

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

March 18, 2021

CITY HALL*

Commission Members Participating: Devon Kurtz, Vice-Chair
Diane Long, Clerk
Janet Theerman
Randolph Bloom
Erika Helnarski, Alternate

Commission Members Not Participating: Mark Wamback, Chair
Tomi Stefani

Staff Members Participating: Michelle Johnstone, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services
Stephen Rolle, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services

*Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor’s March 23, 2020 Order, as amended, imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting was conducted through remote participation. The meeting was livestreamed from the City of Worcester website and is available for streaming online. Public participation was facilitated through a call-in number, 415-655-0001 (Access Code: 1608081191#), and link (<https://cow.webex.com/meet/historicalcommissionwebex>), which were publicized on the posted meeting agenda and during the video broadcast.

CALL COMMISSION TO ORDER

The Commission was called to order by Vice-Chair Devon Kurtz at 5:35 PM.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

March 4, 2021: On a motion by Commissioner Long and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission voted 5-0 to approve.

NEW BUSINESS

Certificate of Non-Applicability

1. 60 Franklin Street – HC-2021-010 (MBL 03-012-01+61)

Petitioner: Ian Fox

Year Built: 1883, 1896

Historic Status: MACRIS listed; State Register of Historic Places (SR); National Register of Historic Places Individual; National Register District; National Register of Historic Places Multiple Resource Area; Preservation Restriction, FKA the Dodge Block & Sawyer Building/Bancroft Building

Petition Purpose:

- Alter the penthouse structure to accommodate a studio apartment

Ian Fox of Alaris Construction spoke in regards to the application. He stated that a penthouse structure on the top of the existing building at 60 Franklin Street will be turned into a studio apartment. Exterior changes include the addition of windows and doors. The windows will match those on the rest of the building. Additionally, the exterior

of the structure will be cleaned up. For outdoor space, a small deck is proposed on the Portland Street side of the structure. Mr. Fox also briefly described the materials to be used.

Commissioner Bloom noted that the work would assumedly be somewhat challenging to see from the street.

Commissioner Kurtz commended the applicant on ensuring that the windows would match those on the rest of the building and that the paint used would blend with the color of the masonry on the rest of the building.

Commissioner Long asked if this would be residential or business use. Mr. Fox stated that it would be residential use.

Commissioner Bloom stated that this project would be an improvement to what is currently there.

Public Comment

Deborah Packard of Preservation Worcester noted that Preservation Worcester holds a preservation restriction on the property. She stated that her organization has reviewed the plans, and is supportive of the project.

On a motion by Commissioner Long and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission voted 5-0 to close the public hearing.

On a motion by Commissioner Long and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission voted 5-0 that the proposed demolition at 60 Franklin Street would not be detrimental to the historical and architectural resources of the City of Worcester, and thus approved the Building Demolition Delay Waiver.

List of Exhibits

Exhibit A. Certificate of Non-Applicability application dated February 8, 2021, and received February 24, 2021.

Building Demolition Delay Waiver

2. 81 Elm Street – HC-2021-011 (MBL 02-046-00063)

Petitioner: Tim Hansen, City of Worcester o/b/o Gary Dutram
Year Built: 1870
Historic Status: MACRIS listed, FKA R.C. King House
Petition Purpose:
• Replace windows

Ms. Johnstone noted that this application is partially retroactive.

Tim Hansen, applicant, presented the proposed project. The owner, Gary Dutram, was also present on the call.

Mr. Hansen stated that this project was brought on by a lead poisoning case. He described the work to be done, which includes the replacement of several storms and original windows, and the removal, dipping, and reinstallation of one arched window.

Commissioner Kurtz commended the applicant on proposing to reinstall the arched window, but asked why the side lights would be replaced with vinyl. Mr. Hansen stated that many of the windows on the building had already been replaced with one-over-one vinyl windows.

Commissioner Bloom stated that it appears as though a lot of original materials have already been lost, and that fussing over the replacement of windows may be unfounded in this case. Commissioner Kurtz agreed.

Commissioner Long asked Ms. Johnstone if the Commission should vote on the newly proposed work and the retroactive work separately. Ms. Johnstone stated that the Commission could vote on each separately, but that it is not necessary. Commissioner Kurtz noted that he believes the vote should be taken together.

No public comment

On a motion by Commissioner Long and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission voted 5-0 to close the public hearing.

On a motion by Commissioner Long and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission voted 5-0 that the proposed demolition at 81 Elm Street of replacing windows, both retroactively and newly proposed, while retaining the center arched window, would not be detrimental to the historical or architectural resources of the City of Worcester, and thus approved the Building Demolition Delay Waiver.

List of Exhibits

Exhibit A: Building Demolition Delay Waiver application dated and received February 25, 2021.

COMMUNICATIONS

- A. Invitation to comment from EBI Consulting on a proposed telecommunications facility at 44 Hammond Street (Section 106).

On a motion by Commissioner Kurtz and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the Commission voted 5-0 to decline to issue comment.

- B. Communication from Preservation Worcester suggesting potential new Local Historic Districts.

Ms. Johnstone stated that Deborah Packard from Preservation Worcester is on the line, and that she may read her letter into the record or discuss the issues addressed in it.

Ms. Packard stated that Preservation Worcester is concerned about the potential closing of Becker College. She noted that nearly thirty of their properties are on the MACRIS list, and many are on the National Register. She stated that Preservation Worcester has often believed that the Becker College area would be a good candidate for a local historic district, and that they would suggest that the Worcester Historical Commission form a study group to determine whether the area should become a local historic district. Additionally, she stated that she recently was in attendance at a program put on by the Massachusetts Historical Commission concerning the creation of local historic districts, where she learned that it was possible to create local historic districts in a short period of time. Many of the buildings have considerable research already conducted on them.

Ms. Packard also spoke briefly on the possibility of forming single-building local historic districts. One that Preservation Worcester has in mind is Liberty Farm, which is one of only two National Historic Landmarks in the city. She suggested that the Commission consider designating that building as a single-building local historic district, and look at other buildings in the city that might merit such a designation going forward. She also stated that as always, Preservation Worcester would welcome the opportunity to work with the Commission and help in any way.

Commissioner Kurtz asked Ms. Johnstone how a study group is formed. She stated that the Commission would act as the study group. They would need to establish boundaries, a list of properties, and compile any additional research that may be needed.

Ms. Johnstone stated that single-building local historic districts are a really great resource that the Commission may want to think about going forward, noting that Somerville has over 200 of them.

Mr. Rolle recommended that the Planning Division is also very concerned about the closing of Becker College as well, both from a preservation and land use perspective. He recommended that the Commission put this item onto their next agenda, and in the meantime, staff would work on gathering information on the creation of local historic districts, as well as gather more data on the Becker College area.

Commissioner Kurtz stated that he was in favor of talking more about this at the Commission's next meeting.

Commissioner Bloom stated that he would recommend that the Commission garner very strong support from the residents of the area, otherwise the efforts would be futile. He stated that he does know that some of the residents on William Street are concerned, and at a prior meeting, he had suggested that the neighborhood get organized in working toward forming a local historic district.

Ms. Packard agreed with Commissioner Bloom. She stated that she reached out to one resident to test the waters, and the interaction was positive, but she doesn't know how many of the building owners that rent out space for commercial use would react. She also noted that in order to form a local historic district, it would need to be passed by two-thirds of the City Council, and that without neighborhood support, it likely would not pass.

Commissioner Long stated that she would love to see a district formed. She suggested starting with Liberty Farm, especially if the owner is open to it.

Ms. Johnstone stated that staff would add a discussion on local historic districts to the Commission's next agenda, and would come prepared to talk about next steps at that time.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Commissioner Kurtz and seconded by Commissioner Theerman, the meeting was adjourned at 6:04 PM.