

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

**DECEMBER 14, 2006
44 FRONT STREET, ROOM 510**

Commission Members Present: Peter Schneider
Thomas Johnson
Thomas Conroy
Michael Theerman
Jeanice Sherman

Staff Present: Ruth Gentile, 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

Upon a motion by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Conroy, it was voted 5-0 by Commissioners Schneider, Johnson, Conroy, Theerman, and Sherman to approve the November 2, 2006 and November 16, 2006 minutes.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

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

23 Oxford Street (HC-06-35) - Building Demolition Delay Waiver and 23 Oxford Street – Preservation Restriction: Jonathan Finkelstein, representative for, Ian Gow, the petitioner submitted a letter requesting a continuance of the meeting on the Preservation Restriction, and the Building Demolition Delay Waiver. He stated that the petitioner had submitted an amendment and restatement of the template to Mass Historic and they indicated that they want to remove themselves from the process. In addition, he stated that the neighbors were informed of the request for the continuance. Commissioner Theerman requested clarification regarding how the basement windows would be changed or replaced to allow access and egress. Commissioner Johnson stated that this information was omitted on the application and requested that the applicant address it by amending the application. Upon a motion by Commission Johnson and seconded by Commission Sherman, the Commission voted 5-0 to continue the Demolition Delay Waiver to December 28, 2006.

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

- 1. 1541 Main Street (HC-06-31):** Patricia Gates, representative for Kettle Brook Lofts, LLC, the petitioner, presented the plan for undue financial hardship. Ms. Gates stated that the developer recently purchased the abutting parcel on 1541 Main Street and indicated that they intend to demolish the building. She, also, stated that the petitioner organized a meeting at the site with a representative from Preservation Worcester and Al Lucibello to determine the significance of the architectural features of the building. At that meeting, it was determined that the building has had significant changes over the years and few original features remain except some mantle pieces, which the petitioner plans to donate to Preservation Worcester. Ms. Packard stated that Preservation Worcester is looking for projects and indicated that they might be able to re-locate this building but that it would be too costly and that very little is intact. She stated that Preservation Worcester would be interested in the fireplace or an attic window. Commissioner Schneider asked if the pictures were showing an adequate state of the building. Upon a motion by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission found the issuance of a demolition approval is necessary to avoid an undue economic hardship to the property owner and voted 5-0 to approve the Demolition Delay Waiver.

NEW BUSINESS

280-282 Highland Street (HC-06-34): John Shea, Leah Bradley and Richard Brown representatives for the Yarock Memorial Housing, petitioner, presented the petition. Mr. Shea stated that they were going to retain the dormer wood, frieze board, wood around the windows, dentil work, restore, paint and repair the stucco and repair timber on the stucco, restore window casings and decorative board on the edge of the windows and the decorative and ornamental board on the frieze working, restore the porch, deck, risers and balusters. In addition, he stated that the front doors have been restored and the stained glass windows have been replaced. The plan calls for replacing current windows with vinyl windows that have a high R-value, which will decrease the future maintenance. He stated that the estimated cost of wood siding with insulation is \$199,823 and the estimated cost of vinyl siding with insulation is \$67,400, which is triple the cost, causing an undue hardship for the petitioner, a non-profit agency. He stated that currently the total price of the purchase and repair for this building is \$680,000 and that his client has secured \$45,000 for these repairs. Mr. Shea, also, stated that there were hearings, ZBA meetings, lawsuits in land court, lack of knowledge that the building was in a historic district, which has caused a lot of money to be spent on the property. Commission Schneider asked what was to be done with the operculum window and the windows on the east side. Mr. Shea said that the operculum would be replaced with a vinyl window and the other windows would be 4 over1. Commissioner Schneider and Commissioner Theerman stated that windows change the whole look of the building and also that they thought from previous meetings that the building was going to be painted and that painting is less costly than vinyl siding. Mr. Shea stated that the wood was in poor condition and needed to be repaired. Commissioner Schneider stated that the Commission would prefer that the building be

stripped and painted, and efforts be made to preserve the windows because their replacements would be detrimental to the historic value of the property. Commissioner Johnson said that methods are available to streamline the stripping and indicated that vinyl siding contradicts efforts to restore the window casings and is detrimental to what is there. Commissioner Sherman stated that she would be horrified to see the windows replaced. She said that a phasing project for the restoration of the windows was possible, and indicated that the neighborhood would suffer if this project was allowed to replace the windows and do vinyl siding. Commissioner Johnson stated that CMHA and Habitat for Humanity plan to discuss this with their boards to possibly restore it free of charge and that the work is stripping and painting. Mr. Shea stated that they would like to partner with anyone but that they have unique clients with sensitive issues and the partners would have to go through background and CORI checks. Mr. Brown stated that there has been no lead test and that a lead abatement contractor must take out the windows. He stated that the windows are rotted, inoperable and must be replaced and if the wood is to be kept, they must be sent out to a millwork house. He stated that four windows on the fourth floor have been restored and that it is expensive. Upon a motion by Commissioner Sherman and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission considered the motion that the demolition associated with the proposed exterior work would not be detrimental to the architectural or historical resources of the City of Worcester: the motion failed with a vote of 0-5.

Commissioner Schneider stated that additional information was needed regarding the request for undue economic hardship, and that the Demolition Delay waiver is valid for twelve months only. Commissioner Theerman stated that he welcomed the petitioner's willingness to save the architecture of the building with the exception of the windows. Mr. Shea requested additional time to provide the requested quotes. Chair Schneider stated that the commission needed to make a decision today, and indicated that he did not support a continuance. Commissioner Johnson stated that there are contractors who are experts in the area of restoration and that the operculum window is magnificent and the stained glass is most critical. He said that on the Haviland Street side the muntins are unique and extraordinary. He also stated that the last time the petitioner was before the commission, they had to have a concurring opinion with Mass Historic Commission. Mr. Shea stated that it was not needed this time, as the petitioner was not getting state money for this project. Commissioner Conroy stated that \$40,000 to vinyl side and then save the architectural features does not make the argument for undue hardship. Jeff Bibeau, an abutter, presented pictures of the property to the Commission. Upon a motion by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission considered the motion that the issuance of a demolition approval is necessary to avoid an undue economic hardship to the property owner: the motion failed with a vote of 0-5.

OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioner Schneider stated that Mass Historic Commission and the Historic Commission have a Memorandum of Agreement for the Caravan Building. The Commission voted 5-0 to approve the Memorandum of Agreement.

Commissioner Theerman stated that there are twelve stained glass windows that are currently on the Quinsigamond Community College campus and Assumption College wants the windows back. He stated that this is an informational item that will be before the commission at a later time.

Commissioner Johnson stated that he will not be able to attend the Chapter 139 hearings and that he thinks more reasons than just fire should be considered for the list. He stated that there are always three or four MACRIS properties on this list.

Commissioner Schneider stated that he received a notice of the deadline for the MPP Chapter 13 grants as 2/21/07. Members thought some items to consider for this grant were: 1) winterizing of the Adriatic Mill Building and that the commission should get a response from Tim McGourthy on this; 2) another survey perhaps in South Worcester or Quinsigamond Village; 3) a survey of factory buildings. The commissioners want to apply for the grant and will need block grant money for matching funds.

Commissioner Theerman presented Commissioner Sherman with a gift on the behalf of the Commission and stated that she had been on the commission for seven years and now she will be leaving. Commissioner Johnson stated that Commissioner Sherman has been an integral part of the commission and that her expertise on windows is invaluable. Commissioner Sherman stated that she feels that a commissioner needs to be at all of the meeting and to be on time.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Schneider adjourned the meeting at 7:05 p.m.