



# Town of Sudbury

## Historic Districts Commission

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### MINUTES

**November 13, 2025 AT 7:30 PM**  
**Virtual Meeting**

**Members Present:** Chair Ahnu Shah, Chris Hagger, and Griff Noble

**Members Absent:** Taryn Trexler, Pete Iovanella, Shervin Hawley

**Others Present:** Planning and Zoning Coordinator, Beth Perry, Peter Benton (Principal, Heritage Strategies), Elizabeth Watson (Heritage Strategies)

Mr. Shah called the meeting to order at 7:39 PM.

Peter Benton introduced Heritage Strategies, a small historic preservation firm focusing on preservation plans and guidelines across the U.S., with long-term experience including work in Sudbury and Freedom's Way National Heritage Area.

Elizabeth Watson, Peter's business partner, also introduced herself and described their joint expertise.

### Background and Context

The consultants have prior experience preparing the Sudbury Preservation Plan (2014-2015) and related heritage projects.

They acknowledged local commissions' existing challenges and expressed enthusiasm to improve the guidelines.

### Revision Project Overview

- A preliminary table of contents for the revised guidelines was shared for discussion.
- The draft structure includes:
  - Introduction: Purpose and educational intent of the guidelines
  - Description of Sudbury's five historic districts including their differing characters and design review processes
  - Preservation and design principles based on Secretary of the Interior Standards, authenticity, and integrity
  - Design review process with emphasis on early consultation
  - Detailed chapters on materials, features, maintenance, additions, and new construction

- Addressing special topics such as substitute materials, energy efficiency, solar panels, mechanical equipment, and landscape

### **Guidelines Purpose and Educational Role**

- Emphasized guidelines as an educational tool for community residents, not just regulatory.
- Need for clear guidance tailored to each district's unique character and history.
- Importance of explaining preservation principles and design philosophy upfront to avoid misconceptions (e.g., not demanding "too historic" appearances).

### **Preservation Concepts**

- Discussions on defining and retaining character-defining features of buildings and landscapes.
- Importance of balancing historic authenticity with necessary changes for contemporary living and climate challenges.
- Use of visual examples and clear illustrations to improve clarity and compliance.

### **Materials and Replacement Issues**

- Preference for repair over replacement of original materials.
- Consideration of substitute materials only when necessary and appropriate, referencing National Park Service guidelines.
- Address climate change and durability concerns (e.g., glulam wood for bridges, proper gutters).

### **Landscape and Site Features**

- Although landscape elements are generally outside HDC jurisdiction, concern about inappropriate plantings and tree donation programs in town.
- Inclusion of non-regulatory recommendations for landscapes that contribute to historic character, especially stone walls.

### **Design Review Process**

- Importance of an early consultation process to avoid costly mistakes.
- Encourage flexibility in design but with thoughtful, sympathetic approaches.
- Suggest empowering commissioners to work with applicants efficiently between meetings.

### **Compliance and Enforcement**

- Discussion on how to ensure compliance with approved plans and the challenges of enforcement in small towns.

- Suggestion to require multiple review stages: conceptual approval, submission of construction documents, and verification during permitting.

### **Specific Topics of Concern**

- Windows are a recurrent issue; the need for clear, definitive guidelines on appropriate replacement vs. repair.
- Mechanical equipment and solar panel installations require guidance on placement and screening.

### **Supporting Documentation & Resources**

- Desire to create a Dropbox folder with example guidelines from various communities for reference.
- Interest in accessing NAPC seminars, especially on updating historic design guidelines.
- Plan to reference the historic landscape studies such as the Hosmer House report.
- Consider obtaining historic photos from the Sudbury Historical Society to illustrate guidelines.

### **Real Estate and Community Benefits**

- A chapter to include supporting data on the value preservation adds to property and community.
- Recognize the importance of communicating preservation benefits to new homeowners and real estate agents.
- Use of clear messaging about how historic character enhances town attractiveness and property values.

### **Meeting Adjourned**

Mr. Shah closed the meeting at 8:50pm