

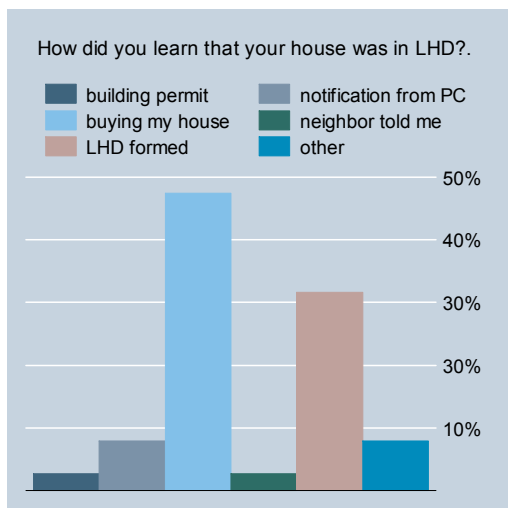
## Brookline Housing Project Survey Results Spring 2009

Number of respondents= 38 (SurveyMonkey: 31)  
 Total population: (list from PC Staff): 80  
 Response rate: 48% (38/80)

*\* Question numbers begin with #2 due to a word processing error, not a missing question. All question numbers track correctly to Report Detail.*

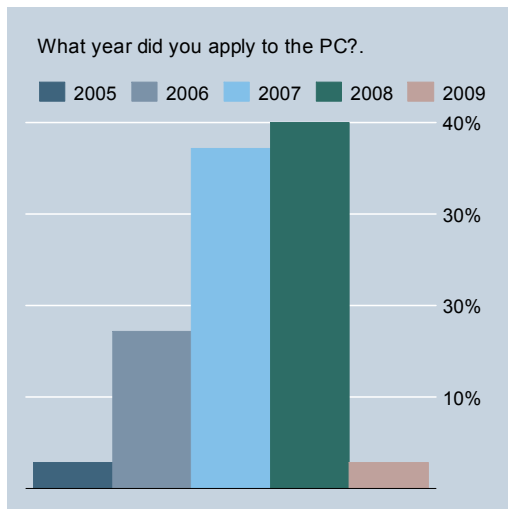
### I. Yes, No & Factual

2\*. How did you learn that your house was in a local historic district?

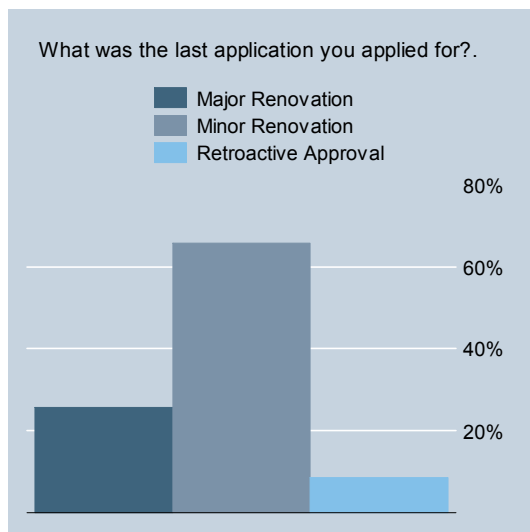


<b>OTHER: How did you learn that your house was a in a local historic district?</b>
Boston University is the owner and was aware that this house was in the Cottage park Historical District
We applied retroactively because we were unaware we needed to apply
When the hearing for an LHD was scheduled
lived there since 1973, before it was a historic district
participated in formation of LHD

3. In what year did you apply to the preservation commission for approval of your proposed work?



4. What was the (last) application you applied for?



<b>IF UNSURE: What was the last application you applied for?</b>
Between minor and major, leaning towards major
I applied to add an attic dormer to the rear of the house.
addition of balustrade
exterior -stone curbing
fencing
installation of a fence
outside perimeter fence

5. Did you refer to the “design guidelines for local historic districts” before preparing your application?

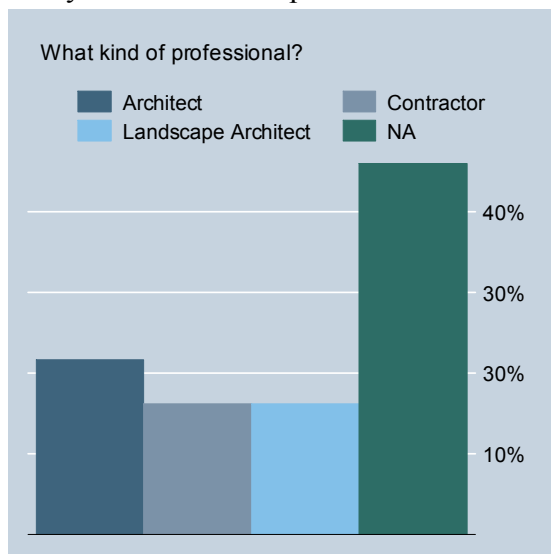
<b>Did you refer to the "design guidelines" for local historic districts before preparing your application?</b>		
Response	Freq.	Percent
No	7	18.92
Yes	30	81.08
Total	37	100

<b>COMMENTS: Did you refer to the "design guidelines" for local historic districts before preparing your application?</b>
spoke with [PC staff member A] about what was needed as design
I'm not sure I have a copy
Was not aware they existed
didn't know about it

6. Did you hire a professional to help with your application?

<b>Did you hire a professional to help with your application?</b>		
Response	Freq.	Percent
No	17	45.95
Yes	20	54.05
Total	37	100

7. If yes: what kind of professional?



8. Did you present historical or architectural research to the preservation commission?

<b>Did you present historical or architectural research to the PC?</b>		
Response	Freq.	Percent
No	23	62.16
Yes	14	37.84
Total	37	100

<b>COMMENTS: Did you present historical or architectural research to the PC?</b>
I don't know!
I was told I had gone outside the boundaries of the PC by doing my own research.
They shared useful old photographs with us
We presented the fact that we replicated exactly the existing feature based on what our neighbor had and with the neighbors written approval
We were fixing later changes.
We researched the history of this house and showed them old drawings of this house and the architect showed information

9. Was your case decided in one hearing?

<b>Was your case decided in one hearing?</b>		
Response	Freq.	Percent
No	18	48.65
Yes	19	51.35
Total	37	100

9a . If no, how many did it take?

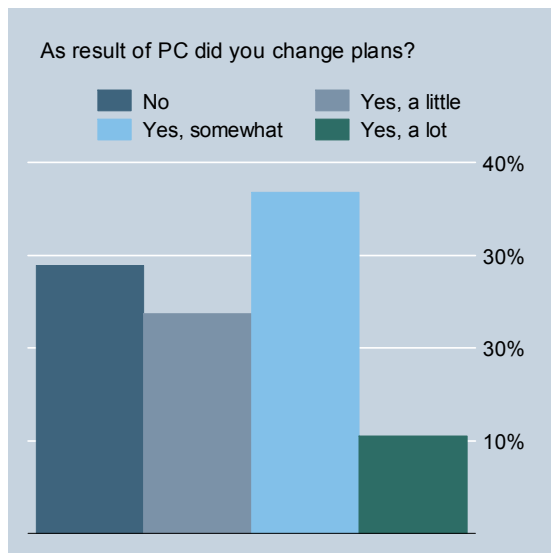
<b>Number of hearings?</b>		
Number	Freq.	Percent
2	9	69.23
3	2	15.38
6	2	15.38
Total	13	100

10. Was your original plan approved?

<b>Was your original plan approved?</b>		
Response	Freq.	Percent
No	17	45.95
Yes	20	54.05
Total	37	100

<b>COMMENTS: Was your original plan approved?</b>
Had to make some changes
It was partially approved
Materials and execution were amended.
One of the commission members suggested that I modify the plan to make the windows in the dormer smaller --- however, he retracted the comment when my architect informed him that the smaller windows would not meet building code.
Partial approval for very minor aspects
They severed a portion of the job, and approved a portion of the job
We had to provide additional architectural drawings
fence was proposed to end further towards the street
Once YES and once NO.
with modifications

11. As a result of your discussion with the PC or the staff did you change your renovation plans?

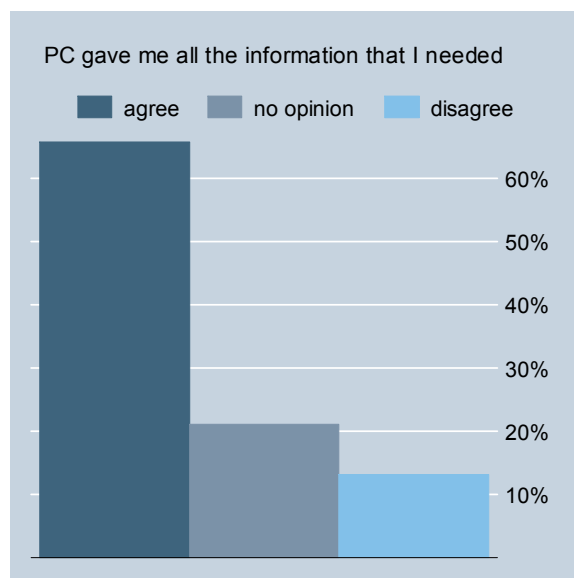


<b>COMMENTS: As a result of your discussion with the PC or the staff did you change your renovation plans?</b>
At great expense, particularly as it was designed exactly to match with what our neighbor had in place and with her written approval
Commission wanted to remove non-original fixtures.

I abandoned plans to replace windows with high-efficiency new wood windows and instead followed the commission's recommendation to repair the existing windows and add unsightly exterior storm windows. The commission's recommendation was somewhat more expensive than replacing the windows.
I emailed a couple of mock-ups and we picked one.
No big deal--I don't even know what the change was
Result was spending a lot of unnecessary money.
The replacement fence we wanted was disallowed. Several changes to our porch drawings.
They made helpful (but optional) suggestions.
We didn't change plans but the contractor might have done a better looking job because of our conversation with the Preservation Comm.
We gave up. We and our landscape architect were treated so poorly.

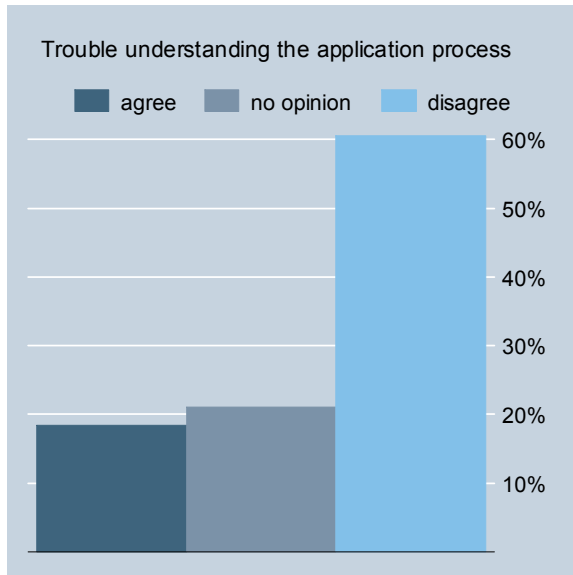
## II. Agree, Disagree, or No Opinion

12. Prior to my hearing, the PC staff gave me all the information I needed to prepare my application.



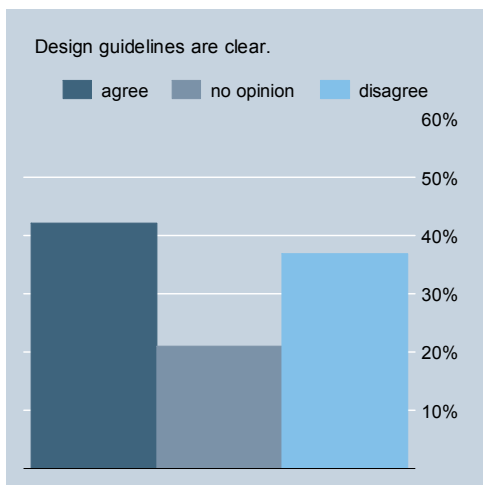
<b>COMMENTS: Prior to my hearing, the PC staff gave me all the information that I needed to prepare my application?</b>
Staff tried.
The architect was aware of the information.
my landscape lady did it, so I don't know
No guidance on what the rules were to be approved
Led us to believe that we would not need construction drawings, then they were required at the hearing. Staff previewed our application materials and said they were OK, then the commission wanted more.
Having read the regulations, I was fairly well-acquainted with what I could and could not do.

13. I had trouble understanding the application process.



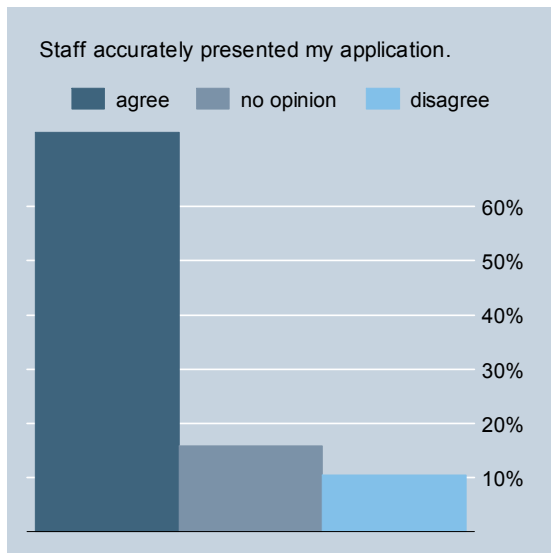
<b>COMMENTS: I had trouble understanding the process.</b>
again, I had no involvement
Subcommittees were formed ad hoc and new requirements were made up
We thought we understood the process, but the hearing didn't go as we anticipated; there were unexpected requests.
Had completed application process for major restoration previously
Yes particularly when a neighbor erected a six foot cedar fence along the frontage perimeter of their home.
If the staff hadn't done so much, I would have been lost.

14. The design guidelines for local historic districts are clear.



<b>COMMENTS: The design guidelines for historic districts are clear.</b>
not applicable
There are not specific guidelines. Personal esthetic preferences formed the basis of decision making
There is room for improvement.
To much latitude left to the Commission so the guidelines end up being arbitrary.
When you read the guidelines they become clear - when you look around the neighborhood it is not clear. Grandfathered homeowners are allowed to be non compliant indefinitely - it creates confusion.
The guidelines can never fit every case.

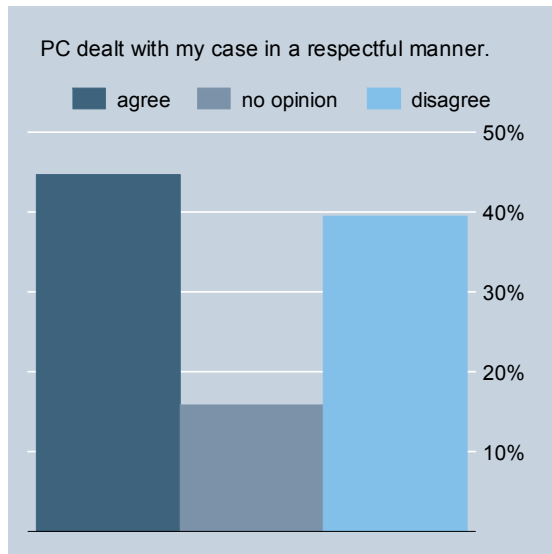
15. At the start of my hearing the staff accurately presented my application to the commission.



<b>COMMENTS: As the start of my hearing the staff accurately presented my application to the PC.</b>
NA
The staff was very helpful
We were part of the presentation. We and the staff made a clear presentation.
We were soundly reprimanded for filing retroactively before we had the chance to present our case.



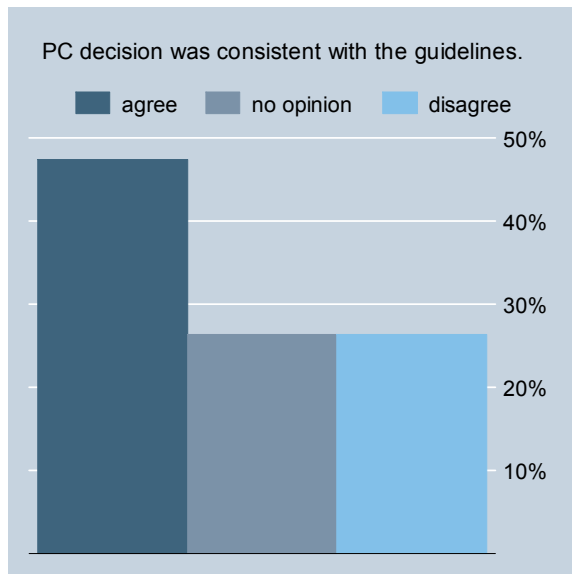
16. The members of the PC dealt with my case in a respectful manner.



<b>COMMENTS: The members of the PC dealt with my case in a respectful manner.</b>
[A Commissioner] was rude and pompous, and even an elitist. "Not likely that in Brookline a resident in a LHD couldn't afford the increase cost that the LHD might result in. It's not like someone in Cambridge" That's pretty close to a [a Commissioner's] quote.
NA
the arrangements for our second site visit did not go well
No respect for the individual, did not follow rules, enforced personal agendas, no respect for time or cost to homeowner
Several members argued among themselves about the aesthetics of the existing house and our plans, not about whether our plans were historically valid. Some seemed to compete with each other in their professional opinions in a way that was not constructive.
One Commissioner lied about my actions and made judgments about my character. The tone was aggressive and the meeting seemed chaotic.
They were extremely rude to our landscape architect -- a national expert on the issue -- and to us at both site visits and the hearing. Commissioners treated us as if we did not consider the historic issues and imposed their personal taste as to what would look "best." We had been before the commission twice before and it was not pleasant, but this was really extreme. One Commissioner called in his own expert to oppose our application without giving us notice that this would occur and without any indication that his expert had seen our property. It was truly appalling.
I will speak less about our case here. Some members were very condescending to an elderly couple and gentleman in earlier cases prior to our case. They came off as unknowledgeable and seem to be arbitrary on how they made their decisions. In one case they overrode the applicant who was clearly historically more accurate to come up with their own determination. It comes off as farcical, ad hoc and arbitrary at best to the applicants.

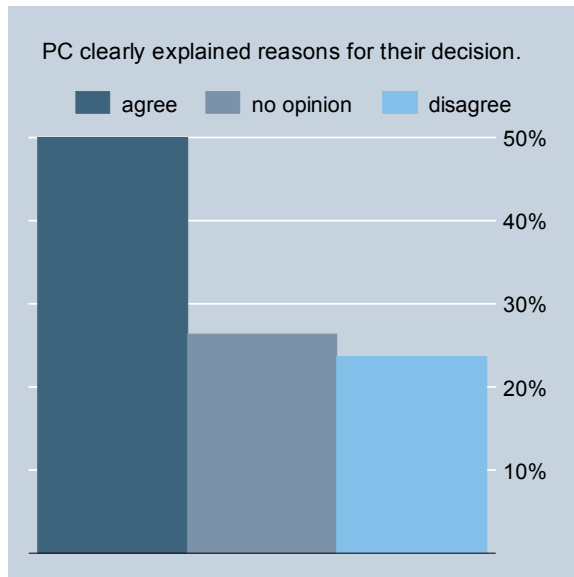
The only issue, which I've seen in other matters, is the members tend to impose their own architectural preferences. I believe strongly the purpose is to review changes so they are historically relevant given the specific conditions. Sometimes members want to impose personal choices when the truth is that taste varies and they should respect that as long as the changes are within the historical range.

17. The PC decision was consistent with the guidelines I read.



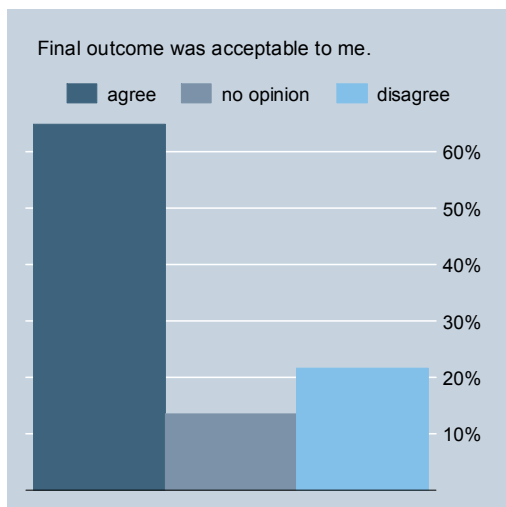
<b>COMMENTS: The PC decision was consistent with the guidelines I read.</b>
NA
They overstepped their responsibilities and I was hesitant to debate them because of their capricious and spiteful rulings
We had to jump through more hoops than we expected, and we could have had the needed drawings ready for the hearing if we had been warned. If we are going to need construction drawings, put that in the guidelines and have the staff warn us. We were told they would not be needed.
The PC needs to clarify the hearing process and the homeowners participation in that process. The home owners do not seem fairly considered as a member of the decision making team.
I saw no indication that Commissioners could call in expert witnesses with no notice to the homeowner.
The guidelines allow for indefinite grandfathering for some constituents while others are required to be compliant. The consequence of this is that people who have lived here since prior to regulation can keep what they have regardless of quality or historical authenticity while more recent arrivals are forced to comply. This defeats the purpose of converging to an overall consistent historical standard. We all pay the same taxes to support the town and so we should all be subject to the same rules.

18. The PC clearly explained the reasons for their decision.



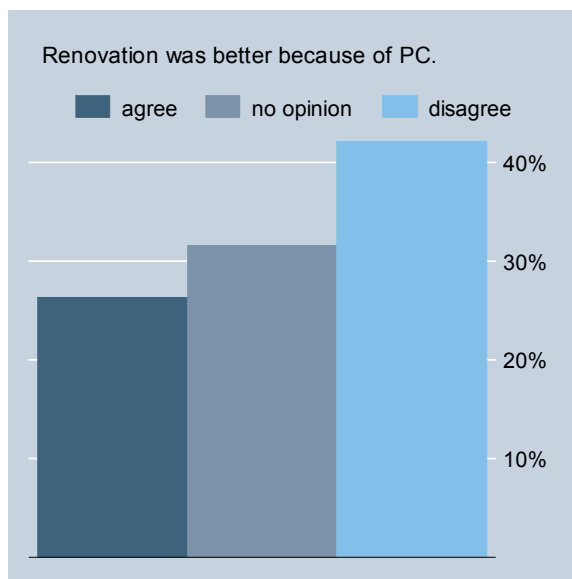
<b>COMMENTS: The PC clearly explained the reasons for their decision.</b>
the decision didn't seem to make any sense
NA
The decision process seemed random (allowed some things and not others)
Our plan was finally approved, but they did not explain why we needed additional drawings, besides the fact they did not believe the ones they saw.
Their reasoning was expressed clearly, but we felt that they went beyond their purview as described in the Guidelines.
No, the grandfathering piece was not well explained.

19. The final outcome was acceptable to me.



<b>COMMENTS: The final outcome was acceptable to me.</b>
we wasted a lot of money, aggravated our architect, spent huge amount on requests which were outside of the purview of PC - to answer [a Commissioner's] continuing questions and requests.
The project looks great
Cost me significant extra money for additional plans that were not used, the final result is less appealing from the street than I would have done without the committee's hamstringing us
They gave me the relief that I sought. However, because I read the regulations and spoke with the one of the planners in the P.C. office, I was careful to present a plan that I was fairly certain would be acceptable to the commission.
Absolutely not - while some residents are allowed to have historically non compliant fences indefinitely because of grandfathering - others are not allowed to put in high quality handmade fences to match existing adjacent fences despite written agreement and encouragement of immediate neighbor. And we are not even talking frontage here.

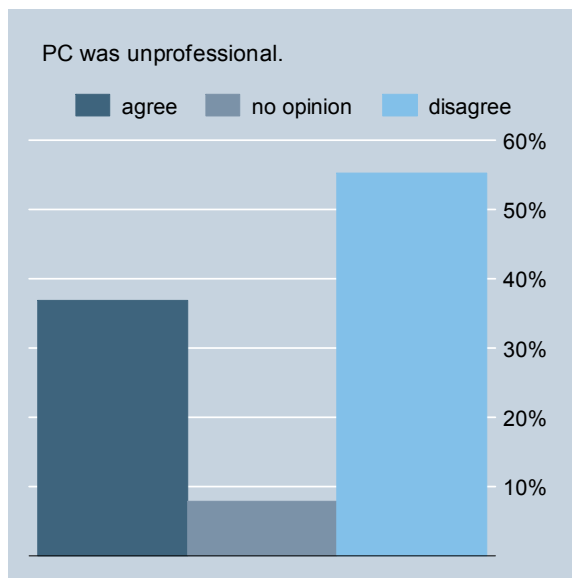
20. My renovation project was better as a result of working with the PC.



<b>COMMENTS: My renovations project was better as a result of working with the PC.</b>
I have no idea!
There was no unbiased support or positive feedback, or constructive advice. All advice came with an unspoken "and if you don't follow my preferences, you won't be approved for anything"
There were delays because of the additional drawings, and because the subcommittee was not able to meet because one member was out of town every week. The delays made our project much more difficult.

Most recent project did not matter. Original project was influenced and improved.
for one of my 2 projects.
My house is not historic --- it just happens to lay within a HC district. For me, the preservation commission was just another bureaucratic step in a series of bureaucratic steps one must climb to complete a home renovation project. If I had not been constrained by the historic guidelines, I think I could have presented a more aesthetically pleasing project -- although, aesthetics is in the eye of the beholder.
No. Several of our immediate have indicated their dismay that half of our project had to be taken down. They were strong advocates for the improvement.
The staff was very good. I'll miss [a PC staff member].
Essentially unchanged

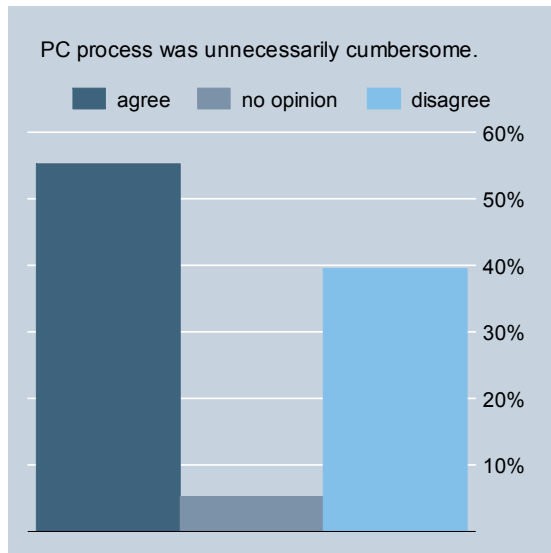
21. Members of the PC dealt with my case in an unprofessional manner.



<b>COMMENTS: Members of the PC dealt with my case in an unprofessional manner.</b>
The worst offender was [a Commissioner].
Some who should have recused themselves did not. The Chairperson needs to make sure that the goals of the committee are being attained without dictating taste.
They weren't unprofessional, except for some of the bickering in the meeting, but they could have been more professional.
The PC seems to excuse what they call "strong personalities" on their board. Meanwhile, LHD residents feel bullied and often do what they can to avoid going before the PC.
They were very professional.
See above comments -- rude, condescending and then the incident with the Commissioner's "expert witness" were all extremely unprofessional.
Some of them did - not just with our case.

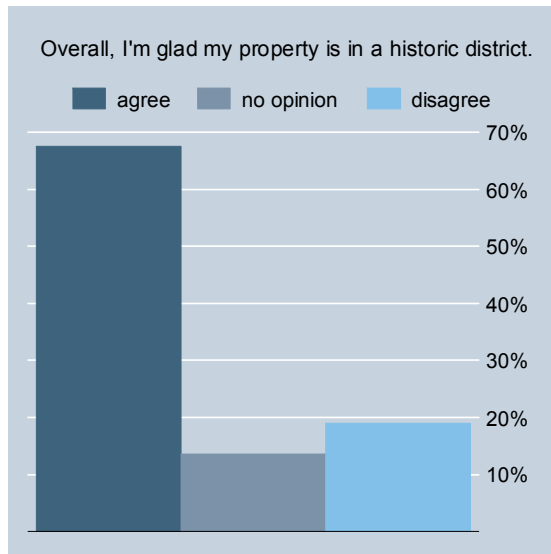
It seems many troublesome hearings arise because people have not beforehand discussed issues with the staff.

22. I feel the PC process was unnecessarily cumbersome.



<b>COMMENTS: I feel the PC process was unnecessarily cumbersome.</b>
Coming before PC, the applicant feels the victim, and certainly a financial victim.
It's unnecessarily cumbersome to actually have to show up for a hearing. It should be able to be done on paper. I'll be a lot of people would feel better about things because people will be more careful about their words when their comments are written.
I have specifically not improved my house in specific areas because I fear the committee (i.e. I am not replacing inappropriate 1950's additions with more period appropriate Victorian renovations)
The staff tried to be helpful, but the hearing was unpredictable and created problems. Perhaps the staff could be more realistic about their commission.
I don't think the process is cumbersome for a home that should be protected --- and there are many, many beautiful homes in my district that should be preserved and protected; I just don't live in one of those homes.
We spent thousands and thousands of dollars on a top-notch, nationally known expert landscape architect only to be treated as if we hired Joe Schmo who knew nothing about the historic issues.
The cumbersome issue is timing. Work is generally done in warmer months and the PC meets once a month, which costs time and money. If you miss a date by a few days, you miss a month.

23. Overall, I am glad that my property is in a local historic district.



<b>COMMENTS: Overall, I am glad that my property is in a local historic district.</b>
NO NO NO.
I think a lot of the properties in this neighborhood look like hell. Being in a historic district is no guarantee of beauty.
I value the affect that guidelines can have on the look of the neighborhood, though I feel that the current process is massively flawed.
It protects the district from developers tearing down houses and replacing them with ugly condos.
While I see the value in an historic district, I think that its application to my home in particular is unnecessary.
Not under current rules - we support historic objectives as long as they are evenly applied so we are all converging to a common goal.
I believe in predictable processes. The PC is more of a crapshoot.
The HC protects us from abuse from speculators and developers, but it creates hassles I could live without.

**III. Suggestions**

24. Do you have suggestion for how the preservation commission could improve its policies and/or procedures?

<b>Do you have suggestions for how the PC could improve its procedures?</b>		
Response	Freq.	Percent
No	10	27.03
Yes	27	72.97
Total	37	100

<b>SUGGESTIONS</b>
Number 1 problem is [a Commissioner]. Someone got him off PC before. Get him off again. Many other problems, especially in this economy. Try to be realistic about extra costs to bring lawyers and architects back and forth to all the work groups. Look at the real world, energy usage etc. and allow energy efficient windows. [A Commissioner] is standing out there pretty much alone against all improvements in window glazing. Storm windows do not give the same R values. One family in a not so historic multiple house on Pill Hill was beaten down just attempting to replace windows with layers of lead paint - sad and costly. What is the reason for so many ancient wired together fences in terrible repair remaining on Pill Hill? Is it because to work with PC to put up a new fence would be too problematic and emotionally painful? As we are urged to get more "green" with construction and energy, how are you going to deal with solar panels and maybe even wind use?
Have more objective members of the P.C., with term limits.
Strike that ridiculous rule about not having air conditioning units facing the street. And they should do a better job clearly explaining exactly what faces a public street and what does not. That is completely unclear to me, especially since I live on a private way.
I think there are some inconsistencies of enforcement. I think there should be some form of P.C. oversight of renovations as they happen so neighbors don't always have to be the whistle blowers. I also wish there was some way that homeowners could be required to adhere to the P.C. regulations regarding minor window, gutter and downspout changes. Either that or we should allow the double glazed, energy efficient windows and aluminum gutters and downspouts.
1. Make clearer guidelines. 2. Separate the judging/ruling from the advice giving (have two groups: one gives helpful advice on where to find resources, how to recreate period details, etc.; and the other group should impartially rule on what is allowed based solely on published guidelines)



<p>The Chairperson needs to have more control over the PC. If a member should be recused, they should not participate in decision making process. WHERE IS THE ACCOUNTABILITY? IF THE PC MISUSES OR ABUSES THEIR POWER, WHO CAN THE HOMEOWNER GO TO IN ORDER TO HOLD THEM ACCOUNTABLE. THIS SURVEY SHOULD BE SENT OUT TO EVERY APPLICANT WHO APPLIES FOR A PERMIT THROUGH THE PC AND SHOULD BE SENT TO ALL CITIZENS IN THE HISTORIC SECTIONS OF BROOKLINE ONCE A YEAR. THE PC MEMBERS WOULD PERFORM A BETTER JOB IF THEIR PERFORMANCE WAS REVIEWED ON AN INDIVIDUAL BASIS BY EACH APPLICANT AND REGULARLY. THIS WOULD PROVIDE THEM WITH USEFUL FEEDBACK THAT WOULD ALLOW THEM TO PROVIDE BETTER SERVICE, DO A BETTER JOB, AND POSSIBLY ALLOW THEM TO REALIZE THAT MAYBE THE PC IS NOT RIGHT FOR THEM. WE APPRECIATE AND WANT A PC THAT DOES WHAT IT IS SUPPOSED TO DO AND IS HELD ACCOUNTABLE BY THE CITIZENS OF BROOKLINE! THANK YOU!</p>
<p>I strongly encourage the Commission to think carefully about how to improve the review process. It appeared that the members spent too much time on applications that had little impact on the historical nature of the neighborhoods. Additionally, our experience was strange in that one member seemed to have a greater sway over the decision making process than the other members.</p>
<p>Very supportive of LHD. Completely appalled with attitude, behavior, treatment by two members of commission. Arbitrary and capricious decision making, rude and dismissive treatment of numerous neighbors, frightful and egregious unnecessary criticism make partnering with commission challenging.</p>
<p>The chair of the commission could keep the group on task better. The staff could be more realistic about the whims of the commission. The commission shouldn't be whimsical. Commission knew some of the applicants and seemed to cut them some slack.</p>
<p>I wish that they had more enforcement tools. It is unfair for some of us to incur the extra cost of complying while others disregard the rules, particularly given that the adoption of the zone was supported almost unanimously.</p>
<p>I would like to be able to check "Agree Strongly" but I can't. I feel that it's in the nature of property in use to change over the years as technology and society changes. I'd like to feel that the Preservation Comm. is there to help us make changes to our property that will benefit us, the homeowner, without compromising our home's historic background. At one time I spoke to someone in the preservation commission about adding windows to my kitchen. They suggested it would be a problem because it would be possible for people passing on the street below to see this non-historic change. When my house was built only the cook and servants used the kitchen. Now it's the central room in my house and we deserve more light and view. In the end we came up with a way to make the changes we wanted but generally I don't feel that the commission is there to facilitate changes in a desired and affordable way.</p>
<p>Consider reappointments on the Commission.</p>
<p>TERM LIMITS for PC Commissioners that may not be renewed. Tape record all PC public hearings. This may help keep the meetings running in a civil and professional manner.</p>

Get a life!
I think that some allowance should be made for "modern" building materials --- in some instances, modern materials are superior to materials that were used 150 years ago. Covering a house with unsightly storm windows so that old drafty windows can be preserved is not a good policy --- especially when there are some very high quality replacement windows that would be a superior alternative. I also think that regulations should be limited to "historically significant" homes and not to a home that just happens to lay within the district but which isn't particularly old or significant.
Commission members who are on a power/ego trip should be removed. Unfortunately, this is a not insubstantial number of commissioners.
Decide if you really want to be an historic district and what that means and apply rules fairly and consistently to achieve the overall long-term goal. Eliminate indefinite grandfathering of things that are not compliant - otherwise....the whole historic district concept is a waste of time because the homeowners will never converge to a common ideal.
Perhaps make themselves more 'user-friendly,' less authoritative, less 'highbrow/pretentious.'
1. A quick way of dealing with things during construction season. Perhaps a subgroup that reviews stuff. 2. Most contentious hearings seem to come from people not having gone over things beforehand. I've seen people come in with plans and architects but not have thought at all about the historically relevant issues - like old glass in old windows. Those issues could be handled better beforehand. 3. As to the above, I'd suggest a list of examples of things that trip people up. As in, "Preserving old glass. Homeowner developed plans to replace enclosed porch without realizing until the hearing that the PC is interested in how old glass reflects light." 4. Make clear that the PC is not about substituting personal taste for what a homeowner wants. In predictable processes, you may not like exactly what is happening but if it meets the rules then it passes. The same should be true with the PC: if it fits the rules, then back off and let the homeowner own his or her house.
Watching the members of HC in action reveals dedicated, conscientious, citizens working to prevent damage to our town. What the HC does is necessary to prevent selfish and irresponsible people from destroying the essence of our property and communities. But owner occupiers should have the presumptive right to make reasonable changes related to health, safety or energy efficiency without being subject to the HC's approval.
The standards need to be much clearer and they need to comply with the standards and not go beyond them. They exercise way too much idiosyncratic personal taste judgments. They also didn't follow the rules for where you could see the property. Too much interest in the back of the property. The board members may not arrive with enough familiarity with the case. They don't stay focused on just the issues of historical relevance. At all. They get lost on tangents that are not relevant. They focus way too much on how they feel about the design, without reference to the history. Not a clear enough definition of the jurisdiction. It gives too much room for judgments. If this were properly done, I would have no problem with it.
I had trouble with the commission. They were uniformed and were being sticklers, and I knew I was at their mercy. They were very pompous and presumptuous about design and materials consistent with the 2000's.

<p>There was no flexibility. And I had to do what they said. And I knew that. I dread the day I have to go before them again.</p>
<p>They should take into account the environmental issues and cost to the owner. As an example, they do not allow modern materials in the construction of garage doors or windows. As a result, they basically force you to constantly repair the old inefficient structures. In my opinion that is wrong. Overall they have to show greater environmental awareness. The environmental awareness should not fall victim to the desire to preserve everything as it was 200 years ago.</p>
<p>ok to have a commission for important issues, but they concern themselves with trivial things. My experience a complete waste of time and resources.</p>
<p>Make clear guidelines, and names of the people who can do the work they want done (builders), and be more flexible. Follow through on promises.</p>
<p>Frustrated; modest home compared w/ others in district; was built for low income &amp; looks bad; difficult for those who want to fix it up and redo front steps.</p>
<p>Get rid of [a Commissioner]. Respondent disgusted w/ PC b/c of their unwillingness to let him replace 80yr old non-insulated windows w/ identical, energy efficient ones.</p>
<p>There is a lack of independence from the town administration - big developers tend to use political means that individual residents cannot use. They could make requirements clearer and provide examples online.</p>