

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

JANUARY 19, 2017

LEVI LINCOLN CHAMBER – CITY HALL

Commission Members Present:

Andrew Shveda
Randolph Bloom
Robyn Conroy
Devon Kurtz
Mark Wamback
Cheryll Holley, Alternate-Commissioner Holley left after item #1

Commission Members Absent:

Staff Members Present:

Stephen S. Rolle, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services
Deborah Steele, Division of Planning & Regulatory
Services

Approval of Minutes –

December 15, 2016

Upon a motion by Chair Shveda and seconded by Commissioner Kurtz the Commission voted 5-0 to approve the minutes of December 15, 2016.

January 5, 2017

Upon a motion by Chair Shveda and seconded by Commissioner Conroy the Commission voted 5-0 to approve the minutes of January 5, 2017 with one edit.

New Business

1. Formation of a study committee to consider a request to establish a local historic district for the Our Lady of Mt. Carmel Church property at 24-28 Mulberry Street and vicinity.

Mauro DePasquale, president of the Mount Carmel Preservation Society stated that the Commission denied the request from Mt. Carmel last year to demolish the building and the one year delay period is almost up and his group is looking to pursue making the church part of a local historic district as it has not received any guarantees from the diocese that the church will be saved or reopened.

Elaine Bafaro from the Mount Carmel Preservation Society stated that their group has come up with a plan to keep the church and the parish and the people of the parish want to be able to keep the church and restore it as they do not want to see the church demolished.

Carmelita Bello stated that the Mount Carmel Preservation Society since last year has had time to do fundraising and raised \$50,000 in cash and about \$130,000 in pledges to help with repairs.

Deborah Packard from Preservation Worcester stated that their Board of Directors voted last night that they support request that the Historical Commission to form a study committee and that their organization would like to offer their assistance in helping with the study.

Susan Ceccacci from Preservation Worcester gave a PowerPoint presentation on the history of the church and stated that the church is important to the history of Worcester.

Father Richard Reidy stated that in 2007 when an attempt was made to raise \$3 million to help with structural repairs only \$700,000 was raised and prior to the church being closed there was only 456 people coming to masses and that was not enough parishioners to raise the money for the repairs. He stated that the permanent repairs to the façade alone were \$1.7 million.

Father Reidy stated that the Chamber of Commerce reached out to the diocese for the possible sale of a portion of the land to see if they could raise sufficient funds for renovations of the church and they were willing to work with the WBDC and a meeting was held with them and Preservation Worcester and they were looking to do a public charrette in February about the possible sale of some of the property to help with repairs and Diocese would hold off on demolition of the building to 2018 with the agreement that City Council not pursue asking for a historic district and that offer was declined so offer was taken off the table.

Father Reidy stated that the creation of historic district includes the request for buildings built in the 1950's and the baseball field and asked how would that merit historic protection.

Father Reidy stated that they feel that the rules are changing half way through the process and they came before Commission last year and applied and were denied and now seven months later the rules are being changed for them and they think that is unfair.

Stu Loosemore from the Chamber of Commerce stated that they have problem with fact that the rules are being changed for the property owner who followed the rules and procedures and what type of precedent does that set.

Monsignor Pedone stated that it takes money to fix the building and what has been raised does not meet the estimate of the amount of money needed for the building.

Chair Shveda stated that he wanted to clarify what is before the Commission is whether the Commission should form a study committee to look into whether to establish a local historic district.

Vice-Chair Bloom asked the how many buildings were on the property. Monsignor Pedone stated the church, rectory, parish center and the baseball field.

Vice-Chair Bloom asked what has been done during the demo delay period. Monsignor Pedone stated that the bishop challenged the group to raise the money for what it would cost for the repairs and the cost just to make the façade safe is \$200,000 and the group was to provide a structural engineer to give estimate on cost to do repairs and several discussions were held but nothing happened and the Bishop offered to hold off the demolition if the group held off on pursuing the historic district.

Clerk Conroy asked what going to stop the next person coming before the Commission and asking for a study to be done and how do they pick which ones they would study.

Commissioner Kurtz stated that the other historic districts in the City the property owners were involved and wanted to be in the historic district but this is a different case.

Chair Shveda stated that the City Council has the final say as to whether this property becomes a historic district and the Commission's role would be to study whether the property is historically significant.

Mr. Rolle stated under a historic district the purview of the Commission would be to review any changes that were made to the exterior of the building prior to work being done. It would not govern the use of the building and a local historic district does not have purview over work done inside the building.

Clerk Conroy stated that she can't separate this from the dangerous precedent such an action might set for future applications before the Historical Commission.

Vice-Chair Bloom stated that but this is just a study and just a first step and doesn't mean they are establishing a local historic district.

Clerk Conroy stated that her problem is that another person can come in and ask for a study and then they would be doing studies all the time.

Upon a motion by Clerk Conroy and seconded by Commissioner Kurtz the Commission voted 3-2 (Clerk Conroy, Commissioner Kurtz and Commissioner Wamback voting against) to appoint the Historical Commission as a Study Committee to study the feasibility of creating a Local Historic District for Our Lady Mount Carmel and adjacent properties and to initiate the initial study report.

Exhibit A: Petition of names of people who spoke at January 19, 2017 Historical Commission meeting.

Exhibit B: Electronic communication from Mount Carmel Preservation Society dated January 11, 2017.

Exhibit C: Electronic communication from Linda Wyatt dated January 17, 2017.

Exhibit D: GIS map 28 Mulberry Street.

Exhibit E: Letter from Chamber of Commerce dated January 19, 2017.

Exhibit F: Communication from Mount Carmel Preservation Society listing accomplishments not dated.

Old Business

2. 21 Catherine Street– HC-2016-075

Petition: Building Demolition Delay Waiver
Petitioner: Advocates, Inc.
Present Use: Rooming House
Year Built: 1848
Historic Status: MACRIS Listed, National Register Individual
NRIP), National Register (MRA), fka The
Draper Ruggles House

Petition Purpose:

- Remove existing deteriorated front porch columns, including new concrete pier foundations. New columns to match existing

Upon a motion by Commissioner Conroy and seconded by Commissioner Kurtz the Commission voted 5-0 to continue the item until the February 9, 2017 Historical Commission meeting and to extend the constructive grant deadline until February 11, 2017.

Exhibit A: Building Demolition Delay Waiver Application received October 18, 2016 and dated October 18, 2016.

New Business

3. 38 May Street– HC-2017-004

Petition: Building Demolition Delay Waiver
Petitioner: Frank McReynolds
Present Use: Multiple structures
Year Built: 1888
Historic Status: MACRIS Listed, National Register District
(NRD), National Register (MRA), fka C.C.
Whitcomb house

Petition Purpose:

- Work to porch, decks, steps and balconies
- Work on windows and replacement of windows
- Replacement of bulkhead
- Work to chimney
- Work on siding
- Work on foundation
- Installation of handrail

Upon a motion by Commissioner Conroy and seconded by Commissioner Kurtz the Commission voted 5-0 to postpone the item until the February 9, 2017 Historical Commission meeting and to extend the constructive grant deadline until February 11, 2017.

Exhibit A: Building Demolition Delay Application waiver received December 28, 2016 and dated December 28, 2016.

4. 34 Mechanic Street/200 Commercial Street – HC-2017-002

Petition: Building Demolition Delay Waiver
 Petitioner: MCPHS University
 Present Use: Mixed Used Building
 Year Built: 1926
 Historic Status: MACRIS Listed, fka Duncan and Goodell Building
 Petition Purpose:

- Restoration of the building façade
- Creation of opening in the building façade along Commercial Street
- Creating of a new vestibule at entrance to the second floor of the building along Mechanic Street

Mark Donahue from Fletcher and Tilton and Alan Westman appeared on behalf of the application. Mr. Donahue stated that the University had given an informal presentation to the Commission a few months ago and reviewed the plans of what work was proposed.

Mr. Donahue stated that they have received a letter of support from Preservation Worcester which had been provided to the Commission for the work proposed.

Mr. Westman reviewed on plans the scope of work proposed.

Chair Shveda stated that he could not see any significant material being removed and any changes being made are being done to restore the building to the original configuration.

Clerk Conroy stated that she understood that the University first planned to demolish the building but then worked with Preservation Worcester to come up with this plan.

Commissioner Kurtz stated that it sounds like a great use of combining historic use with a modern structure.

Chair Shveda and Clerk Conroy expressed their thanks to the University for saving the building and coming up with an alternative plan for the building.

Upon a motion by Vice Chair Bloom and seconded by Clerk Conroy the Commission voted 5-0 that the work was not detrimental to the historical and architectural resources of the city and voted to approve the Building Demolition Delay Waiver application

Exhibit A: Building Demolition Delay Application received December 22, 2016 and dated December 22, 2016.

5. 120 Granite Street - HC-2017-003

Petition:	Building Demolition Delay Waiver
Petitioner:	City of Worcester
Present Use:	School Building
Year Built:	1926
Historic Status:	MACRIS Listed, National Register Individual fka the Granite Street Grade School
Petition Purpose:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Window and exterior door replacement

Russ Adams from the City of Worcester Department of Public Works appeared on behalf of the application.

Mr. Adams stated that they plan to go out to bid in the Spring for the work. Mr. Adams stated that they tried to keep the original design but if they have to deviate it is because they need to follow the MSBA requirements for energy efficiency and maintenance issues.

Vice-Chair Bloom asked if windows were original. Mr. Adams stated that they were.

Chair Shveda stated that he understands that this is a MSBA job so understands what they need to comply with.

Vice-Chair Bloom asked what would be the color of the frames. Mr. Adams stated that they try to stay away from white so maybe a beige color.

Chair Shveda asked if the center door frame would be replaced in kind. Mr. Adams stated that they would try to save and reframe it.

Clerk Conroy asked if any work would be done to the transom. Mr. Adams stated that they would put in new glass.

Chair Shveda asked if possible that the frame of the main entry door be saved.

Upon a motion by Vice Chair Bloom and seconded by Commissioner Kurtz the Commission voted 5-0 that the work was not detrimental to the historical and architectural resources of the city and voted to approve the Building Demolition Delay Waiver application

Exhibit A: Building Demolition Delay Application received December 23, 2016 and dated December 23, 2016.

6. 570 Pleasant Street- HC-2017-001

Petition:	Building Demolition Delay Waiver
Petitioner:	Josue Rosa
Present Use:	Three Family Residence
Year Built:	1912
Historic Status:	MACRIS Listed, National Register Individual NRIP), National Register (MRA), fka Helen Three Decker
Petition Purpose:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demolition of the Building

Sam Rosario along with the applicant Josue Rosa appeared on behalf of the application.

Mr. Rosario stated that the building is not structurally sound and is in rough shape and as a contractor he has looked at the building and it doesn't make sense to repair. He stated that Mr. Rosa owns Tu Moda next door and needs parking and to save the building would be a financial hardship.

Chair Shveda stated that a full demolition of a building in a residential area the Commission takes very seriously.

Chair Shveda asked when the building was bought was the intent to demolish it. Mr. Rosario stated no and that they had looked at other options but the building is in bad shape. Mr. Rosario stated that they took the ivy off the building to see if it could be saved but it would be cost prohibitive.

Chair Shveda asked how many units were in the building. Mr. Rosario stated three.

Vice-Chair Bloom asked how long the building has been vacant. Mr. Rosario stated two years.

Mr. Rosa stated that the building has been in bad shape a long time and was left to deteriorate and the building is a hazard as materials fall onto his property and he wanted to fix it but it had been let go for far too long and he can't afford to put more money into the property.

Chair Shveda asked what is the current square footprint footage of the property. Mr. Rosario stated the footprint of the land is 6,000 square feet with living area consisting of 4,500 square feet.

Chair Shveda stated that for that amount of living space you could obtain good rent.

Mr. Rosario stated that everything would need to come to code in the building and it would cost \$500,000 just to come to standard code in order to allow it to be rented out and it just not salvageable and there are no banks that offer construction loans to help with the costs involved.

Chair Shveda stated that if intent was to renovate the house why wasn't a cost analysis done prior to purchasing the property.

Mr. Rosario stated that because it first most important that Mr. Rosa acquire the property prior to some else coming along and purchasing the property which could potentially hurt Mr. Rosa's other property next door.

Mr. Rosario stated that Mr. Rosa took the ivy off the building which there was a cost involved in doing that but once they looked further into the cost to renovate the property the cost skyrocketed.

Commissioner Wamback asked since Mr. Rosa has owned the property how much has he put into the house. Mr. Rosa stated that he over paid and paid over \$200,000 and the property was always a problem with tenants moving in and out and he thought he was only going to have to put \$100 to \$150,000 into the property.

Chair Shveda and Commissioner Wamback expressed concern that the property was just bought in November 2016 and owner is already looking to demolish building. Mr. Rosario stated that it was bought then but if their intent was just to demolish the building that they would have come before the Commission sooner and the intent was to restore the building.

Mr. Rosa stated that his intention was not to knock it down and it more valuable to keep it so he can get a return on his investment but he doesn't want to put another \$300,000 to \$400,000 into it and he had to buy it as it so close to his business.

Clerk Conroy asked if Mr. Rosa was aware when he purchased the property it was MACRIS listed. Mr. Rosa stated no. Clerk Conroy stated that has been an on going issue.

Vice-Chair Bloom asked what the \$45,000 quote included in the packet for the slate roof was for. Mr. Rosario stated it was for structural repairs and taking down and putting up the new roof and work on the chimney.

Chair Shveda stated that the application states that applicant wants to knock down the building to create more parking. Mr. Rosa stated that he wants to knock the building to protect his property next door.

Mr. Rolle asked if the intent was to demolish the building as quick as possible. Mr. Rosario stated that it not an immediate rush as they are still looking at demolish estimates but if given approval they like to do in next three months.

Mr. Rolle stated that if there isn't an immediate need to knock it down that staff could offer to the applicant to come in for an IRT meeting so staff could explore with the applicant potential reuses for the property.

Mr. Rosario stated that would make a lot of sense and if they could find a better use of the building they would be in favor of that.

Mr. Rosa stated the he would like to continue the meeting so he could meet with staff.

Upon a motion by Clerk Conroy and seconded by Vice-Chair Bloom the Commission voted 5-0 to continue the meeting to the February 9, 2017 Historical Commission meeting and to extend the constructive grant deadline until February 11, 2017.

Exhibit A: Building Demolition Delay Application received December 16, 2016 and dated December 16, 2016.

Communications

- a. Communication from MacRostie Historic Advisors re: Request for Letters of Support
18 Chestnut Street, Paul Revere Life Insurance Company Building
Lincoln Square, Worcester Boys' Club

Upon a motion by Chair Shveda and seconded by Commissioner Conroy the Commission voted 5-0 to issue a Letter of Support.

- b. 2018 Meeting schedule-Held to next meeting

Adjournment

Upon a motion the Commission adjourned the meeting at 8:55 p.m.