



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

**Thursday, February 29, 2024**

**Commissioners Present:** Diane Long, Chair  
Janet Theerman, Vice-Chair  
Erika Helnarski  
Donald Northway  
Vanessa Andre, Alternate

**Commissioners Absent:** Devon Kurtz  
Steven Taylor

**Staff Present:** Michelle Johnstone, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services (DPRS)  
Amy Beth Laythe, Division of Planning & Regulatory Services (DPRS)

**Call Commission to Order** – 5:30 PM

**Approval of Minutes** – January 4 & 18, February 1 & 15

*On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed to approve minutes for January 4.*

*On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed to approve minutes for January 18.*

*On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed to approve minutes for February 1.*

*On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed to approve minutes for February 15.*

**Old Business**

**Request for Continuance**

**1. 160 Russell Street (02-041-00058) – COA-24-3**

***Petition Purpose: Replace windows and exterior trim (retroactive).***

*On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the Commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed, to continue to March 28, 2024, with a constructive grant deadline of April 12, 2024.*

## **2. 15 Whitney Street (05-032-00006) – BDDW-24-3**

*Petition Purpose: Replace corner trim, railings & newel posts, and install new vent*

*On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the Commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed, to continue to March 14, 2024, with a constructive grant deadline of March 29, 2024.*

### **New Business**

#### **Building Demolition Delay Waiver**

## **3. 56 Blackstone River Road (10-024-00031) – BDDW-24-5**

*Petition purpose: Install ramp, replace doors & windows.*

Charles Wilmot, contractor, o/b/o Ellen Coffie, owner, stated that the first floor will be a supermarket and they will renovate the rest of the house. The plan is to replace all doors with something consistent to the period of the house. There is a side door and a rear door. At the rear door, they would like to put a handicapped ramp from the parking area to a platform and then to the entrance. They would like to seal off cellar stairway. There are traditional windows on the rear of the upper floors with clothes lines. They would like to put in traditional triple decker vinyl replacements and remove clothes lines. For the remainder of the windows, the plan is to remove the storm windows and put in vinyl windows with 6/1 replacements.

Chair Long confirmed that 32 windows will be replaced.

Ms. Johnstone said that this house is not eligible for the National Register and thus would be out of the purview of the commission, but there was a determination of eligibility that was done for the Quinsigamond Village District in the 90s. The property has degraded in architectural integrity since then. There is a gable over the side door that is historic fabric, as well as the chimneys, but other than that, all other historic fabric has been replaced.

Commissioner Helnarski asked if there are tenants in the upstairs apartments.

Mr. Wilmot stated that the apartments are vacant and have been for some time.

Commissioner Helnarski asked why they were looking to replace the traditional back wooden sliders with glass sliders.

Mr. Wilmot said that weather gets in. The flooring has stood test of time as it is hard pine, however, people don't want weather inside their porches anymore.

Commissioner Helnarski stated that her wish would be not to see the doors go.

Mr. Wilmot said that they will come up with a better solution to maintain the doors and clotheslines. Perhaps they can frame in the opening and make it look like a traditional three decker window opening and it could look like open air.

Ms. Johnstone said that the commission could take a vote on the remainder of work and continue the windows if Mr. Wilmot can provide a drawing for the back windows for a future meeting.

Mr. Wilmot agreed yes, that can be done.

*Public Comment – None*

*On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed to close public comment.*

*On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the Commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) approved Demolition Delay Waiver for ramps, doors, and windows granted, but not including the rear windows.*

*On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the Commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) approved to continue to March 28, 2024, for approval of replacement of back windows with a new constructive grant deadline of April 12, 2024.*

Exhibits

*Exhibit A: Building Demolition Delay Waiver Submitted February 7, 2024, by Charles Wilmot o/b/o Ellen Coffie, owner, and received February 7, 2024.*

**CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS & BUILDING DEMOLITION DELAY WAIVER**

**4. 49 West Street (02-041-00058) – COA-24-3**

***Petition purpose: Install new siding over existing siding, replace windows.***

John Adjim, Contractor, in person, and Fritzie Puverge o/b/o Black Equity Group, LLC, participating remotely, presented to the commission that 40 windows on the house need to be replaced in addition to the siding. They were here last year to replace all windows with vinyl windows that was approved, and they are back with same proposal. Several homes in the area have similar windows.

Chair Long said that anything changed before the local historic district went into effect doesn't matter. The ask is to grandfather the prior approval because the permits were never pulled.

Mr. Adjim answered that is correct.

Commissioner Northway asked if it was approved, are we here tonight because they didn't pull the permits.

Chair Long said because it is now a local historic district, and the permits were not pulled before the previous approval expired.

Commissioner Theerman said that it would not have been approved if it were a local historic district on the first presentation.

Chair Long asked why the petitioner didn't pull the permits.

Mr. Adjim said it was a financial issue.

Commissioner Helnarski asked if they planned to replace any of the leaded glass.

Ms. Johnstone said that the petition was only to replace the double hung windows. All stationary glass windows were not being removed.

Cedric, owner, the plan for this house is to have affordable housing units and the finances of everything is a big deal but they wanted to put the petition forward.

Chair Long stated that the windows that were approved were simulated divided light with the same look as the historic windows but vinyl. Normally this type of window would not be approved in a local historic district. Because this project is for affordable housing, it is a good reason to grandfather the work in.

Commissioner Theerman said that the commission should receive estimates to know the cost difference between wood windows, composite windows, and the vinyl replacement windows.

Ms. Johnstone said that maybe the commission should vote on the siding. Then they could decide whether to vote and deny the windows or continue the conversation on the windows to the next meeting altogether.

Cedric asked if the vote on the windows happened tonight, the petitioner can they reapply with the new window at a later date.

Ms. Johnstone said yes, it just wouldn't be as timely as the petition would have to be advertised again.

Mr. Puverge stated that they spoke with manager at Harvey windows, before losing his internet connection.

Cedric continued for Mr. Puverge that they learned there is a \$40,000 cost difference between the vinyl and the traditional wood windows.

Chair Long said a compromise that the commission has made in the past is that the windows facing the street would be the wood windows and the side/back of the house could be vinyl. Is the quoted difference for a wood clad window and did you look at composite pricing as well.

Cedric said they don't have any info on composite windows, just the wood clad. They did talk to other homeowners in the area who put in the exact same vinyl replacements.

Chair Long said the neighbors who have vinyl windows were replaced before the local historic district was enacted, so what they did won't matter in this situation.

Ms. Johnstone said there are different levels of appropriateness. The most appropriate would be retaining and repairing the original windows. The second most appropriate would be a full divided light wood window which are exorbitantly expensive. Then there is a simulated divided light wood or wood clad window with a baked enamel finish if you were using aluminum cladding. Then there is a composite which would be field paintable, which looks more similar to a traditional window than a vinyl window might. And lastly, there is a vinyl window, which typically is not appropriate. Maybe come back with an estimate for a composite type window depending on your timeline.

Cedric asked if there was an option to put the wood clad or composite windows on the front of the house and the previously approved vinyl windows around the side.

Chair Long said that is up to the entire commission if anyone has thoughts.

Commissioner Northway said if the petitioner can come back with options and estimates, then the commission can vote on the options.

Cedric said that they can come back with two or three other options.

Commissioner Helnarski said the options the petitioner should look at are wood, composite, to repair the existing front windows and then to replace the rest with what you are proposing.

Chair Long asked if the petitioner would like the commission to take a vote on the siding and continue the windows to a later meeting.

Cedric answered yes.

*Public comment*

None

*On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed to close public comment.*

*On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the Commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed to approve Demolition Delay Waiver for the proposed siding in the elm park historic district.*

*On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the Commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed to approve Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed siding in the elm park historic district.*

*On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the Commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed to approve to continue the discussion of the replacement windows to March 14, 2024, with a new constructive grant deadline of March 29, 2024.*

Exhibits

*Exhibit A: Certificate of Appropriateness Hardship note dated February 7, 2024, submitted by Fritzie Puverge, o/b/o Black Equite Group, LLC, owner, and received February 7, 2024.*

*Exhibit B: Slides showing current conditions and proposed windows.*

**Communications**

A. Request from Worcester Historical Museum for a letter of support for grant funding.

Carol Ward, Associate Executive Director of the Worcester Historical Museum, was in person before the commission. The Worcester Historical Museum is applying for a grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Part of the application requires a letter of support from the local historical commission.

Chair Long said the commission is happy to support the grant proposal.

Commissioner Theerman said that the Denholm exhibit at the museum was great.

Ms. Ward said the data was collected and 1900 visitors came to the museum and went through the exhibit. Ms. Ward is new to the museum and to Worcester and is glad to be here.

*On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the Commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed to approve a letter of support to the Worcester Historical Museum for grant funding.*

Ms. Johnstone asked when the letter was needed.

Ms. Ward said the deadline was in a couple weeks.

Ms. Johnstone said it will be done next week.

B. Request from Lene Arnett Jensen & Katy Silverstein to initiate a preliminary study of the Hammond Heights Neighborhood for potential creation of a local historic district.

Lene Jensen, resident 9 Germain Street for 20 years, was speaking on behalf of residents of the Hammond Heights neighborhood, which includes Haviland Street, Westland Street, Germain Street, and sections of Institute Road and Highland Street, to ask for your support on becoming a local historic district. Becoming a local historic district would protect and promote the preservation of the neighborhood's character and integrity of the architecture of its historic properties. There is a long-standing interest in the neighborhood. Hammond Heights became a National Register District in 1980 and the majority of the houses are listed in MACRIS (Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System). The neighborhood is architecturally diverse but attractive and cohesive. Most houses were built between 1890-1920 and are wood framed. Fuller and Delaney was the architect of her house and many

others. Most houses are Queen Anne style, Colonial Revival, or Tudor. The neighborhood is seeking permanent protection for these houses and would like to empower the commission to ensure the architectural integrity moving forward. Work has already begun within the neighborhood. Ms. Jensen and others have met three times to inform everyone what would change if the local historic district designation were to happen and would there be support from the neighborhood. All who attended the meetings and some who did not indicate they were in support. Ms. Jensen has provided 55 names and addresses for 37 households of folks who are in support and believes there are more, and no one is opposed. There was a meeting at city hall with City Councilor King to hear a presentation from Ms. Johnstone about becoming local historic district and it was well attended and there was strong interest. The neighbors are prepared to support and help with any research that is needed. Yasmine Carter has expertise and personal interest in research and has volunteered to assist as needed and is appropriate. This is a unique and beautiful neighborhood that could never be built again.

Chair Long said that she is familiar with the area as her son actually lived in this neighborhood.

Commissioner Helnarski said that her son's bus stop is in this neighborhood, and she admires the houses daily.

Ms. Johnstone thanked Ms. Jensen for the presentation. The commission just finished the Elm Park Local Historic District, they are awaiting the Massachusetts Historical Commission decision on 36 butler street, and then there are two additional single building local historic districts that require researching before this new one, and it is great that the neighbors have volunteered to help. There is public comment included in the commission's materials tonight to review as well. If the commission would like to take a vote to initiate a study, there is already a meeting scheduled for tomorrow morning to go over with the neighbors what next steps will be so the work can begin.

#### *Public comment*

David Green, 12 Germain Street, would like to thank his neighbors for speaking and thanked commissioners for serving. He is highly in favor, and this is an exceptional neighborhood. Compared to his house growing up, a 1950's ranch house, this neighborhood where every house is one of kind deserves support.

*On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed to close public comment.*

*On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the Commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed to approve to initiate a local historic district study for the Hammond Heights Neighborhood.*

#### **Other Business**

- A. Status update for 100 Chandler Street. – No Update
- B. Approval of 2025 meeting schedule – *On a motion made by Vice-Chair Theerman and seconded by Commissioner Helnarski, the commission voted five (5) in favor and zero (0) opposed to approve 2025 meeting dates.*
- C. Call for 2024 Worcester Preservation Awards nominations.

Nomination forms will be going out with the following categories: Residential Rehabilitation, Commercial Rehabilitation, Stewardship, Compatible Construction, and Merit Award. The form is available on the Historical Commission's website and Preservation Worcester's website/social media. The deadline for nominations is April 19<sup>th</sup>. If everyone on the commission could nominate a building to make this year's process robust.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Upon a motion by Commissioner Long, the Commission voted five (5) to zero (0) to adjourn the meeting at 6:20 p.m.