

FLINT HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
March 5th, 2026

Commissioners Present:

Stephanie Wright, Chair
Kurt Neiswender, Vice-Chair
Justin Wetenhall
Beverly Davis
Samantha Farah
Megan McAdow

Staff Present:

Max Lester, Zoning Coordinator

Absent:

Cade Surface

ROLL CALL:

Chairperson Wright asked for roll call attendance, which was taken, and a quorum was present. The meeting was held in-person in the City Council Chambers as well as via Zoom as approved.

Megan McAdow, present
Beverly Davis, present
Michael Hurley, present
Kurt Neiswender, present

Stephanie Wright, present
Samantha Farah, present
Cade Surface, excused absence

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA:

Commissioner Davis made a motion to adopt the agenda as presented. Vice-Chairperson Neiswender seconded the motion. Chairperson Wright asked for a voice vote.

M/S – Davis/Neiswender

The motion carried via voice vote.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING:

Draft minutes for the meeting of February 5th, 2026, were presented.

Vice-Chairperson Neiswender made a motion to accept the minutes of February 5th, 2026, as presented. Commissioner Farah seconded the motion. Chairperson Wright asked for a voice vote. Commissioner Wetenhall abstained.

M/S – Neiswender/Farah

The motion carried via voice vote.

PUBLIC FORUM:

Chairperson Wright opened the floor for public comment.
No one spoke. Chairperson Wright closed the floor for public comment.

CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS/NOTICES TO PROCEED:

There were no applications for review.

OLD BUSINESS:

Resolution for Heather Burnash

Chairperson Wright discussed potential ways to proceed and asked Max if a resolution would dedicate a day for the person being recognized. Max said they were not aware of dedicating a day to an individual and that their understanding is this would be a standard resolution through City Council. Commissioner McAdow thanked Max for discussing this matter at the previous meeting. She noted that while she was only on the Commission with Heather for a couple of meetings, she wanted to recognize Heather's long tenure of service. Commissioner McAdow also noted that May 1st is a recognized day for preservation. She offered to complete the first draft of the language. Max said the City Attorney is supportive of this idea. Max also said that they need at least three weeks to get a resolution through City Administration before going to City Council. Chairperson Wright said she was not aware of the full process involved and asked generally if there are examples to draw from. Max said they have a template prepared such that each "whereas" statement can include something the Commission wants to recognize about Heather. Commissioner McAdow asked how others would feel about drafting a letter together that would be presented to Heather's family and read aloud in a meeting.

Meeting with State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Staff

Commissioner Surface spoke via Zoom on this matter, and his notes were shared with the Commission. Commissioner Surface said one highlight of the meeting was an openness to options based on the reality of changing demographics and the economic situation of the city. Today, the established districts have lost a significant number of historic assets. Some suggestions involved reevaluating the districts to determine if broadening the period of significance is appropriate to include other structures. Commissioner Surface stated that Teresa Gillotti from the Lank Bank was present and she shared that several homes in Civic Park that the HDC previously denied for demolition were purchased to be restored. Additionally, SHPO staff shared tools that are available such as trainings, statewide and national preservation networks, and document access. Vice-Chairperson Neiswender thanked Commissioner Surface for his notes and stated it was a good meeting.

Max noted some key discussion points. Max expressed relief when SHPO staff said that the issues that are present in Flint are not unique to the city. Another point of discussion is that some buildings may have aged into historic eligibility, and the City may want to explore if there are any recently eligible buildings that should be added. Max said they also discussed Civic Park, specifically the challenges with the cost of rehabilitation compared to the average value of homes in the neighborhood. For example, the district standards should typically require slate shingles for many of the homes. One potential idea was proposed to protect Civic Park with a conservation district or zoning district rather than the historic district. This could allow the city to preserve massing, size, and form within the neighborhood without needing to require specific historic materials that are too challenging to provide. Commissioner Farah asked if the HDC would review developments in that scenario or would it go to another body. Max said it would depend, if transitioning into a zoning district the HDC would do a study and make recommendations. The specific reviewing individual or body would depend on how it is set up. Max said their assumption is that the HDC would only review properties within historic districts. Chairperson Wright discussed prior examples of applications where allowances were made due to the difficulty and cost associated with using historic materials. Max agreed that it can be difficult when someone tries their best to maintain their property but still technically fall within the definition of demolition by neglect due to wider economic factors. Chairperson Wright and Commissioner Farah discussed areas that could potentially be considered historic and considered the

possibility of surveying these areas in the future. Commissioner Surface said his understanding is that the inventory surveys were completed prior to the creation of the Historic District Commission and that the values of the community were different at that time.

Commissioner Surface spoke about historic preservation tax credits that are available for owner-occupied homes. The recognition of a structure as local historic is important in the review and approval of those credits. According to SHPO staff these are not widely used. Commissioner Surface noted that the Commission has a say in what areas are designated historic and thus qualify for these tax credits.

Commissioner Farah asked if SHPO staff shared the resources needed to complete an inventory survey. Max said that the money that would be available to the HDC once the City is a Certified Local Government could be used to conduct surveys. Commissioner Surface said he has been involved in inventory surveys in other communities and there is a wide range of estimates that could be proposed depending on whether the work is reliant on volunteers, student researchers, professional firms, or doing the work in-house. Commissioner Farah noted recent work by staff to clarify district boundaries and legal definitions. She asked if funds could be used to further this work such as by hiring a GIS professional. Max confirmed, stating that one of their ideas is to use any available funds to hire a professional to convert the boundary descriptions in the ordinance to a more accurate map. Max said they believe their map is close to the actual boundaries, but they would like to have a professional do it with more accuracy. Commissioner McAdow asked if the pending items on the agenda are holding up the application process. Max confirmed, stating the City's historic district ordinance needs to be updated to be eligible to apply for the program.

Commissioner Farah asked if there was any discussion regarding communication tips with property owners that do not follow the development review process for historic districts. Max said there were not many tips or suggestions other than acknowledging that this is a common issue.

Max noted that Teresa offered to share a redacted version of a cultural resources report. She also shared a draft pamphlet that would be given to individuals purchasing properties in historic districts informing them of their responsibilities and provides the HDC's information. Max said that they shared the historic district boundary data with the Land bank for incorporation into their internal systems.

Commissioner Farah commented on scholarship opportunities for the Michigan Historic Preservation Network annual gathering and other potential training opportunities. She also spoke on Commissioner Surface's point of the homes that were purchased in Civic Park. Commissioner Farah asked if there was any more information regarding conservation districts such as how one might operate, and if this was a recommendation by SHPO staff or a potential option to consider. Max said they were making general suggestions of options to consider after they noted the challenges, especially in areas like Civic Park, where the Land Bank acquires vacant properties that have sat for decades but then may technically meet the standards of demolition by neglect. An alternative regulatory structure could still allow areas to maintain their overall character without needing to require cost-prohibitive materials. Vice-Chairperson Neiswender agreed, noting that many homes in historic districts need wood windows, wood siding, maintaining original details, etc. Max added that there is a point where the integrity of a historic district is lost. Vice-Chairperson Neiswender discussed utilizing Notices to Proceed for work that does not meet standards. Max stated they try to guide applicants to the appropriate application based on the specific request. Max added that Notice to Proceed language is technically not in the local ordinance at this time, only in the enabling State law.

Commissioner Wetenhall said he is happy to see that the HDC is open to an air of reasonability for residents who may not be able to afford full restoration of a property. Commissioner Wetenhall introduced himself, stating he has lived in Flint for twelve years, he currently serves as the Executive Director of the Whaley Historic House Museum, serves as President of the Board for the Stockton Historic House Museum, and is an all around history nerd.

By-Laws Update

Max stated the by-laws are currently pending review by the City Attorney.

Certified Local Government Program – SHPO – Draft Update to Article XIX. §2–141 through §2–161

Max stated the draft ordinance update is currently pending review by the City Attorney.

HDC 25-20 & 25-21

Max stated there are no updates available at this time for these cases due to the weather.

NEW BUSINESS:

Max said that Joshua Cambri no longer works for the City of Flint and that the HDC may not have a legal representative at regular meetings for some time. Commissioner McAdow asked if he was the only attorney for the City. Max answered that he was one of the assistant city attorneys, but there are staffing challenges in the Legal Department. Commissioner McAdow asked if requests by phone would help. Max said they do not believe there is anyone who could staff HDC meetings at this time.

Max added that Dalton Castle also no longer works for the City of Flint. Max noted that this will have some impact on the remaining Zoning Division staff's timelines and schedules.

Commissioner Wetenhall made a motion to adjourn.

Vice-Chairperson Neiswender seconded the motion.

ADJOURNMENT:

M/S – Wetenhall/Neiswender

The motion carried via voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:58 p.m.