

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE
HISTORICAL COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF WORCESTER
September 26, 2013**

LEVI LINCOLN CHAMBER – CITY HALL

Commission Members Present: Timothy McCann, Chair
Kevin Provencher, Vice-Chair
Karl Bjork
Meagen Donoghue
Andrew Shveda

Commission Members Absent: Erika Dunn

Staff Members Present: Deborah Steele, Division of Planning & Regulatory
Services
George Saliba, Executive Office of Economic
Development

REGULAR MEETING (5:30 PM)

Chair McCann called the meeting to order at 5:34 p.m.

Approval of the Minutes from 9/12/13 meeting. – The Commission voted 5-0 to approve the minutes of September 12, 2013.

Unfinished Business:

1. 55 Salisbury Street (HC-2013-051): Building Demolition Delay Waiver:

Francis Pedone from the Worcester Art Museum along with Byron Chang from WHY, the design consultant for the project appeared on behalf of the petition.

Chair McCann stated that the Commission received a memo from Division of Planning & Regulatory staff and it was staff's opinion that the proposed work was not under the purview of the Historic Commission and recommendation that the Commission vote for Leave to Withdraw.

Commissioner Provencher expressed his disagreement with staff's and stated the stairs are just as much a part of the building as any other part. He added that petitioner's previous presentation was not well developed enough to show how the proposed walkway would interface with the stairs. He expressed his belief that the project did come under the Commission's purview.

Commissioner Bjork concurred.

Mr. Pedone stated that the museum cares very much about all museum structures including the staircase. He stated that the stairs were installed in 1933 and is in need of repair and stabilization. Part of the project is to investigate the staircase's stability including repairing the

footers. Mr. Pedone reiterated the importance of adding an accessible walkway at the main entrance of the museum.

Mr. Chang stated that a structural engineer has helped with design of the walkway and feels that the support beam for this walkway must interface with the stairs and be anchored through the stairs into the foundation below.

Commissioner Provencher stated that he supports the plans to restore the stairs which was not initially presented as part of the petition.

Mr. Pedone stated that it had been the museum's intent to restore the stairs as part of the project but that the Commission's comments from the previous meeting really caused the museum and their design engineer to reexamine the issue and refine their plans.

Chair McCann stated that he felt the Commission should vote on staff's recommendation for Leave to Withdraw. Prior to taking this vote, Chair McCann asked for public comments.

Scott Ricker stated he was a long time accessibility advocate and that he had examined the museum stairs. He stated that it was important to allow the museum to provide an accessible main public entrance. He did not understand why the Commission would consider the proposed walkway as a temporary structure and stated that it should be anchored to a strong and stable feature like the existing staircase. He asked if appropriate curb cuts and accessible parking would be provided.

Mr. Pedone responded that accessible parking would be to meet code with curb cuts to enhance accessibility. He stated that phase 2 of the project proposed to eliminate all curbs in the proposed area and open the area up as a flat, accessible plaza.

Commissioner Provencher stated that he did not want to imply that he or the Commission did not support accessibility but that the purview of the Commission is the historic integrity of the building that may be impacted by the proposed walkway.

Mr. Ricker responded that he felt historic issues should not trump accessibility issues and that he hoped the proposed walkway would be allowed as it was important to have an accessible ramp at the main entrance of the museum.

Mr. Chang presented a concept plan via PowerPoint presentation for the addition of an ADA bridge to connect with the existing staircase at the Salisbury Street entrance of the museum. There is currently one ADA accessible entrance to the Worcester Art Museum from the Tuckerman St. entrance; however, this is not a primary entrance and the museum would like to add another ADA accessible ramp at the main entrance on Salisbury Street. The concept plan calls for a steel walkway ramp structure that has a gentle slope of less than 1:20. The plan also calls for constructing an additional step at stairs to make the top of landing flush with interior floor, repairing an existing damaged handrail and replacing existing pavers and asphalt with new pavers and re-grade for even surface. Mr. Chang pointed out where the curb cut and future accessible parking would be located on the engineering drawings.

Jo Hart, city resident, asked why the walkway could not have a column tying into the top of each stair but without drilling in through the stairs.

Mr. Pedone responded that the structural engineer has advised that this will not provide sufficient support for the steel structure.

Mr. Chang stated that some of the granite on the staircase will need to be removed, replaced with new granite but that removed granite will be saved in case of future use.

Jacqueline Norton expressed her appreciation of the museum's efforts to increase accessibility supported the project.

Chair McCann stated that the Commission was in favor of adding an accessible walkway but was concerned with the staircase demolition. He read staff's memo recommending that the Commission vote for a Leave to Withdraw and stated his belief that staff's recommendation is unfounded.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Provencher and seconded by Commissioner Bjork, the Commission voted 3-0 that to oppose staff's recommendation for a Leave to Withdraw. Commissioners Shveda and Donoghue abstained from the vote as they were not present at the September 12, 2013.

Commissioner Provencher then addressed the petitioner and stated that he appreciated the work they had done to examine the issue of the walkway further and minimize impacts to the staircase.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Provencher and seconded by Commissioner Bjork, the Commission voted 3-0 (Commissioners Shveda and Donoghue abstained) that the proposed accessible walkway is not detrimental to the historical or architectural resources of the City.

The motion passed and the Building Demolition Delay Waiver petition was approved.

Exhibits:

Exhibit A: Building Demolition Delay Waiver Application dated August 13, 2013 and submitted August 19, 2013.

Exhibit B: Memorandum from the City of Worcester Division of Planning & Regulatory Services to the Historical Commission; re: 55 Salisbury Street – Building Demolition Delay Waiver; dated September 26, 2013.

New Business:

2. 860 Main Street (HC-2013-053): Building Demolition Delay Waiver:

Mohammad Djamshidi and Sharona Sefaraday appeared on behalf of the petition to remove an asphalt shingle roof and replace the roof with like materials. The petitioner explained that the building was constructed in 1871 but that the asphalt shingles are not original and in his opinion, do not have historic value.

Chair McCann inquired about the fascia material and whether it would be repaired or replaced. He said the application states that the fascia will be wholly replaced and that there would be an issue if it were. He also asked if any work was proposed for the chimney.

Mr. Djamshidi responded that the fascia is metal and that the portions of it that do require repair would be repaired. He added that the fascia will not be replaced; only repaired where necessary. Mr. Djamshidi responded that the chimney is in good condition and no work is proposed.

Commissioner Provencher he asked if the dome would be left intact as he felt that it had historic value. Mr. Djamshidi responded that the dome would be left intact.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Shveda and seconded by Commissioner Donoghue, the Commission voted 5-0 that the roof repairs were not detrimental to the historical or architectural resources of the City.

The motion passed and the Building Demolition Delay Waiver petition was approved.

Exhibits:

Exhibit A: Building Demolition Delay Waiver Application dated August 22, 2013 and submitted August 28, 2013.

Other Business:

- 3. The FY-2013 Certified Local Government Annual Report was received by the Commission.**
- 4. Electronic Mail from Mary Nastasia, MacRostie Historic Advisors, LLC; Re: Letter of Support; dated September 12, 2013-MHRTC – People’s Block, 371-377 Main Street**

Commissioner Shveda recalled that the applicant stated it would not seek historic tax credits for the properties.

Chair McCann asked staff if the applicant would need to apply for historic tax credit through the Department of the Interior.

Ms. Steele responded that they would have to apply through Department of the Interior.

Chair McCann stated he had no issue providing a support letter as it was ultimately a federal decision to grant historic tax credits and that because the properties are on Main Street and in a historic district that this was an important reason to write a letter in support.

Commissioner Provencher concurred but added that the historic value of the building in question was dubious as they had gone through many changes over the years.

Upon a motion by Commissioner Shveda and seconded by Commissioner Donoghue, the Commission voted 5-0 to write a letter of support for federal tax credits for the People’s Block property located at 371-377 Main Street.

Adjournment: Upon a motion by Chair McCann and seconded by Commissioner Shveda the meeting at 6:45 pm.