

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

October 28, 2021

CITY HALL*

Commission Members Participating: Devon Kurtz, Chair (remote)
Diane Long, Vice-Chair
Janet Theerman, Clerk
Randolph Bloom (remote)
Tomi Stefani
Steven Taylor, Alternate (remote)

Commission Members Not Participating: Mark Wamback
Erika Helnarski, Alternate

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

CALL COMMISSION TO ORDER – 5:30 PM

APPROVAL OF MINUTES –

SEPTEMBER 2, 2021 – On a motion made by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Stefani, the Commission voted 4-0 to approve the minutes of the September 2, 2021 meeting. Commissioners Kurtz and Stefani did not vote due to their absence at the September 2 meeting.

September 23, 2021 – On a motion made by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Stefani, the Commission voted 6-0 to approve the minutes of the September 2, 2021 meeting.

SEPTEMBER 30, 2021 – On a motion made by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Stefani, the Commission voted 6-0 to approve the minutes of the September 2, 2021 meeting. Commissioners Long and Stefani did not vote due to their absence at the September 30 meeting.

REQUEST FOR LEAVE TO WITHDRAW

Certificate of Appropriateness & Building Demolition Delay Waiver

4. 7 Crown Street – HC-2021-058 (MBL 03-025-00009)

Petitioner: Frank Zirpolo
Year Built: 1854
Historic Status: MACRIS listed, State Register of Historic Places, National Register District, Positive National Register DOE, Crown Hill LHD, Preservation Restriction, FKA Ezra Sawyer House

Petition Purpose:

- Extend the porch roofline to accommodate an attached carport

On a motion made by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Stefani, the Commission voted 6-0 to issue a Leave to Withdraw without prejudice to the application.

NEW BUSINESS

Certificate of Non-Applicability

1. 41 Chatham Street – HC-2021-059 (Multiple MBL – condo)

- Petitioner: Phoenix Company, Inc.
Year Built: 1918
Historic Status: MACRIS listed, State Register of Historic Places, Crown Hill LHD, FKA The Irving
Petition Purpose:
- Repair damage to masonry from vehicle collision in-kind

Raymond James from Raymond James Restoration, acting as representative for Phoenix Management, spoke in regards to the application. He informed the Commission that a vehicle hit the building and the damaged area will be replaced in-kind.

Commissioner Theerman commented on an existing variation in the mortar. Mr. James stated that the mortar in the damaged area would be a gray color.

Commissioner Stefani asked for details on the window sill. Mr. James stated that it is cast stone, and would be replicated.

Public Comment

None

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Stefani, the Commission voted 6-0 to close the Public Hearing portion of the meeting.

Upon a motion made by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Long, the Commission voted six (6) in favor and zero (0) opposed that the proposed changes consisting of the repair of damaged masonry with in kind material is not under the jurisdiction of the Worcester Historical Commission and is therefore not applicable due to the fact that the work is proposed to be in-kind. Having gained a unanimous vote, the motion passed and the Certificate of Non-Applicability for the proposed work at 41 Chatham Street was thus approved.

List of Exhibits

Exhibit A. Certificate of Non-Applicability application, dated October 14, 2021, and received October 18, 2021.

Building Demolition Delay Waiver

2. 1073 Pleasant Street – HC-2021-056 (MBL 25-014-00003)

- Petitioner: Global Montello Group Corp.
Year Built: ca. 1815
Historic Status: MACRIS listed, FKA Levi Gates House
Petition Purpose:
- Demolish house

Attorney Elena Despotopoulos of Fletcher Tilton spoke in regards to the application. She stated that the plan is to demolish the building.

The Commission had a discussion about whether the property would be eligible for listing on the National or State Register. Commissioner Long reviewed requirements for eligibility.

Commissioner Theerman stated that the building appeared much altered. Commissioner Kurtz agreed.

Commissioner Bloom asked if the building were to be returned to what it originally looked like, if it would be eligible for listing. Ms. Johnstone stated that the building's massing and fenestration pattern were both altered, and that the house would have to essentially be rebuilt to regain eligibility for listing. Mr. Rolle elaborated on the alterations that have taken place.

Public Comment

None

On a motion made by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Stefani, the Commission voted 6-0 to close the Public Hearing portion of the meeting.

On a motion made by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Stefani, the Commission voted 6-0 that the proposed demolition at 1073 Pleasant Street is not subject to the Historic Buildings Demolition Delay Ordinance because the structure has been heavily altered and is no longer potentially eligible for listing on the State or National Register, and a Leave to Withdraw without prejudice to the application was granted.

List of Exhibits

Exhibit A. Building Demolition Delay Waiver application, dated September 29, 2021, and received October 4, 2021.

Certificate of Appropriateness

3. 7 Oxford Street – HC-2021-057 (MBL 03-025-00004)

- Petitioner: Don Pham
Year Built: ca. 1846
Historic Status: MACRIS listed, State Register of Historic Places, National Register District, Positive National Register DOE, Crown Hill LHD, FKA Henry P. & Martha F. Howe House
Petition Purpose:
• Construct a retaining wall

Don Pham participated in the meeting remotely, and spoke in regards to the application. He described the proposed work, which was to construct a retaining wall using concrete block and slab. Ms. Johnstone clarified where each of the materials would be used.

Commissioner Long asked if the reason that two materials were being proposed was for cost reasons. Mr. Pham stated that was the case.

Ms. Johnstone gave background on a previous application that had been approved by the Commission, which called for the driveway to be repaved and for parking spots to be added behind the house. At the time the application was approved, there was no design for a retaining wall.

Commissioner Stefani asked how widespread the use of concrete retaining walls in Crown Hill is. Ms. Johnstone stated that there are many instances of concrete block in the district, but there is no precedent for concrete slabs.

Commissioner Bloom stated that many people in Crown Hill find the concrete slabs objectionable, and that they look like they belong on a highway rather than in a historic district.

Commissioner Theerman asked for clarification on where the retaining wall would be going. Ms. Johnstone and Mr. Pham clarified the location of the proposed wall.

Mr. Pham stated that he may need to build a two-tier retaining wall. Mr. Rolle stated that depending on the height of the wall, Mr. Pham may need to install a fence, which would necessitate further approval from the Historical Commission.

Commissioner Bloom asked for clarification on whether the slabs would be used. Commissioner Long stated that the concrete blocks would be used at the back of the property, and that slabs would be used at the side of the property.

Commissioner Kurtz stated that he was uncomfortable with mixing the concrete blocks and slabs. Commissioner Taylor and Commissioner Bloom concurred.

Mr. Pham stated that he would be amenable to using just the concrete blocks.

Public Comment

Commissioner Long read public comment that had been received via e-mail from Mark Moran and Liz Barnes at 14 Oxford Street. In summary, the comment stated that while natural stone would be preferable for a retaining wall, concrete block would be more acceptable than concrete slabs. It also stated that the area in which the concrete slabs were proposed is visible from the street.

On a motion made by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Stefani, the Commission voted 6-0 to close the Public Hearing portion of the meeting.

On a motion made by Commissioner Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Stefani, the Commission voted 6-0 that the proposed changes consisting of building a one tier and/or two tier retaining wall made out of concrete block at 7 Oxford Street would be appropriate to the Crown Hill Local Historic District. Having gained a unanimous vote, the request for a Certificate of Appropriateness was thus approved.

List of Exhibits

Exhibit A. Certificate of Appropriateness application, dated October 3, 2021, and received October 7, 2021.

COMMUNICATIONS

- A. Communication from MHC to Deborah Hall, WYCA of Worcester regarding the upcoming consideration of the building by the MHC for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.
- B. Communication from MHC to Vaske Gjino, Worcester Executive Office of Economic Development, requesting further information regarding the PNF for façade renovations at Bay State Savings Bank, 24 Franklin Street.
- C. Communication from MHC to Stephanie Page, Abby's House/AKFH Renovations LLC, informing her of the listing of the Saint Joseph's Home for Working Girls to the National Register of Historic Places.
- D. Communication from the MHC regarding Massachusetts Historical Commission Survey and Planning Grant Cycle for FY 2022.

OTHER BUSINESS

None

ADJOURNMENT

Upon made and duly seconded the Commission adjourned the meeting 6:12 p.m.