

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

**January 10, 2019**

**LEVI LINCOLN CHAMBER, ROOM 309 – CITY HALL**

**Commission Members Present:** Robyn Conroy  
Diane Long  
Janet Theerman  
Andrew Shveda  
Mark Wamback  
Tomi Stefani, Alternate

**Commission Members Absent:** Randolph Bloom  
Devon Kurtz

**Staff Members Present:** Susan Arena, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services  
Stephen S. Rolle, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services

**Call Commission to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Shveda at 5:30 pm.

**Approval of Minutes**

Review of the November 8, 2018 minutes.

*Upon a motion by Chair Shveda and seconded by Commissioner Wamback the Commission voted 5-0 to approve the minutes of November 9, 2018.*

Mr. Rolle took this opportunity to acknowledge that this is Chair Shveda's last meeting. He thanked him for his seven plus years of serving on the Commission, three of those as Chair, and for his valuable contributions. Chair Shveda was then presented with a certificate recognizing his service.

Mr. Rolle left.

**Old Business**

**1. 116 Mower Street – HC-2018-052 (MBL 10-005-00020)**

Petition: Building Demolition Delay Waiver  
Petitioner: Josh and Poppy Gray  
Present Use: Single-family residence  
Year Built: c1810  
Historic Status: MACRIS listed, National Register listed, and a National Historic Landmark, fka Liberty Farm  
Petition Purpose:  
• Replace windows

Josh and Poppy Gray, owners; and Will Salem, Renewal by Andersen, appeared on behalf of the application.

Ms. Gray reviewed an estimate she received from Charles Buckroth for restoration of windows and installation of new storm windows, for a total of \$700 per unit. The quote from Andersen was approximately \$2100 per unit. In an effort to retain historic material that is most visible from a public way the Commission asked that the applicants restore the 13 visible windows located on the brick, Federal style portion of the house and replace the rest.

Commissioner Conroy expressed opposition to the request.

Chair Shveda read into the record a letter of opposition from Preservation Worcester, stating that all efforts should be made to retain the windows since the property is a National Historic Landmark.

*Upon a motion by Chair Shveda and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission voted 6-0 to close the hearing.*

*Upon a motion by Commissioner Wamback and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission voted 4-0 that the proposed demolition of the historic building located at 116 Mower Street, consisting of the restoration of the 13 windows existing on the brick, Federal portion of the house, and replacement the remaining windows, is not detrimental to the historical and architectural resources of the city and voted to approve the Building Demolition Delay Waiver.*

Exhibit A: Building Demolition Delay Waiver Application dated October 3, 2018 and received October 24, 2018.

Exhibit B: Letter from Preservation Worcester, dated and received November 26, 2018.

Exhibit C: Letter from Preservation Worcester, dated and received January 10, 2019.

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## **New Business**

### **2. 84 William Street – HC-2019-001 (MBL 02-047-45+83)**

Petition: Building Demolition Delay Waiver  
Petitioner: Becker College  
Present Use: Single-family residence/Office  
Year Built: c1906  
Historic Status: MACRIS listed, and National Register listed, fka the Louis W. Southgate House  
Petition Purpose:

- Remove portions of front porch to allow for handicapped accessible ramp

Scott Zeke, Gregory J. O'Connor Associates, appeared on behalf of the application.

Mr. Zeke stated that they are representing Becker College, who purchased the property as a single-family home and are converting the building to executive offices. As part of that they need to make the building handicapped accessible. The proposed work would involve closing one basement window and removal of the railing and brackets on one side of the front porch to allow for the construction of a walkway and ramp coming around the right side of the building.

Chair Shveda read into the record a letter from Preservation Worcester encouraging the applicant to explore the possibility of using the side or rear entrance instead. He asked Mr. Zeke whether they had looked at the possibility of using a rear entrance. Mr. Zeke replied that it would be cost prohibitive, and would involve entering through a kitchen, which isn't consistent with their programmatic goals. Additionally it would require a variance from the state architectural access board. Chair Shveda inquired

about using the enclosed porch that would enter into the same vestibule as the front entrance. Mr. Zeke replied that it would require a variance as well to use an entrance other than the primary entrance.

Gregory O'Connor, also on behalf of the applicant, stated that the design as presented is intended to be as minimalistic as possible and that it may be difficult to get a variance.

Commissioner Conroy expressed concern about the loss of material on the front porch and the visual impact to the façade. Mr. Zeke stated that the brackets and any other material would be stored on site.

Commissioner Theerman asked where the handicapped parking would be located. Mr. Zeke replied that it will be in the back of the property and along the street, but there is no handicapped access from the street in front. Commissioner Long stated that she works with people with disabilities and has concerns about having them traverse such a distance from the parking area.

Public comment: Pasquale Torano, 12 Somerset Street, noted that he is handicapped and stated that he is concerned that if things continue that the neighborhood will lose its historic character. He doesn't understand why one of the rear entrances can't be used.

Pat Glennon, 87 William Street, stated that she and her husband bought this house because they wanted to live in a historic neighborhood. She stated that only recently has she had an issue with Becker College, that they have not lived up to what they claimed they would do. She disagreed that entering through the back is degrading, that telling a handicapped person to traverse a long walkway around the building is not better. Mrs. Glennon shared additional photos of the property and surrounding area with the Commission.

Terese Gleason-Carr, 85 William Street, also stated that she and her husband sought out a historic area and being within a college campus appealed to them. She stated that she is concerned about what appears to be a lack of principal when caring for these historic buildings. She reiterated earlier comments about it making more sense to have the entrance closer to handicapped parking, and that the covered porch seemed like an ideal option.

William Belcher, resident, stated that the college is disregarding the neighborhood and the abutters. He stated they should work with the community and disability organizations better to find other options.

The Commission asked the applicant to take another look at alternate options. The applicant agreed to consider the possibility of using the side porch if it's not visible from the street, and therefore not under the Commission's purview. Staff will visit the property to determine whether the side porch entrance discussed is visible from a public way. If it is not then the original petition would be withdrawn and the applicant would pursue a variance for the side entrance. If it is visible then the applicant would return on January 31 to continue the discussion.

*Upon a motion by Commissioner Conroy and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission voted 6-0 to continue the hearing to January 31, 2019, and extend the constructive grant deadline to February 4, 2019.*

Exhibit A: Building Demolition Delay Waiver dated November 9, 2018 and received November 29, 2018.

Exhibit B: Letter from Preservation Worcester dated and received January 10, 2019.

Exhibit C: Photos provided by Pat Glennon.

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**3. 31 Elizabeth Street (Unit #205) – HC-2019-002 (MBL 01-028-00205)**

Petition: Building Demolition Delay Waiver  
Petitioner: Debra Cottis  
Present Use: Condominium  
Year Built: c1893  
Historic Status: MACRIS listed, and National Register listed, fka Elizabeth Street Schoolhouse  
Petition Purpose:

- Replace windows

Debra Cottis, owner; Rob Lewis, contractor, appeared on behalf of the application.

Ms. Cottis stated that seven windows will be replaced and they will match the units in the other condos that have already been replaced. Mr. Lewis stated that the storm windows will remain in place. Staff noted that the Commission has previously approved replacement windows in four other units in this building.

No public comment.

*Upon a motion by Chair Shveda and seconded by Commissioner Conroy, the Commission voted 6-0 to close the hearing.*

*Upon a motion by Commissioner Wamback and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission voted 6-0 that the proposed demolition of the historic building located at 31 Elizabeth Street is not detrimental to the historical and architectural resources of the city and voted to approve the Building Demolition Delay Waiver.*

Exhibit A: Building Demolition Delay Waiver Application dated December 1, 2018 and received December 6, 2018.

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**4. 24 Franklin (aka 28-38) Street – HC-2019-003 (MBL 03-013-00029)**

Petition: Building Demolition Delay Waiver  
Petitioner: Bay State Savings Bank  
Present Use: Commercial Building  
Year Built: c1926  
Historic Status: MACRIS listed, and National Register listed, fka Worcester Chamber of Commerce Building  
Petition Purpose:

- Remove recessed vestibules; install new storefront entries

Tom Milfor, Baystate Savings Bank; Tam Le, restaurant owner; and Edgar Luna, City of Worcester appeared on behalf of the application.

Chair Shveda read into the record a letter of support from Preservation Worcester, stating that the applicant consulted with the organization on the design in advance.

Mr. Le explained that only two entrances necessitate modification for the proposed restaurant but all four entrances will be altered for consistency. Mr. Luna stated that the proposed design complies with city fire code and ADA requirements. Also, the architectural elements around the door opening will be retained. The new doors will be recessed slightly to avoid all entrances being flush along the façade.

No public comment.

*Upon a motion by Chair Shveda and seconded by Commissioner Conroy the Commission voted 6-0 to close the hearing.*

*Upon a motion by Commissioner Conroy and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission voted 6-0 that the proposed demolition of the historic building located at 24 Franklin Street is not detrimental to the historical and architectural resources of the city and voted to approve the Building Demolition Delay Waiver.*

Exhibit A: Building Demolition Delay Waiver Application dated December 10, 2018 and received December 20, 2018.

Exhibit B: Letter from Preservation Worcester dated and received January 10, 2019.

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### **Communications**

- a. Communication from MHC re: Notification of Section 106 filing for 86 Austin Street – dated December 3, 2018 and received December 7, 2018.

*No comment.*

- b. \*Request for updated Letter of Support from Epsilon Associates re: Tax credit application for Ransom F. Taylor Block, 526 Main Street – received electronically December 13, 2018.

*Upon a motion by Chair Shveda and seconded by Commissioner Wamback, the Commission voted 6-0 to provide an updated letter of support.*

- c. Communication from MHC re: Notification of Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund grants, Round 25.

*No comment.*

- d. Communication from MHC re: Notification of 41<sup>st</sup> Annual Preservation Awards.

*No comment.*

- e. \*Communication from TAT re: ADA variance application for the Worcester County Courthouse, 2 Main Street, received electronically December 19, 2018.

*Upon a motion by Chair Shveda and seconded by Commissioner Conroy, the Commission voted 6-0 in favor of the application.*

- f. \*Request for updated Letters of Support from MHA Northeast re: Tax credit applications for:
  - 98 Beacon Street
  - Quinsigamond Firehouse, 15 Blackstone River Road
  - Worcester Boys' Club, 2 Ionic Ave.
  - Elwood Adams Hardware Store, 156 Main Street– received electronically December 20, 2018.

*Upon a motion by Chair Shveda and seconded by Commissioner Wamback, the Commission voted 6-0 to provide updated letters of support.*

- g. Communication from VHB re: Section 106 review of Kelley Square improvements, dated December 17, 2018 and received December 20, 2018.

*No comment.*

- h. \*Request for new Letter of Support from VHB re: Tax credit application for 128 Chandler Street – received electronically December 28, 2018.

*Upon a motion by Chair Shveda and seconded by Commissioner Wamback, the Commission voted 6-0 to provide a new letter of support.*

- i. \*Request for updated Letters of Support from PAL re: Tax credit applications for:
    - Bancroft Hotel, 50 Franklin Street
    - Park Building, 507 Main Street
    - Worcester County Courthouse, 2 Main Street
    - Cheney-Ballard Building, 517 Main Street
- received electronically January 2, 2018.

*Upon a motion by Chair Shveda and seconded by Commissioner Wamback, the Commission voted 6-0 to provide updated letters of support.*

*\*Item requiring action*

### **Other Business**

#### I. Election of Officers

*Upon a motion by Commissioner Conroy and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission voted 5-0 to elect Mark Wamback as Chair.*

*Upon a motion by Commissioner Conroy and seconded by Commissioner Shveda, the Commission voted 5-0 to elect Randolph Bloom as Vice-Chair.*

*Upon a motion by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Wamback, the Commission voted 5-0 to elect Robyn Conroy as Clerk.*

*Staff also noted that Commissioner Stefani is being recommended to the City Council to move from an Alternate member to Full member. Upon a motion by Commissioner Shveda and seconded by Commissioner Wamback, the Commission voted 5-0 in support of this recommendation.*

#### II. Preservation Awards – January 16, 2019 at the Park View Room

*Staff announced the winners and encouraged all Commissioners to attend the ceremony if possible.*

#### III. Building Demolition Delay Ordinance revisions

*Staff briefly outlined the proposed changes and stated that the draft is currently being reviewed by the law department.*

### **Adjournment**

*Upon a motion by Chair Shveda and seconded by Commissioner Wamback, the Commission voted 6-0 to adjourn the meeting at 8:25 p.m.*