



GARDNER HISTORICAL COMMISSION JANUARY 20, 2026 MEETING MINUTES

The monthly meeting of the Gardner Historical Commission was held on Tuesday, January 20, 2026 in the Mayor's Conference Room, City Hall, 95 Pleasant Street.

CALL TO ORDER AND ATTENDANCE

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m. by Commission Chair Chris Pera. Also in attendance were Commission members Alan Agnelli and Chuck LaHaye. Member Scott Huntoon was excused due to another obligation. Associate Members Steve Rockwood and Marcia White and residents Ottavio Canu, Heather Mount, and Nancy Brown were also in attendance. Mr. Agnelli, Commission Clerk, transcribed the Minutes.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF OPEN MEETING RECORDINGS

The Chair announced that any person may make a video or audio recording of an open session of a meeting, or may transmit the meeting through any medium, subject to reasonable requirements of the chair as to the number, placement and operation of equipment used so as not to interfere with the conduct of the meeting. Any person intending to make such recording shall notify the Chair forthwith. All documents and exhibits used or referenced at the meeting must be submitted in duplicate to the Chair, as they become part of the Meeting Minutes. No one informed the Chair of their intention to record the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETING(S)

On a motion by Mr. LaHaye and seconded by Mr. Agnelli, it was voted to accept the Minutes of the December 16, 2025 Meeting, as printed.

PUBLIC COMMENT AND PRESENTATIONS

Nancy Brown, a resident of Gardner, introduced herself and offered to volunteer for Commission activities, particularly cemetery head stone cleaning. She said that she has cleaned numerous stones in New York while a resident.

COMMUNICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE

309 Central Street – “The Gardner News Building”

Mr. Pera informed the Commissioners that a voice-mail message was received from a representative of the owner of 309 Central Street, the former *Gardner News* building, concerning loose/falling bricks on the easterly side of the building abutting the Parker Smoke Shop at 307 Central Street. Both Mr. Pera and Mr. Agnelli investigated the building and noted that a portion of the front of 309 Central and the entryway to 307 Central has been cordoned off by the Building Inspector for safety reasons.

Continuing, Mr. Pera stated that he and Mr. Agnelli met with the Mayor that afternoon and expressed to the Mayor the historic significance of the former *Gardner News* building, citing its inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places; its listing in the Massachusetts Cultural Resources Information System (“MACRIS”); and, listed in the West Gardner Square National Historic District. Both Mr. Pera and Mr. Agnelli relayed the Mayor's assurance that he and his Administration have been in contact with the owner and stressed the historical importance of the building and that it was recommended that the brickwork be restored to maintain its historic character.



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Mr. Pera added that there are no locally-imposed restrictions on the type of renovations that the owner may utilize.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Commissioner Appointments

Mr. Pera informed the Commission that the Mayor advised him that he has submitted to the City Council the appointments of Ottavio Canu, Linda Rice, and Marcia White to serve as members of the Commission. He added that the Appointee-designees would be contacted for interviews at the Council's discretion.

Law Department Review of Rules & Regulations Regarding Historic Preservation Special Permits Advisory Opinions.

The Commission postponed discussion of Assistant City Solicitor Chris Batinsey's comments concerning the Commission's proposed Rules & Regulations Regarding Historic Preservation Special Permits Advisory Opinions.

PROJECTS

Historic Markers and Artifacts Documentation

Mr. Agnelli reported that the project will move ahead once volunteers are identified to assist with photo editing skills to realign photographs of historic markers and artifacts and then prepare MHC "Form C – Object" for narrative of each item's history/provenance.

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System ("MACRIS") Update

A special session will be scheduled to train volunteers to update the MACRIS Inventory.

Old Burying Ground Assessment of Graveyard Conditions

Mr. Pera informed the Commission that he received correspondence from Kai Nalenz, President of Gravestone Services, concerning the status of the assessment of graveyard conditions. In his correspondence, Mr. Nalenz reported that he photographed and assessed all gravestones in need of repair and plans to return to assign a location when weather conditions permit.

Gardner Community Center/Archives Development

Mr. Agnelli will correspond with the Mayor and Building Commissioner in order to arrange a meeting to discuss the status of the project.

Gardner Historical Collaborative

Mr. Pera informed the Commission that he and Mr. Agnelli were recently introduced to Carla Morrissey, Circulation Supervisor of the LaChance Library at Mount Wachusett Community College, who embraced the Commission's outreach to collaborate on local historical endeavors. Mr. Pera added that the Commission now has committed working relationships with individuals of Gardner's five principal historical groups – the Levi Heywood Memorial Library, The Gardner Museum, Mount Wachusett Community College, the South Gardner Historical Society, and the City of Gardner's Historical Commission.



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Semiquincentennial of the United States Anniversary Programs for 2026

Commissioners discussed potential local activities for the Semiquincentennial such as Liberty Tree Program and the Bicentennial Time Capsule. The issue will be included on the February Agenda for further discussion.

NEW BUSINESS

Demolition Delay Ordinance & Scenic Roads Ordinance

Mr. LaHaye raised a concern that more and more older houses and buildings have been razed in recent years without first considering preservation via restoration.

Mr. Pera noted that the Commission put forth efforts in 2014 to propose a Demolition Delay Ordinance, but failed due to the lack of support from the City Council. He suggested that if Mr. LaHaye would like to revisit this idea at a future meeting, we could add the item to the agenda to evaluate the Commission's past and future efforts.

Similarly, Mr. Pera noted that in years past, the Commission proposed the adoption of a Scenic Roads Ordinance, but that it was "shot down" by some City officials and "went nowhere." He added that such an ordinance principally encompasses the protection of trees and historic stone walls to maintain the rural and historic character of local roads, with proposed changes being brought before a public meeting and hearing of the Planning Board.

Master Plan

Mr. Pera noted that the City's Master Plan consultant identified the City's MACRIS Inventory as being outdated and that the city lacks any locally-designated and protected historic districts; a Demolition Delay Ordinance; the adoption of the Community Preservation Act; or, lack of Community Development Block Grant funding to assist with preserving or rehabilitating local historic buildings.

FEBRUARY MEETING

The next Regular Meeting will be held on **Tuesday, February 17, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.** in City Hall.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Mr. LaHaye and seconded by Mr. Agnelli, it was voted to adjourn at 7:12 p.m.



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City of Gardner, Massachusetts Historical Commission

MEETING AGENDA

for

TUESDAY, JANUARY 20, 2026

6:00 P.M.

MAYOR'S CONFERENCE ROOM 128, CITY HALL
95 PLEASANT STREET

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ATTENDANCE

II. ANNOUNCEMENT OF OPEN MEETING RECORDINGS

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III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETING(S)

Review and approval of the December 16, 2025 Meeting Minutes.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT AND PRESENTATIONS

V. COMMUNICATIONS AND CORRESPONDENCE

VI. BUSINESS

1. Administrative

- a. Membership/Status of Appointments/Volunteer Recruitment.
- b. Law Department Review of *Rules & Regulations Regarding Historic Preservation Special Permits Advisory Opinions.*

2. Projects

- a. Historic Markers and Artifacts Documentation
- b. Old Burying Ground Restoration Project
- c. Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS) Update
- d. Gardner Historical Collaborative
- e. Semiquincentennial of the United States Anniversary Programs for 2026

VII. NEW BUSINESS

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Items listed on the Agenda are those reasonably anticipated by the Chair to be discussed at the meeting. Not all items listed may in fact be discussed and other items not listed may also be brought up for discussion to the extent permitted by law.