Planning Department: Regular monthly meeting