

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE
HISTORICAL COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF WORCESTER**

**NOVEMBER 2, 2006
455 MAIN STREET, ROOM 310**

Commission Members Present: Peter Schneider, Chair
Thomas Johnson
Michael Theerman
Thomas Constantine
Jeanice Sherman

Staff Present: Lara Bold, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services

REGULAR MEETING (5:30 PM)

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Schneider called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Ms. Bold informed the Commission that the October 26, 2006 minutes were not complete.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Ms. Bold informed the Commission that DPRS staff will have a final update on the question of special tax assessments and the Historical Commission's proposed regulations by December 31, 2006.

NEW BUSINESS

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

- 1. 653 & 661 Main Street (HC-06-30):** Dean Harrison, Al Finer, and Eric Kuczarskr, representatives for David Rodriguez Pinzon, petitioner and owner of 653 Main Street (also known as 651 Main Street) and George Drapos, petitioner and owner for property at 661 Main Street, presented the petition. Chair Schneider informed the Commission that the Worcester Historical Commission had previously approved the demolition of the Sears/Caravan building at 661 Main Street in 2002 for economic hardship reasons but the demolition delay waiver had since expired. Mr. Harrison informed the Commission that the project had received funding from a number of organizations including MassHousing, Department of Housing and Urban Development, State Historic Tax Credits, Federal Historic Tax Credits and HOME funds. Mr. Harrison indicated that the plans for the building have evolved with the funding requirements, precipitating a

number of changes such as: the inclusion of 5,000 square feet of first floor commercial space. Mr. Harrison informed the Commission that the 45 proposed residential units in the Hadley/Burwick building will have two to three bedrooms and, therefore, must have additional windows on the side of the building facing 661 Main Street. He also informed the Commission that the Sears/Caravan building would be difficult to renovate for residential units due to the building's design, its façade, and also as a result of the severe water damage. Mr. Harrison stated that the original architectural drawings for the building at 653 Main Street show that the Hadley/Burwick building originally had windows on the side of the building facing 661 Main Street. He stated that the newly proposed windows will be similar to the original windows. He also stated that the proposed windows will be operable with an awning that will project outwards to maintain the wind load, and that the bottom two panes will tilt out. In addition, he stated that the windows will be aluminum 5/8", with one inch of insulated glass, and a 7/8" sash. He also stated that the jambs will be 3/4". Al Finer stated that muntins will be applied to the windows and that the windows facing Main Street side will be ten over ten windows. Chair Schneider inquired as to whether or not the proponents will make a record of the Sears/Caravan building by submitting photos to the Massachusetts Historic Commission or by saving any important decorations. Mr. Finer stated that there are several art deco style cast decorations worthy of preservation. Mr. Harrison stated that preservation of those decorations would not pose any problems and that they would be willing to take photographs if Massachusetts Historical Commission requested they do so. Chair Schneider inquired as to whether or not the applicant had thought of using the Sears/Caravan building as a garage. Mr. Harrison stated that the Hadley/Burwick building at 653 Main Street is a heavy timber structure which is workable, open, and easily convertible. He stated that the proposed renovations will bring the building up to date with higher building code standards. He stated that the Sears/Caravan building, on the other hand, is windowless and would require a large investment to renovate. Mr. Harrison stated that the renovation of the Hadley project cannot be completed without the demolition of the Sears/Caravan building. He also indicated that the former Boys and Girls Club, which he also owns, will be used for storage and will be heated, cooled, and inhabited, thereby helping preserve the building. Scott Hayman, Director of the Housing Division, stated that the project proponents were able to maintain the Hadley/Burwick building in good condition; however there was no heat in Sears/Caravan building for a number of years. Mr. Hayman also indicated that a community charette will take place to elicit ideas for the renovation of the Boys and Girls Club. Mr. Finer stated that there are a number of design challenges to the renovation of the Boys and Girls Club. Upon a motion by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Sherman, the Commission found that the demolition associated with the exterior work for the removal and replacement of the windows at 653 Main Street will not be detrimental to the architectural or historical resources of the City of Worcester and voted 5-0 to approve the exterior work associated with the windows. Upon a motion by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Constantine found that the demolition of the Sears/Caravan building at 661 Main Street will not be detrimental to the architectural or historical resources of the City of Worcester and voted 1-4 to approve the Building Demolition Delay Waiver, therefore the motion did not carry. The Commission then discussed the possibility of an economic hardship. Upon a motion by

Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission found that the issuance of the Demolition Delay Waiver was necessary to avoid undue economic hardship for the owner and petitioner and to ensure the overall success of the Hadley/Burwick building renovation.

Mr. Hayman stated that the Massachusetts Historical Commission will likely contact the Worcester Historical Commission for their opinion on the project. He stated that none of the federal funds are being used for the demolition of the Sears/Caravan building. Chair Schneider stated that the Sears/Caravan building was National Register eligible; therefore, the Massachusetts Historical Commission will have an interest in the demolition and any nearby renovations.

Mr. Hayman stated that the project is still awaiting tax credit awards. Commissioner Johnson requested that efforts be made to salvage the art on the front of the Hadley/Burwick building. Chair Schneider suggested that a letter be written to the Massachusetts Historical Commission, prior to receiving any notice through the Section 106 process. Commissioner Johnson suggested that the letter reflect the Commission's support for the overall project and include information relative to the proposed window replacement which will match original window placement. Upon a motion by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Sherman, the Commission voted 5-0 to send a letter of support to the Massachusetts Historical Commission relative to the Hadley/Burwick building renovation and the demolition of the Sears Caravan building as an integral part of that renovation.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Schneider adjourned the meeting at 6:30 p.m.