

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
HISTORICAL COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF WORCESTER  
December 13, 2012**

**LEVI LINCOLN CHAMBER – CITY HALL**

**Commission Members Present:** J. Thomas Constantine  
Timothy McCann, Vice-Chair  
Kevin Provencher, Clerk  
James Crowley  
Meagen Mulherin  
Erika Dunn

**Staff Members Present:** Marlyn Feliciano, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services

**REGULAR MEETING (5:30 PM)**

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Chair Constantine called the meeting to order at 5:33 P.M.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

The minutes for August 9, 2012 and November 15, 2012 were approved with no additional edits.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**1. 80 Elm Street (HC-2012-075)**

Attorney David Nestlebaum, representing Marie Nestelbaum Trustee, and Johnathan Lapin, contractor from Salisbury Construction Company were present to speak on this petition. The petition purpose is to remove the existing asphalt shingled roof and replace it with architectural asphalt shingles.

Mr. Provencher asked the applicant how the roof edge will be treated; if he was planning to do any work on the soffits, fascias, or decorative brackets. Mr. Nestlebaum stated there are is no carpentry involved in the project; a simple drip edge will be installed.

Upon a motion by MR. Provencher and seconded by Ms. Mulherin, the Commission voted 6-0 to approve the petition.

**Exhibits**

Exhibit A: Building Demolition Delay Waiver Application dated November 13, 2012 and submitted on November 15, 2012.

**2. 56 Dorchester Street (HC-2012-076)**

Petition: Building Demolition Delay Waiver  
Petitioner: Li Liu  
Present Use: Multi-family residential structure  
Year Built: Circa 1890  
Historic Status: MACRIS-listed property  
Petition Purpose: Remove the existing asphalt siding to replace with new vinyl siding, to remove the existing architectural shingles and remove the double hung vinyl window and replace with like materials  
Constructive Grant Deadline: BDDW: 12-29-2012

No one was present to provide testimony on this petition. Mr. McCann stated that because there were no pictures or Form B that he was uncomfortable taking up the item without the applicant present. Mr. Constantine stated that they could not postpone it without asking the applicant.

Upon a motion by Mr. Crowley and seconded by Mr. McCann, the Commission voted 0-6 that the proposed was not detrimental to the architectural or historical resources of the city. The motion failed, therefore the petition was denied.

**Exhibits**

Exhibit A: Building Demolition Delay Waiver Application dated and submitted on November 15, 2012.

**3. 227 Burncoat Street (HC-2012-077)**

Mike Hughes, Vice President of Operations for Community Healthlink, and Jeff Anges, Director of Facilities for Community Healthlink were present. Mr. Anges stated that the proposed work is to remove the existing three tap asphalt shingles on the roof and replace it with architectural asphalt shingle. Mr. Hughes stated that the roof is in disrepair and needs to be done immediately. Mr. Provencher asked the applicant if there will be working on the fascias, soffits, or brackets. Mr. Anges stated that they will not be working on the fascias, soffits, or brackets. They will be installing an 8-inch drip edge all around the property.

Upon a motion by Mr. McCann and seconded by Mr. Provencher, the Commission voted 6-0 that the proposed is not detrimental to the architectural or historical resources of the city. The motion passed and the petition was approved.

**Exhibits**

Exhibit A: Building Demolition Delay Waiver Application dated November 1, 2012 and submitted on November 14, 2012.

**4. 1200 Main Street (HC-2012-078)**

Petition: Building Demolition Delay Waiver  
Petitioner: Tam Nguyen and Tuan Anh Le Do  
Present Use: Commercial building  
Year Built: Circa 1883  
Historic Status: MACRIS-listed property (Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System, formally known as Erastus Woodis Cottage)  
Petition Purpose: Construct a 1,225 SF wood frame addition with a flat roof  
Constructive Grant Deadline: BDDW: 12-29-2012

No one was present to provide testimony on this petition. Mr. Constantine stated that the information provided does not clarify what will be demolished and therefore the commission is unable to take up the matter.

Upon a motion by Mr. Provencher and seconded by Mr. Crowley, the Commission voted 0-6 that the proposed was not detrimental to the architectural or historical resources of the city. The motion failed, therefore the petition was denied.

**Exhibits**

Exhibit A: Building Demolition Delay Waiver Application dated and submitted on November 15, 2012.  
Exhibit B: Photographs of 1200 Main Street property.

**OTHER BUSINESS:**

5. Received Communication:

- o Re: 82 Paine Street, St. Bernard Church – Invitation to Comment from EBI Consulting; dated November 29, 2012.

Mr. Constantine stated that this was a request to comment on three new wireless antennas being installed on the St. Bernard Church. Mr. Provencher states that it seems that the antennas will be visible but the symmetry of the design is complimentary. Ms. Dunn stated that they made it work with the design on the tower.

The Commission decided to provide no comment to the communication.

**RECESS:**

Chair Constantine called a recess at 5:49 p.m.

**CROWN HILL LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT PUBLIC HEARING:**

**Commission Members Present:** J. Thomas Constantine  
Timothy McCann, Vice-Chair  
Kevin Provencher, Clerk  
James Crowley  
Andrew Schveda  
Meagan Mulherin  
Erika Dunn

**Staff Members Present:** Joel Fontane, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services  
Nancy Tran, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services  
Marlyn Feliciano, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Chair Constantine called the Crown Hill Local Historic District public hearing to order at 6:30 p.m.

Purpose: To formally consider the creation of the Crown Hill Local Historic District pursuant to Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40C.

Mr. Fontane stated that per the Commission's request and as a good practice DPRS staff posted the Preliminary Study report online, mailed a notification letter to all property owners informing them of the public comment period and the multiple places they could obtain a copy of the report, and a direct mail for a frequently asked questions flyer. The public comment period lasted two months and ended yesterday, December 12, 2012. Mr. Fontane read a communication from Christopher Skelly, Massachusetts Historical Commission, which reported that MHC voted to encourage the adoption of Crown Hill Local Historic District and that they encourage the City of Worcester to create a larger local historic district.

Mr. Fontane stated various letters of support were received: one from Randall Bloom on behalf of the Crown Hill Neighborhood Association, and one from Deborah Packard on behalf of Preservation Worcester. Also, the Planning Board submitted a letter stating they did not have a comment regarding the Crown Hill Local Historic District.

Mr. Fontane proceeded to give the following presentation:

This Preliminary Study Report proposes the creation of the Crown Hill Local Historic District (CHLHD) in the area roughly along and within Pleasant, Irving, Austin and Newbury streets. The report describes the District's cultural, historical and architectural significance and defines district boundaries.

A Local Historic District (LHD) is a specific area recognized for its historical and architectural significance.

It's intended to preserve significant buildings, structures and places through a design review process that considers the features as well as overall setting of properties within a district.

Local Historic Districts provide for the thoughtful management of external physical changes made to buildings and properties that are viewable from a public way. This management occurs through a public design review process by which the Historical Commission considers changes for approval prior to the issuance of a building permit. This design review process helps ensure that changes are compatible with the neighborhood's historic and architectural features and helps prevent the unnecessary loss of significant features over time.

The creation of a LHD does *not* change underlying land use rights (zoning) for the properties included. Inclusion of a property within a local historic district does not prevent the ordinary maintenance, repair or replacement of any exterior architectural feature within an historic district, which does not involve a change in design, material, color or the outward appearance.

The design items that are within scope of review for the Historical Commission to review are all exterior changes to features of buildings, structures including paths and driveways viewable from a public way and building demolitions. Outside the scope of review are Interior changes and exterior changes NOT visible from a public way.

Mr. Fontane gave a brief overview of the design review process:

- 1. Property owner files application** – plan out specific details of project
- 2. Public hearing is held** – present project details (~30 days from application submittal)
- 3. If changes found appropriate** –decisions are issued and applicant is able to apply for building permit
- If not appropriate** – Commission explains how project could be modified to obtain its approval
- 4. Decisions signed**
- 5. Apply for building permit**

There are four key reasons to create a Local Historic District for Crown Hill.

1. The proposed district represents some of the City's best remaining examples of mid and late 19th century architecture. (Nearly 50% of the buildings are on the National Register of Historic Places and the vast majority of its buildings 77% are contributing.)
2. This area presents a rare opportunity for preservation as many of its properties have their original architectural features largely intact.
3. A Crown Hill Local Historic District will promote preservation of the neighborhood's general character, historic resources and architectural features threatened by ongoing changes and development.
4. While strong grassroots neighborhood efforts have been present and have helped protect the area, creation of a local historic district will serve to formally recognize the sense of pride in the neighborhood's historic meaning and architectural significance to the City.

### *Crown Hill Consideration Timeline (Background)*

This area has a long history of neighborhood involvement and was one of the first target areas for projects that came out of the Housing and Community Development act of 1974.

Coordinated by the Crown Hill Development Committee, a façade initiative was instituted to reverse the deterioration and abandonment of historical buildings in the neighborhood.

The City invested community development funds to stem the decline of buildings and infrastructure.

The Worcester Heritage Society (now Preservation Worcester) created a revolving loan fund to support rehabilitation work.

The Society also began to purchase abandoned buildings to stabilize and resell with covenants. And, by 1976, the core of the Crown Hill neighborhood was listed as a historic district on the National Register of Places, that district was expanded in 1980.

These efforts were instrumental in helping preserve this significant collection of mid-19th century architecture in Worcester.

More recently, in the mid part of the last decade, a group of neighborhood residents coalesced around their keen awareness of the architectural and historical significance of their neighborhood and the need to preserve it.

By 2008 this group, known as the Crown Hill Neighborhood Association (CHNA), petitioned Worcester City Council to create the city's third local historic district.

Dr. Thomas Johnson, a former Worcester Historical Commission member and long time resident of Crown Hill, strenuously advocated for the creation of a Crown Hill Local Historic District along with fellow residents and Neighborhood Association leadership Edla and Randolph Bloom, Janet Merrill, James Marcotte, Marc Tumeinski.

I thank them for their active participation and patience throughout this process. I also thank the current and past members of the Historical Commission for their careful consideration and thoughtful participation in the development of the proposed District.

Current members Thomas Constantine, James Crowley and Timothy McCann have been on the Commission since the formation of the Study Committee in 2008 and past members, Peter Schneider and Michael Theerman helped shape the Commission's Study Report.

I also thank my staff that worked to develop this report despite few resources and a significant ongoing workload – Nancy Tran, Ruth Gentile and Edgar Luna all contributed to making this study report a reality. And Lara Bold, Luba Zhaurova and Abby McCabe who took on their work to enable this to get done.

Lastly, I thank Neil Larson Associates for their quality work related to the Historic Building Survey. The comprehensive information provided by this survey served as the grist for the Commission's 2012 Study Report.

Understanding the community development benefits that a Local Historic District could bring to the neighborhood and community at-large, City Manager Michael V. O'Brien, allocated funds from the City's Community Development Block Grant to provide part of the monies needed for a matching grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission.

This commitment leveraged with a generous gift from Crown Hill residents through the Crown Hill Neighborhood Association.

The funds contributed by the neighborhood association enabled the City to obtain a matching grant from the State large enough to fund Neil Larson Associates' historic building survey of Crown Hill in 2010.

The 2010 survey addressed a full range of cultural resources such as: historic land use patterns, economic development, social and demographic history, and events that had an impact on the local community.

Ethnic and cultural diversity, which is fundamental to the social history of this area and the City, was also an important part of this analysis. The survey area was further assessed and the district boundaries ultimately included a smaller area than what was originally petitioned by the neighborhood association.

On December 4, 2008, the Worcester Historical Commission unanimously voted to form a study committee to consider the creation a Crown Hill Local Historic District. The Study Commission then set in motion the following events:

#### **Study Report Development**

- Dec 2008 – Historical Commission votes to form Study Committee
- 2009-2010 – Comprehensive Historic Building Survey
- 2011-2012 – Develop & review of Study Committee Report
- Sept 2012 – Historical Commission votes to send its Study Report to State (MHC)
- Oct 2012 – Notice of Public Comment Period sent to all property owners
- Oct 2012 – Report and FAQs posted to the City's Website

#### **Public Meetings** (all property owners invited)

- Jan 29, 2009 – Informational Meeting
- Oct 14, 2010 – Presentation of Historic Building Survey
- Feb 24, 2011 – Presentation of District Boundaries

#### **Public Hearings** (all property owners notified)

- Dec 13, 2012 – Historical Commission Hearing
- (TBA) City Council Hearing

Mr. Fontane showed where Crown Hill is located in relation to City Hall.

In considering the boundaries of the district we began with the National Register of Historic Places' 1976 and 1980 Oxford-Crown District boundaries, shown here in green and blue respectively, in relation to the neighborhood's petition which included roughly the entire area shown in this map.

After a comprehensive historic building survey, a number of neighborhood meetings and Historical Commission public meetings, the proposed district boundaries were winnowed down as follows by the Historical Commission.

The properties on Hawley and Piedmont streets were excluded from the boundary delineation because, although they were historically and architecturally significant in many cases, they were considered better associated with the development history of the Piedmont neighborhood, not Crown Hill.

The proposed district does not include parcels containing non-historic buildings and properties on the north side of Chandler Street, which consist of commercial uses and are more recent than those characteristic of the Crown Hill neighborhood.

Lastly, the Commission reconsidered the inclusion of the Austin Street and Irving Street area based on property owner opposition and determined that although historic, the buildings in that area were not central to the creation of the Crown Hill Local Historic District as a whole.

An integral part of protecting this district's historical value is the ongoing preservation of its character. Regulating the non-historic properties and vacant land located within the District is important to ensure that future development is consistent with the character of the District.

As such, 19 non-contributing buildings and 21 vacant / parking parcels are included in the District as they are in proximity to historically and architecturally significant properties and are therefore important to preserving the integrity of these significant properties and the District as a whole. Their inclusion also provides for regulatory consistency throughout and creates a cohesive district.

These nineteen (19) non-contributing buildings are found throughout the proposed District account for only 11% of the buildings and are mostly along Pleasant Street the District's commercial corridor at its northerly end.

Properties on the north side of Pleasant Street are included because of their age, high visibility and to create a regularly shaped boundary that includes both sides of this street and contributing buildings along the corridor, which leads us to the resulting proposed district in the area roughly along and within Pleasant, Irving, Austin and Newbury streets.

Nearly half of properties affected are on National Register

- 205 property addresses
- 189 property owners
- 166 parcels (including 21 vacant/parking parcels)



- 173 properties (number of properties greater than parcels because some parcels have more than one building)
- 152 buildings (133 contributing, 19 non-contributing)
- ~40 acres of land

Contributing Buildings represent 77% of total area, Vacant Land & Parking represents 12% of total area, and Non-Contributing Buildings represent 11% of total area.

Mr. Fontane showed examples of Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Queen Anne, Second Empire, Romanesque, and Italianate architecture within the boundaries of the Crown Hill Local Historic District.

### **Regulatory Alternatives Considered**

Per Chapter 40, Section 8 of Massachusetts General Laws, the Study Committee considered the scope of the Commission's purview with regard to the Crown Hill Local Historic District. Specifically, the Committee considered whether to recommend providing exclusions for any of the following:

- 1) Temporary structures or signs, subject, however, to such conditions as to duration of use, location, lighting, removal and similar matters as the commission may reasonably specify.
- 2) Terraces, walks, driveways, sidewalks and similar structures, or any one or more of them, provided that any such structure is substantially at grade level.
- 3) Walls and fences, or either of them.
- 4) Storm doors and windows, screens, window air conditioners, lighting fixtures, antennae and similar appurtenances, or any one or more of them.
- 5) The color of paint.
- 6) The color of materials used on roofs.
- 7) Signs of not more than one square foot in area in connection with use of a residence for a customary home occupation or for professional purposes, provided only one such sign is displayed in connection with each residence and if illuminated is illuminated only indirectly; and one sign in connection with the nonresidential use of each building or structure which is not more than twelve square feet in area, consist of letters painted on wood without symbol or trademark and if illuminated is illuminated only indirectly; or either of them.
- 8) The reconstruction, substantially similar in exterior design, of a building, structure or exterior architectural feature damaged or destroyed by fire, storm or other disaster, provided such reconstruction is begun within one year thereafter and carried forward with due diligence.

After deliberation and based on feedback by the petitioners, the Study Committee decided not to exclude any of the above items from consideration within the Crown Hill Local Historic District.

## **Next Steps**

1. Public Hearing Testimony
2. Vote by Historical Commission regarding recommendation to City Council
3. Report back to City Council
4. City Council Committee Hearing
5. Vote by Full City Council
6. Recording the Final Local Historic District Map at Registry of Deeds

## **PUBLIC COMMENTARY:**

Randall Bloom, Crown Hill Neighborhood Association member, stated that he believed that the local historic district can positively affect the area adjacent to it, for example the theatre district. He also mentioned that Crown Hill is a different historic district than the other two that exist in the City. He expressed his enthusiasm and pleasure this project is in this current stage.

Dr. Johnson, resident of 11 Oxford Street, stated that during the 1970s many buildings were destroyed in the Crown Hill neighborhood. He stated he believed that historical structures do not exist in a vacuum and that they require a close knit neighborhood to protect them. In response to that need, in 2008 the Crown Hill Neighborhood Association was re-activated. The petition to create the Crown Hill Local Historic District was made and the process began. Dr. Johnson stated that most of the homes included in this district are listed as an significant historical resource in the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS) and have to undergo the design review process with the Historical Commission already.

Dr. Johnson stated that within the boundary lines of the proposed district there are 5 churches, non-profit organizations, condos, single and multi-family dwellings. He stated he envisions an inclusive, safe, tolerant, cohesive, and beautiful place to live.

Deborah Packard, executive director of Preservation Worcester, stated she commended the residents of Crown Hill and fully supports the creation of the local historic district in the Crown Hill neighborhood. She also stated that Preservation Worcester owns a parcel within the boundaries of the proposed district.

Susan Cecacci, education director for Preservation Worcester, stated she is very supportive of the project. She stated that when giving people a tour of the City, Crown Hill is always a highlight. When you pull into Crown Street or Oxford Street, you are transported to a different era. She stated that creating the local historic district will protect what exists and encourage owners to take care of their property and stated that historical properties increase in value.

Bonnie Prescott, board member of Preservation Worcester, stated the board eagerly and enthusiastically support the local historic district.

Barbara Haller stated that she was part of the Crown Hill Neighborhood Association when it began the process and can testify that everything was done in order to educate property owners and be inclusive of everyone when discussing the creation of this district.

Marge Purves, resident of 8 Crown Street, stated she has lived in the neighborhood since 1972 and fully supports the local historic district.

Mr. Fontane stated that the Commission should vote to include the attachments from the original petition in the appendix of the report.

Mr. Crowley stated that he was moved by the commitment of the neighborhood association and agreed with the wisdom of creating a local historic district.

Mr. Provencher stated that he was excited to work with this new district. He believes it is a unique and eclectic collection of architecture.

Mr. Fontane stated that once the Crown Hill local historic district is passed a position for a member that live in that local historic district will be added to the Commission roster.

Upon a motion by Mr. Crowley and seconded by Mr. McCann, the Commission voted unanimously to recommend that the City Council adopt the Crown Hill Local Historic District as proposed with additional formatting and minor typographical changes if needed.

Enclosed and made part of this report to City Council are the following documents:

1. Crown Hill December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2012 Public Hearing Presentation
2. Crown Hill Preliminary Study Report (which was made final by Commission's vote on the matter)
3. Appendix E – Inventory Forms

**MEETING ADJOURNMENT:**

The Commission voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:28 PM.